FIVE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE REPORTS, FOCUSING ON SIGNIFICANT AREAS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN APPLIED EDUCATIONAL AND CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

(VOLUME TWO)

BY

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An Evaluation of a Key Stage 2 Special Unit for Pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

Abstract

This chapter focuses on an evaluation of provision within a specialist resource base (unit) for pupils with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). The evaluation sought to answer three questions: (1) What are the educational needs of pupils attending the unit?; (2) What is additional/ different/ specialist about the provision for pupils in the unit, and how does this meet their educational needs?; (3) What are the perceptions of staff regarding the effectiveness of the provision that the unit offers? Data were collected through classroom observations, analysis of pupil records and discussions with unit staff. While SLCN were an area of need common to all of the pupils, they also had a broad variety of additional and/or related difficulties. Challenges associated with implementing "specialist" educational provision for children with diverse needs are discussed. The main way in which the provision could be seen to differ from that within a mainstream setting related to staff-pupil ratios and the amount of adult support that children received. I discuss how "specialised" this support was, and also the potential problems associated with the support that was observed. There is also discussion of the role of the Educational Psychologist as scientist-practitioner, and some of the conflicts and challenges associated with this.

CHAPTER THREE

Ethical issues for trainee educational psychologists and the grounds for a professional ethics

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Abstract

It is suggested that one of the key features of a profession is that its members are regulated and constrained by a distinctive set of ethical values or principles. This paper focuses on professional ethics within Educational Psychology. It begins by considering the role of ethics within a profession, before discussing the "separatist thesis" – the idea that because of their role, professionals are constrained by ethical principles and requirements that are different to those involved in everyday morality. Ethical codes and frameworks in relating to the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) are discussed, before considering how such codes should influence the behaviour and judgements of Educational Psychologists. Data are presented from a discussion group involving Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs) discussing the ethical challenges and dilemmas that they had experienced. In addition to highlighting the importance of ethical awareness within Educational Psychology, the TEPs' comments also suggest the existence of cultural and organisational norms that they encounter in their work and that can be at-odds with the ethical values that EPs identify and endorse. The paper concludes by arguing that codes of ethics are not enough, and that there is a need for EPs to trained in and aware of the ethical tensions and challenges that their role entails, as well as there is a need fro ethical practice to be promoted at an organisational level with appropriate enabling supports and structures.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Small-Scale Action Research Project to Improve Pupil Motivation in a Primary School

A Small-Scale Action Research Project to Improve Pupil Motivation in a Primary School

Abstract

Student motivation is viewed as being a significant determinant of educational outcomes. This paper reports an action research project involving the teacher of a Year 4 class in a primary school, which focused on improving the motivation and engagement of a group of pupils identified as being demotivated. Social-cognitive theories of motivation are discussed, and the Motivation Wheel (Martin, 2007) is used as a model for conceptualising multiple constructs relating to motivation. Two action research cycles were conducted. The first involved using semi-structured pupil interviews to identify differences in motivation between a target group of pupils identified as demotivated and a comparison group. The second cycle involved the class teacher identifying and implementing classroom strategies to improve the motivation of the target group, and evaluating the effectiveness of these using goal attainment scaling. This evaluation suggested that the motivation of the target pupils had improved. Limitations of the study are discussed.

CHAPTER 5

Classroom behaviour management: Educational Psychologists' views on effective practice

Classroom behaviour management: Educational Psychologists' views on effective practice

Abstract

The behaviour of children and young people in schools is a perennial concern to educators and the wider public alike. It also represents a significant focus for the work of Educational Psychologists (EPs). Research evidence has identified a number of strategies which teachers, students and school inspectors believe contribute to effective classroom behaviour management (CBM). Psychological theory has also been used to inform approaches to CBM. This study focuses on EPs' views about effective CBM. EPs within one Educational Psychology Service completed an activity which involved them identifying strategies they considered were most effective for CBM. Their responses were analysed using thematic analysis. A number of psychological functions or mechanisms underlying effective CBM strategies were identified. Based on these mechanisms an approach to CBM is advocated which draws from differing psychological paradigms and principles, and which suggests that effective CBM strategies and practices should be implemented at different systemic levels. This approach is discussed in relation to debates about how psychological theory informs EP practice. Limitations of the present study and possibilities for future research are discussed.

CHAPTER 6

Out of GAS? Evaluation in educational psychology service delivery

Out of Gas? Evaluation in educational psychology service delivery

Abstract

Evaluation is an increasingly important consideration for Educational Psychologists individually and for Educational Psychology Services (EPSs). This paper discusses the context for the increased focus on evaluation, both in relation to national policies and agendas, and also at a local level, drawing on a research activity conducted within one EPS. Different approaches to evaluation are identified, as are different evaluation purposes or aims. Building on the idea of evaluation as a purposive form of enquiry, I advocate pragmatism in relation to epistemological issues. Three different models for evaluation within educational psychology are identified: Goal Attainment Scaling; Target Monitoring and Evaluation; and the evaluation matrix. Strengths and limitations of these approaches are discussed.

1. Introduction to Volume Two

This Volume presents five reports focusing on significant areas of professional practice in Applied Educational and Child Psychology. They relate to work that I have undertaken while completing professional training in Educational Psychology.

Since 2006 training for Educational Psychologists (EPs) in the England requires a three-year, doctoral qualification. During the second and third years of professional training, students are required to undertake a supervised professional practice placement within a Local Authority (LA) educational psychology service (EPS).

I commenced my training Applied Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Birmingham in September 2007. From September 2008 I was employed as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) within a large, metropolitan LA in the West Midlands. The LA is among the largest in the UK and covers a city of considerable diversity. Under the supervision of an experienced EP, I worked within a team serving the eastern region of the city. In particular I worked as the visiting EP for seven different educational settings, comprising a children's centre, four primary schools and two secondary schools, as well as being the named EP for a number of pre-school children and "non-routine" statutory cases involving children and young people from the region but attending schools in neighbouring LAs.

All of the schools that I worked with were in areas of deprivation. Most were on a large housing estate on the outskirts of the city. It was in one of the most deprived wards in the city. Approximately 85 per cent of the ward's population describe their ethnicity as White (British, Irish or Other), with the remaining 15 percent relatively evenly spread between those who describe their ethnicity as Black, Asian or Mixed (2001 Census data). The schools on this estate were all part of an extended provision cluster, and in the second year of my placement I was the named EP for the cluster.

In September 2007, when I started my professional practice placement, the EPS had launched a new agenda in relation to service delivery called *Transforming the EPS*. This agenda focused on altering the role of EPs in three ways. Firstly, there was an emphasis that EPs should only be involved in "complex" casework, in order to avoid duplication of roles with colleagues from other LA support services. Secondly, there was increased emphasis on working at a cluster level, with the named EP responsible for undertaking project work with an impact on multiple schools or settings. Thirdly, there was an increased focus on the role of EPs as researchers, developing and implementing evidence-based practice. Linked to this agenda there were moves to promoting the role of the EP within preventative work, using consultation, training and interventions at an individual, group or whole school level to promote inclusion.

The educational settings within which I was working have inevitably influenced the focus of the contents of this volume. One of the primary schools with which I worked contained a specialist resource base for pupils with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Throughout the city there was the start of a movement away from special schools and towards special provision (where used) within resource bases attached to mainstream schools. The report in chapter two is an evaluation of provision within one of the classes within this resource base.

While the report focuses on specific questions about the effectiveness of provision within that particular resource base, it also has a broader relevance. In particular, it addresses questions about the appropriateness of resource-base provision, including how inclusive and how specialist it actually is. The report was written at a time when provision for children and young people with SLCN was on the national agenda, following the publication of the Bercow Report (Bercow, 2008). The Bercow report highlights, among other things, that children and young people with SLCN can have a variety of additional needs too, and that SLCN can contribute to other areas of difficulty, such as social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It was certainly the case the children attending the resource base had a diverse range of needs (as I put it: The homogeneity of the group is defined by its heterogeneity), and such diversity also raises questions about how specialised specialist provision can be.

Chapter 2 also considers how well suited the role of the EP is to the scientist-practitioner model of applied psychology (Shapiro, 2002), identifying challenges involved in trying to be simultaneously a detached, scientific researcher and an expert practitioner. Chapters 4 and 6 also consider the role of the EP in relation to research, with Chapter 4 presenting an action research project focused on improving pupil motivation, and Chapter 6 focuses on how EPs evaluate the effectiveness of their work within a context of promoting evidence-based practice. Both of these emphasise the needs of balancing scientific rigour and standards with the challenges of real-world research in "messy" settings.

Conflicts and challenges within the role of the EP are also addressed in Chapter 3 of this volume, which focuses on ethical challenges faced by trainee EPs. Drawing on the work of philosopher Alan Gewirth (1986) among others I discuss the rights and duties of EPs as professionals, and the role of professional codes of conduct (e.g. British Psychological Society, 2009; Division of Educational and Child Psychology, 2002) in ensuring that EP practice is ethical. Views of other TEPs in the report suggest that ethical challenges are experienced regularly by them, but also suggest that organisational cultures and norms can exert pressures for EPs to behave in ways that conflict with the professions loft ethical aspirations.

The two secondary schools with which I worked were among two of the highest-excluding schools in the city. Much of my work in these schools, and in the primary schools that I worked in focused on addressing social,

emotional and behavioural difficulties. Chapters 4 and 5 both relate to these difficulties in different ways. Chapter 4 focuses on motivation and engagement, and uses a multi-dimensional model of motivation (The Motivation Wheel (Martin, 2007) as the basis for a theory-based action research project to improve pupil motivation. Chapter 5 addresses classroom behaviour management, and examines EPs' views about what effective behaviour management strategies and approaches. Again the relation of theory to practice is relevant, and the chapter considers whether EPs' approaches to promoting positive behaviour remain as detached from psychological theory as has previously been suggested (Miller, 1989). Both of these chapters focus on promoting behaviour and engagement through classroom-based approaches and through strategies employed by teachers and other school staff, which is consistent with the preventative approach being advocated by the service within which I was working.

The final chapter of this volume, Chapter 6, also considers the views and practices of EPs, this time in relation to evaluation. Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS; Kirusek & Sherman, 1968) is an approach to intervention or programme evaluation, and it has been suggested that it is a potentially useful tool for EPs to evaluate the effectiveness of their work (Baxter & Frederickson, 2005). The importance of demonstrating effectiveness and outcomes was something that was strongly emphasised within the LA that I worked in. The EPS had adopted GAS as a method of evaluation, but with limited success. In order to understand why this was, a TEP colleague and I conducted a research project within the EPS. Chapter 6 considers some of the findings of

this research, and also discusses some of challenges in evaluating the work and impact of EPs, and considers the merits of GAS and alternative approaches to evaluation.

Thus, the volume ends with a focus on evidence, a focus which I have attempted to maintain throughout. Even when addressing matters of a more philosophical nature, as in Chapter 3's discussion of professional ethics, I have endeavoured to maintain a focus on empirical evidence. This is, I believe, one of the ways in which EPs can be scientist-practitioners. The move to doctoral training in 2006 emphasises the importance of research within the work of EPs. But it is important the EPs share evidence as well as using it. With this in mind, I have submitted for publication a paper based on Chapter 5 (Hart, submitted a). From other work that I have undertaken during my professional training, I have also had one paper published in a peer-reviewed journal (Hart, 2009), and have another submitted for publication (Hart, submitted b).

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2. An Evaluation of a Key Stage 2 Special Unit for Pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

2.1 Introduction

A child or young person has speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) as their primary educational need when difficulty, delay or abnormality of language use or understanding exist in spite of normal exposure to language, an absence of cognitive deficit, neurological impairment and physical problems (Wright & Kersner 1998; Bishop, 1992).

Difficulties with speech, language and communication can be considered from different perspectives or within different paradigms. These include cognitive/ psychological, linguistic, medical, social and educational paradigms or perspectives (see e.g. Daniels et al., 1996; Fleming et al., 1997; Martin & Miller 2003 for further discussions of perspectives on language difficulties). The perspective one takes reflects and affects the terminology used to discuss difficulties with speech, language and communication. For example terms such as disorder or delay imply a medical approach. The use of the term SLCN (as adopted here) implies an educational perspective (Martin & Miller 2003), and is consistent with terminology used in current policy documentation (Bercow, 2008; Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) / Department of Health (DoH), 2008).

Martin (2005) identifies a number of difficulties encountered by children with SLCN. Such difficulties can be described in cognitive or linguistic terms, and include difficulties in processing, storing, retrieving and manipulating language; difficulties in phonological development (perceiving/ discriminating between speech sounds); motor difficulties associated with the production of speech sounds; syntactic difficulties relating to forming or making sense of word sequences or word endings; difficulties in developing vocabulary or relating it to concepts; difficulties relating to appropriate use of language in social situations; and difficulties in understanding language (Martin , 2005). One way of categorising or conceptualising such difficulties is to distinguish between *expressive* difficulties (i.e. problems in production of language or articulation of speech), *pragmatic* difficulties (problems relating to the appropriate social use of language and communication), and *receptive* difficulties (problems with understanding and comprehension) (Wright & Kersner 1998).

In addition SLCN are associated with increased risk of other educational needs or difficulties, including literacy difficulties (Botting et al., 1998; Dockrell & Lindsay, 1998; Martin , 2005), low academic attainment (Snowling et al., 2001), and social-emotional problems (Beitchman et al., 1996; Lindsay and Dockrell, 2000). Thus it is important to note that learners, such as those with complex needs, may have SLCN as a secondary educational need (Bercow, 2008; DCSF / DoH, 2008; Wright & Kersner 1998), and sometimes it may not be possible to distinguish whether SLCN are the primary or secondary needs (Wright & Kersner 1998).

Children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) are educated in a range of settings, including mainstream schools, specialist units or resource bases within mainstream schools and special schools. Research by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) suggests that for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities the type of setting is not the most important factor in determining best outcomes. Rather it is the quality of the provision within the setting that matters most. That said mainstream schools with additionally resourced provision (i.e. specialist units) were particularly successful in achieving high outcomes for pupils (OFSTED, 2006). While this research focused on provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities generally, these include pupils with SLCN as both a primary and secondary need.

Approximately 5-7% of school-age children have SLCN (Botting et al., 1998; Dockrell et al., 2006), most of whom are educated in mainstream schools (Dockrell & Lindsay, 1998). For children with more severe SLCN specialist provision is more common at key stages 1 and 2, and relatively uncommon at key stages 3 and 4 (Lindsay et al., 2005a). The main kind of setting in which these pupils receive specialist support is in mainstream schools with specialist language units (Lindsay et al., 2005b).

What defines a language unit is the existence of an additional and specialist resource located within a mainstream school, however what this looks like in

practice can vary greatly. Research by Lindsay et al. (2005b) involving interviews with heads of language units identified a continuum of approaches ranging from teaching exclusively within a separate unit class to full inclusion with in-class support, with the possibility of supplementary withdrawal support at all levels. It should be noted that what Lindsay et al., or their interviewees, describe as “inclusion”, actually refers to where children and young people are educated, and may be more appropriately considered to reflect variations of integration rather than inclusion *per se*. From their sample of 38 language units they found that six (16%) reported full or very high levels of inclusion within mainstream classes, possibly with some withdrawal support, while 14 (37%) reported including children only in set lessons and teaching them in the unit for others, and nine (24%) “arranged inclusion mainly for social reasons or less academic subjects” (p. 91), such as music, PE and play. Eight (21%) of the units reported that the degree of inclusion depended on the individual child, and one (3%) stated rarely integrating children from the unit at all. Alongside and corresponding to these differences in levels of inclusion, there was wide variation in the types of support that language units offered to their pupils, ranging from direct therapy with a speech and language therapist (SLT), collaboration between SLT and teachers and TAs, indirect therapeutic work delivered by a TA in consultation with a SLT, and in-class support from a TA (Lindsay et al., 2005b). Thus while there appears to be a preference for educating pupils with more severe SLCN in specialist units, there appears to be little consistency regarding models of practice.

2.1.1 The present study

The present study is an evaluation of provision for pupils with SLCN in a language unit within a mainstream primary school. I had been working with the school as a Trainee Educational Psychologist since September 2008. In discussions at a planning meeting, the SENCO and Head Teacher (HT) had identified a desire to evaluate aspects of its provision for Key Stage 2 pupils in the Unit. At this meeting I learned that the HT was newly appointed to the school, and felt that he had little specialist knowledge or experience relating to SEN in general or SLCN, in particular. The Key Stage 2 Unit class teacher (CT) was also new to his role. He had previously been working in the school as a teacher in a mainstream class, and similarly felt that he lacked some expertise in relation to teaching children with SLCN. Hence they were interested to judge the effectiveness of the provision for pupils in the Unit and learn about how that provision might be improved. This research project was intended to contribute to these judgments and this learning. The aims of this study were to answer three broad questions:

1. What are the educational needs of pupils attending the Unit?
2. What is additional/ different/ specialist about the provision for pupils in the Unit, and how does this meet their educational needs?
3. What are the perceptions of Unit staff regarding the effectiveness of the provision that it offers?

2.1.2 The EP as researcher and the role of the "scientist-practitioner"

It is not unusual for EPs to be commissioned to undertake small-scale research and evaluation projects such as the one that I describe here. Indeed changes in EP training, with a move to doctoral training, reflect an increasing emphasis on research as playing a key role in the work of the EP.

While there are undoubted benefits to EPs undertaking such research and using it to inform the development of organisations and of applications of psychology, such a role is not without certain tensions. In particular, conflicts can arise between the rigours of a scientific approach and the messy realities and constraints of applied research. Robson (2002) describes a scientific attitude (as opposed to the scientific method) as being one that encompasses researching systematically, sceptically and ethically. The first two of these qualities involves planning enquiry in a methodical, logical manner that is described clearly, and subjecting ideas to the possibility of disconfirmation and observations to scrutiny. The scientist-practitioner model of applied psychology involves core tenets, such as:

- delivering psychological assessment and intervention in accordance with scientifically-based protocols;
- accessing and integrating scientific findings to inform decisions about intervention; and,
- framing and testing hypotheses that inform these decisions (Shapiro, 2002).

There is ongoing debate about whether the scientist-practitioner model is an appropriate one for EPs (see e.g. Lindsay, 1998). It is not my intention here to address that question directly, but rather to beg it by asking to what extent I have been able to operate as both a practitioner and a scientist when conducting this research. What follows, then, is both a discussion of the research process and findings – much as is usual practice in reporting scientific research – and a discussion of the process from my point of views as the researcher – the tensions and dilemmas, the constraints and limitations. It is hoped that such an approach can provide insights, not only into provision and support for children with SLCN, but also more generally for EPs engaged in similar research processes.

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Context

The context for this study was the Key Stage 2 class in a specialist unit with additional resources for speech, language and communication needs (hereafter "the Unit") within a mainstream primary school. The school itself was located on a large housing estate in one of the most deprived wards in the city. Approximately 85 per cent of the ward's population describe their ethnicity as White (British, Irish or Other), with the remaining 15 percent relatively evenly spread between those who describe their ethnicity as Black, Asian or Mixed (2001 Census data).

The primary school has approximately 250 pupils on roll. An OFSTED inspection in summer 2007 rated the school as being satisfactory overall. The school has two classes for pupils with SLCN, one for each Key Stage. The OFSTED report states that, “Pupils with speech and language difficulties in the Resource Base classes achieve well because they receive good teaching”, and, “The support given to pupils with speech and language difficulties is especially good”.

For most of the time, most of the pupils were taught within the unit, separate from mainstream classes. There were some activities that all of the pupils accessed alongside their mainstream peers, such as assemblies, PE and play times, although it was notable that within assemblies the children from the unit seated in a separate group while mainstream pupils seated in their year groups. The SENCO reported that they had previously tried having the pupils from the Unit seated in year groups with their mainstream peers, but some of the children had been unhappy with this and resisted it, so they had not persevered. It is also notable that at play times most of the pupils from the Unit were observed to play together, and with few or none of their mainstream peers.

One of the pupils from the Unit was taught for all lessons within a mainstream class, and a further two attended mainstream classes for Mathematics. In addition there were at least three pupils from the mainstream school who attended some lessons in the Unit, particularly Literacy.

All of the pupils from the Unit accessed some additional support through withdrawal sessions, either individually or in small groups with pupils from the unit and/or the mainstream school, both with a speech and language therapist and with a TA, for specific domains and skills, including speech, language and communication, social skills, literacy, and motor skills.

It is worth noting that the most obvious difference between the Unit class and a mainstream class is in terms of numbers of staff and pupils. The Unit is staffed by one CT and three TAs. The TAs were involved in delivering some withdrawal support to individuals or small groups or supporting pupils from the Unit in a mainstream lesson, consequently there would not always be four members of staff in the classroom at any one time, but there were always at least three, including the CT. The number of pupils in the class also varied, depending on whether pupils were attending lessons in mainstream classes or were receiving withdrawal support and whether children from mainstream classes were attending lessons there. When the class size was at its largest there were likely to be more staff members present as this meant fewer or no pupils were receiving support from Unit staff elsewhere. Thus staff:pupil ratios were consistently between 1:2 and 1:3.

2.2.2 Procedure

This research project took place over a period of four months, between October 2008 and January 2009 with a number of discrete stages:

1. The first stage was the planning meeting mentioned above at which the initial invitation to undertake the evaluation was made.
2. I visited the Unit to observe the class informally and to talk to the CT, as a means of learning about the Unit, its pupils and staff, how it functions, what the CT's concerns were and what he hoped the research would be able to tell him. These hopes and concerns were not specific and were somewhat broadly construed: he wanted to know whether what the Unit did was effective and appropriate, and whether there was more that it could or should be doing to support pupils with SLCN.
3. Following this I had a further meeting with the CT in November to refine research questions and to discuss and plan approaches to data collection. Here we agreed that I would conduct observations in the Unit, focusing on the support given to pupils in class and strategies used to promote speech and language development.
4. In December I conducted observations in the Unit over two mornings (approximately seven hours). Observations were conducted in the Unit class and also in a withdrawal group which some of the pupils attended and which was facilitated by a SLT and a TA. Three different types of structured observation were used. The first of these measured whether children were on- or off-task, whether they were receiving support, and what type of support they were receiving. The second type of observation looked at what language-promoting strategies Unit staff were employing in interactions with pupils. The third observation focused on patterns of talking within the unit (see Observations section for further details).

5. Data were also collected from pupils' EPS files, Statements of SEN and IEPs at this stage, in order to gain information about the needs of the pupils in the Unit. These documentary sources were used to identify which particular areas of need were recorded for each pupil.
6. Following the observations the CT was interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule.
7. In January 2009 I met with the CT and the TAs working in the Unit to feedback results from the evaluation and deliver training linked to it.

2.2.3 Observations

As almost all of the pupils from the Unit were taught for most or all of the time within the Unit class, it seemed appropriate to assess the nature of additional support and adaptation that was being practiced in the Unit class, and how this contributed to meeting the individual needs of the pupils there. To this end observations were carried out in the Unit over two mornings (approximately 7 hours). During the course of observations the minimum number of pupils in the classroom was seven and the maximum was eleven.

Given the high staff:pupil ratios in the Unit it was decided that structured observations would focus, in part, on what these staff members were doing, specifically addressing the questions 'how much adult support are pupils receiving and what is the function of this support?' and 'what strategies are staff using to promote the development of speech, language and communication skills?'. A further focus for structured observations was only

language use of staff and pupils within the Unit, specifically ‘who is talking who and about what?’.

Three different observation methods and proformas were used to address each of these questions at different points in time over the two mornings. To assess the amount and type of support that pupils were receiving I devised an observation schedule (Appendix 1) which involved attending to each pupil in turn for 30 seconds and recording four things: whether they were on-task or not; whether they were receiving adult instructional support or not; if they were receiving adult support, what kind of support this was (i.e. what the adult was doing); and whether or not the pupil appeared to be concentrating.

The Teacher Interaction Language Rating Scale (TILRS) (Girolametto et al., 2000) was used to identify types of behaviours employed by teachers and support staff to promote the development of children’s language skills. This identifies three broad types of strategy which are beneficial: those which are *child-centred* and draw of the child’s existing interests, those which are *interaction-promoting*, and those which involve *language-modelling.* Within these categories TILRS identifies certain specific strategies, and the observer records how frequently these are observed to be employed. It is important to emphasise that TILRS should only be administered by a trained individual, which I am not. These judgements are therefore somewhat subjective and less reliable than a full TILRS assessment, but they nonetheless provide a useful structure for evaluating the specific strategies employed by staff to support this cohort of children.

The Language Use observation schedule (Appendix 2) was used as a means of recording patterns of talking within the setting. This involved observing the class or group for a ten minute period and recording each verbal exchange between individuals. Exchanges were coded according to whether they were from teacher (or other staff) to pupil, from pupil to teacher, or from pupil to pupil, and also whether or not they were learning-related exchanges.

In addition to counting and coding in relation to structured observations the researcher also recorded a more general commentary in relation to things that were observed that were judged to be of significance or note.

2.2.4 Reflections on methods and approaches to data collection

In undertaking this piece of research I was endeavouring to undertake the role of scientist-practitioner, and to collect data which could achieve standards of reliability and validity that would allow sound, defensible and useful conclusions to be drawn. In reality, however, there are a number of limitations of the methods used and the research questions and how they were derived, which mark a departure from these aspirational standards.

Regarding the aims and research questions for the present study, one might hope that these aims were clearly derived from hypotheses suggested by the research literature, or based on a clear recognition of need on the behalf of the research commissioners, or both. In actual fact the questions emerged and evolved from my own understanding of the context, or the research

commissioners' concerns, and the relevant literature. Staff in the school, with whom I consulted in planning this research, did not have a clear idea of what they wanted. They appeared to feel that there were ways in which provision in the Unit could be improved, but were not sure what might need development. Through discussions with the HT and the CT I gained the impression that there were certain areas of concern, namely that they found it hard to identify and demonstrate student progress, and that they were not entirely sure about how well student support and provision was matched to areas of individual need. From my own observations in the setting, prior to undertaking this research, I had begun to think that staff support and interactions were a key aspect of these concerns. It appeared to me that the kind of support given in the Unit was such that pupils had relatively few opportunities to demonstrate independent learning, as too much help was given too frequently, and that the classroom environment did not consistently promote language development in all areas of learning. To be sure, there were specific learning activities which aimed to achieve this, but it seemed to me that aside from these, there were a number of missed opportunities with regard to promoting speech, language and communication skills within the everyday practices of the Unit. Hence these features became the foci of my research, and informed the research questions. And from these questions, I had to find ways to find out about pupils' needs, about verbal interactions, about the quantity and nature of support being given, and about specific strategies to promote language development.

In terms of specific measures used and approaches to data collection Table 1 (over) sets out some of the relevant strengths and limitations. From this table it is apparent that there were a number of limitations to the approaches used. Perhaps most significantly there were questions about the reliability of all of the measures. For practical reasons it was not possible to have multiple raters or standardisation of procedures. Nonetheless, one might contend that the preference for empirical methods and focus on observable data, as well as the multiple sources of data, enables the research as a whole to have greater reliability than might otherwise have been achieved if it were reliant only on, say, unstructured observations or interviews. Moreover, given the situation specific nature of this study and the lack of potential for generalisation, it was not considered so important to use measures that would enable reliable comparisons to be made with findings in literature or with other settings.

Regarding the validity of the study, the table notes that a number of the measures had face validity or local validity insofar as they were collecting data that appear to be pertinent and relevant to the local context. Inevitably there is a trade-off between reliability and validity in any research, and in this case there was a preference for data that would be meaningful to the staff who would receive the findings and act upon them. Whether this constitutes validity in terms of objectivity and truth is debatable.

Research method	Strengths	Limitations
Content analysis of Statements	Could be said to be reliable means of identifying needs as are based on reports from a variety of sources (e.g. school, parents/carers, EP, other agencies). Assessment of needs based on agreed Local Authority criteria which staff are trained to use and where assessments a periodically moderated to ensure consistency.	Different professionals will have input into production of different Statements. Lack of consistency with respect to terms used to describe needs. A document produced with political considerations, such as level of funding, type of placement, parents'/carers' views.
Structured observation – levels of support, on/off-task behaviour	Focuses on observable and quantifiable behaviours, allowing greater objectivity. Measure of support has face validity.	Relies on support being observed and appropriately described, and also subjective judgements about what constitutes on/off-task or concentrating. Lack of multiple raters to assess reliability of measure. Assumes that additional support takes the form of staff-pupil interaction. Measure derived from professional judgement rather than validated through existing research literature.
Structured observation – patterns of talking	Focuses on observable and quantifiable behaviours, allowing greater objectivity. Based on the assumption that pupils with SLCN should have access to language-rich environment which provides opportunities for using language. This assumption and the measure have face validity in this respect.	Lack of multiple raters to assess reliability of measure. Measure derived from professional judgement rather than validated through existing research literature.
Teacher Interaction Language Rating Scale	Measure derived and validated from research literature.	Observer not trained to use measure. Lack of multiple raters to assess reliability of measure.
Discussions with CT and with TAs	Draw on in depth knowledge of context. High local validity.	Questions determined by researcher based on observations, and therefore biased to reflected established judgements which were not always explicitly shared. What staff say in context of discussion with professional colleagues and researcher may not give true reflection of their own views.

Table 1: *Strengths and limitations of research methods and data collection approaches.*

The pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty argues that rather than strive for objectivity and a picture of the world 'as it really is', it is preferable to try to

achieve solidarity, that is, a shared understanding of how the world is perceived (Rorty , 1985). The aim of this research was to create such a shared understanding, and the use of empirical measures as well as measures with high face and local validity could be seen as a way not of striving for objectivity, but of striving for solidarity by eschewing the partiality of more subjective approaches.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 What are the needs of the pupils attending the Unit?

Table 2, below, shows the areas of SLCN identified in the Statement for each of the children attending the Unit. Statements identified three broad types of expressive difficulties: those associated with articulation and the production of speech sounds, those associated with syntax and appropriate word orderings, and those associated with vocabulary and word-finding. All but one of the pupils had some kind of expressive difficulty, with articulation difficulties most common (7/10 pupils) followed by syntactic difficulties (6/10). The one pupil who was not identified as having expressive difficulties was identified as having pragmatic difficulties. Some authors treat pragmatic difficulties as a subset of expressive difficulties as they are both related to language output (e.g. Morgan-Barry & Wright , 2002). Thus all of the pupils in the unit had some problem with using language either in terms of the cognitive or physical demands of producing language, or in terms of producing language appropriate to social conventions and context.

Area of need identified in Statement	***Pupils***										
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	***Total***
Expressive - Articulation			x	x	x	x	x		x	x	7
Expressive - Syntax	x		x		x	x		x		x	6
Expressive - Vocabulary			x	x							2
Pragmatic		x						x			2
Receptive	x		x	x	x				x		5
Reluctance in language use			x						x		2

Table 2: Areas of SLCN for pupils in the Unit

Almost all children with expressive difficulties also have receptive difficulties to some degree (Martin, 2005). Five of the ten children in the Unit were identified in their Statements as having receptive difficulties, such as difficulties with comprehension. Two things are note-worthy in relation to this. First, this may be under-identified as receptive problems can be more difficult to identify and less prominent than expressive difficulties (Wright & Kersner 1998). The second, and possibly related point, is that there was no child who only had problems with receptive language, and there were a number who were not identified as having problems with receptive language. Thus, from this cohort, receptive difficulties appear neither necessary nor sufficient for attending the Unit. Conversely, both pragmatic difficulties and difficulties with articulation, individually, did appear to be sufficient for a child to attend the unit, as there were children where each of these was the sole identified area of SLCN. This may be a quirk of the cohort, who may or may not be representative of the wider population of children attending SLCN Units. Alternatively one might

speculate that for children to be identified as having SLCN, and thus access an additional resource in relation to this, it is (often) necessary for them display some form of “abnormal” language production that is deemed to warrant further investigation, and it is this further investigation that highlights other areas of difficulty, such as receptive difficulties. Were this the case it could also be that receptive difficulties are over-identified among children with expressive difficulties, because of assumed concurrence, and under-identified among the wider population of children. It is worth repeating that this is no more than speculation.

In addition to these SLCN two of the children had Statements which identified difficulties in terms of their reluctance in language use. Table 3, over, shows the different areas of SEN identified in the Statement for each pupil, as well as specific diagnoses that are listed, where applicable. As is evident from this table, the cohort in the unit comprises individuals with a broad range of needs in addition to SLCN, including difficulties with specific curriculum areas, and with learning and cognition more generally, social and emotional difficulties, behavioural difficulties, and motor difficulties. After SLCN, the two next most common areas of need were literacy and social interaction/ interpersonal skills (hereafter social skills), which were identified as areas of need for the majority of the cohort. Beyond the fact that none of the pupils had SLCN identified as their sole area of need, there is insufficient evidence to suggest a typical profile or profiles of needs for pupils attending the unit, given the small numbers involved.

Statement identified needs/ difficulties	***Pupils***										
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**Total**
Speech, language and communication	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
Literacy	x		x	x		x	x	x		x	7
Social interaction/ interpersonal skills	x	x			x		x	x	x	x	7
Numeracy	x		x	x				x		x	5
Concentration / attention	x				x			x		x	4
Autism Spectrum Disorder		x						x		x	3
Articulatory Dyspraxia			x	x							2
BESD		x								x	2
Gross motor	x		x								2
Self-esteem / confidence						x	x				2
Cognitive skills (general)									x		1
Fine motor	x										1
Oppositional Defiant Disorder										x	1
Self-help / independence	x										1

Table 3: *Areas of educational need identified in Statements for pupils in the Unit*

2.3.2 In-class adult support

Within the class two kinds of seating arrangements were used. These are shown in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 (over) shows a typical arrangement for when pupils were working at desks, usually completing written or other paper-

based tasks. Pupils were seated around two horseshoe-shaped desks with a TA in the centre facing them. If there were three TAs in the class then the remaining one would usually be seated at one of the desks between pupils, and the CT would move between the desks. Figure 2 shows a typical arrangement when pupils were seated on chairs around the whiteboard, often at the start or end of lessons when the CT would typically be explaining and demonstrating tasks to the class or leading a discussion and checking pupils' understanding. In this situation the CT was seated at his desk and pupils and TAs seated in predetermined places in an arc around the board.

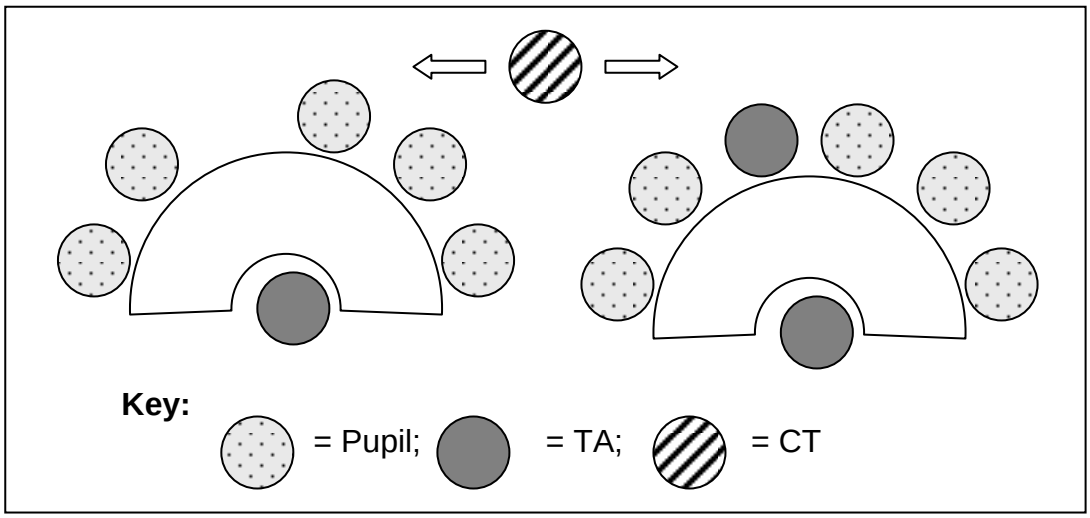

Figure 1: Seating arrangements at desks

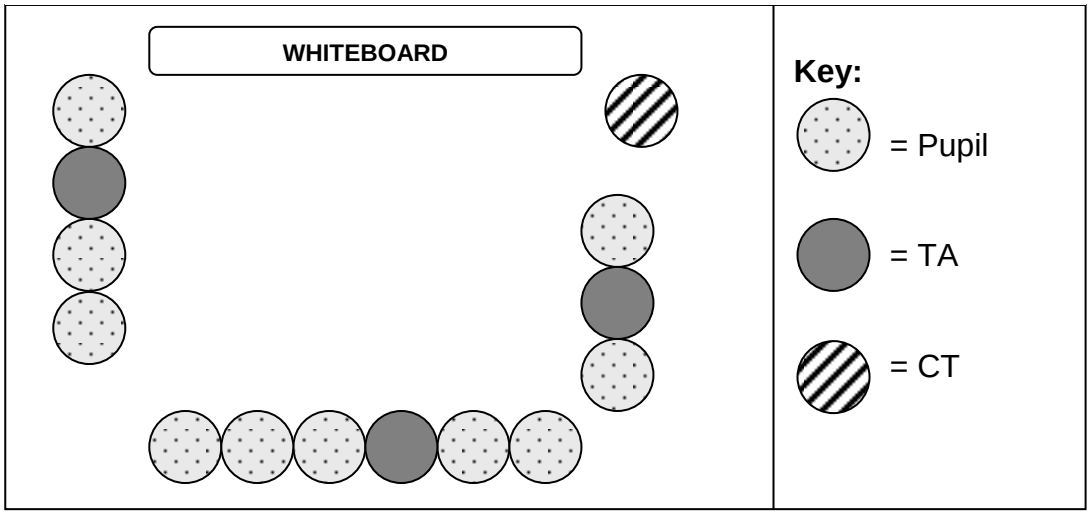

Figure 2: Seating arrangements around board

In order to assess the quantity and function of adult support that pupils in the Unit received structured observations were conducted on four different occasions over the two days using the Support Observation Schedule (Appendix 1). These observations occurred both during Literacy and Numeracy lessons, and in each of these, both while pupils were working at desks and when they were seated around the board.

Table 4, over, shows the results of these observations. It is evident from these data that when pupils were working at desks they were both more engaged in learning and more likely to be receiving additional support than when they were seated around the board. Indeed, when pupils were seated at desks their engagement in on-task behaviour was very high (94%). It is an open question whether this increased engagement was a product of the additional support that pupils were receiving or whether being on-task prompted staff to give additional support. Certainly some of the support given to pupils at desks did serve the function of encouraging them to be on-task (17%), and this was not evident when pupils were seated as a group around the board. Here, support focused mainly on promoting understanding through explaining and questioning, as well as promoting “good” sitting behaviour.

		At desks	Around board
What pupils are doing	On task	68 (94%)	51 (81%)
	Concentrating	68 (94%)	46 (73%)
	Receiving support	24 (33%)	7 (11%)
Type of support given	Demonstrating	6 (25%)	0
	Modelling speech sounds	5 (21%)	0
	Encouraging pupil to be on-task	4 (17%)	0
	Questioning/ prompting	3 (13%)	3 (43%)
	Answering questions	2 (8%)	1 (14%)
	Encouraging “good sitting”	1 (4%)	2 (29%)
	Checking work	1 (4%)	0
	Gluing	1 (4%)	0
	Instructing/ explaining	1 (4%)	1 (14%)

T**able 4:** *Adult support received by Unit pupils during observed lessons.* Numbers are the number of individual pupil observations. Numbers in parentheses represent the percentage of observations. There were a total of 72 individual pupil observations at desks, and 63 around the board.

One might argue that the setting with pupils seated in a group around the board was less effective than having pupils seated at desks. For one thing, given that four of the pupils were identified as encountering difficulties with concentration, learning by sitting and listening for prolonged periods potentially offers a more challenging experience to access than learning through completing structured tasks. Also, in a group situation, support for one child has the potential to be a distraction for others. On the other hand, the group situation and the nature of the group, particularly its size, did offer the chance for all pupils to participate, through demonstrating skills on the whiteboard, answering and asking questions, and it allowed the CT to explain

things to the group with the opportunity to check pupils' understandings, both individually and collectively. Moreover, given the difficulties with expressive language and social interaction that the pupils had, the group situation also offered the opportunity to focus on and develop some of these skills, although it is worth noting that more staff interventions to develop speaking skills were evident when pupils were working at desks.

In neither of the learning settings did pupils all receive equal, or roughly equal, levels of support from staff. The quoting of global rates masks great variation between individual pupils. When pupils were seated around the board, as Figure 2 shows, TAs were seated amongst them in predetermined seats, and the main recipients of their support were the pupils sitting adjacent to them. I was told by the CT that seating was planned so that staff were seated by those pupils who either encountered greatest difficulties in understanding and accessing what they were learning, or those who were seen to pose the greatest threat of being uncooperative or disruptive. When pupils were working at desks, as Figure 1 shows, because of the organisation of furniture, staff were more able to support all pupils. Nonetheless in particular lessons, some pupils were observed receiving no support on each occasion, and others were observed receiving support on all or almost all occasions. The nature of this support often tended towards demonstrating and instructing pupils what to do, which raised the question of how successful the teaching around the board was, if following this pupils were not aware of what they should be doing.

2.3.3 Specific strategies promoting speech, language and communication skills

In terms of the kinds of support given by staff specifically to address SLCN and promote skill development in these areas, a number of specific strategies were identified in observations. For example in class situations, staff were observed to emphasise speech sounds to encourage discrimination, and they were observed to repeat back, model and expand a pupil's speech, although it was noticeable that this seldom resulted in the pupil responding by correcting themselves or developing what they were saying.

At the end of the observation period the TILRS was used to make judgements about the frequency of use of specific strategies to promote speech, language and communication skills. Table 5, over, shows these assessments in two settings – within the Unit class and within a small group working with the speech and language therapist (SLT group). It is evident from this table that there were some differences between the two situations. Within the SLT group more strategies were employed more frequently with the pupils than in the Unit class. That said, there was evidence of all of the TILRS strategies being used at least sometimes in the Unit class, with the exception of imitation. Here staff were frequently observed to model the production of speech sounds and words, often with emphasis to ostensibly to assist with spelling or pronunciation, however pupils rarely responded to these prompts (or rarely appeared to be expected to respond) by imitating what was said to them.

Strategy	How often strategies were observed Unit Class	SLT group
Wait and listen	Consistently	Consistently
Follow child's lead	Frequently	Consistently
Join in and play	Sometimes	Frequently
Face to face	Sometimes	Consistently
Variety of questions	Frequently	Frequently
Turn-taking	Sometimes	Frequently
Imitate	Rarely	Sometimes
Variety of labels	Sometimes	Sometimes
Expand (utterances)	Frequently	Frequently
Extend (conversation)	Sometimes	Sometimes

Table 5: Strategies from TILRS used in the Unit class and in the SLT group

The only strategy that was applied consistently within the Unit class was that of waiting and listening, so that pupils were given time to process what they had heard, think about their response and make it. This was also used consistently within the SLT group, as were "follow child's lead" and "face to face". In general terms the SLT group offered a less directed experience than the class setting, with more frequent occurrences of strategies to promote pupils' interest and interaction (follow child's lead, join in and play) as well as a greater focus on conventions of language use (turn-taking). Both settings were roughly equal in terms of using strategies to enhance the oral contributions made by pupils (expand, extend) and to assist pupils' understanding (wait and listen, variety of questions, variety of labels),

although there was more evidence of staff in the SLT group also using face-to-face talking to assist in this area.

2.3.4 Patterns of talking

In addition to observations relating to support from staff and the specific strategies that they employed, data were collected concerning the frequency and type of verbal interactions involving pupils that occurred in the different learning settings (around board, at desks, SLT group). Data from these observations are presented in Table 6, below, and the graph, Figure 3, over.

	Type of verbal interaction					
	Staff to pupil		*Pupil to staff*		*Pupil to pupil*	
Learning setting	*Learning*	*Non-learning*	*Learning*	*Non-learning*	*Learning*	*Non-learning*
Around board	54%	0%	30%	4%	2%	9%
At desks	50%	0%	31%	0%	14%	5%
SLT group	32%	3%	49%	0%	0%	16%

Table 6: Verbal interactions involving staff and pupils in different learning settings

Perhaps the most striking feature of these data is that in the Unit class, whether seated at desks or around the board approximately half of verbal interactions were made by staff to pupils, and just under a third were made by pupils to staff. The reverse was true for the SLT group. It is worth noting that each part of an interaction was counted, so if each staff member interaction led to a pupil response, and vice-versa, the proportion of interactions

attributed to each would be equal. This was not the case. In fact it appeared that staff in the SLT group said less and got more responses (either through a number of pupils responding, or one pupil 'having the last word'), whereas in the Unit class, they said proportionately more and got fewer responses from pupils. Thus it could be said that the SLT group was more effective as a setting for promoting pupils' talking. Taking into account pupil-to-pupil non-learning related interactions, almost two thirds of all talking was done by pupils.

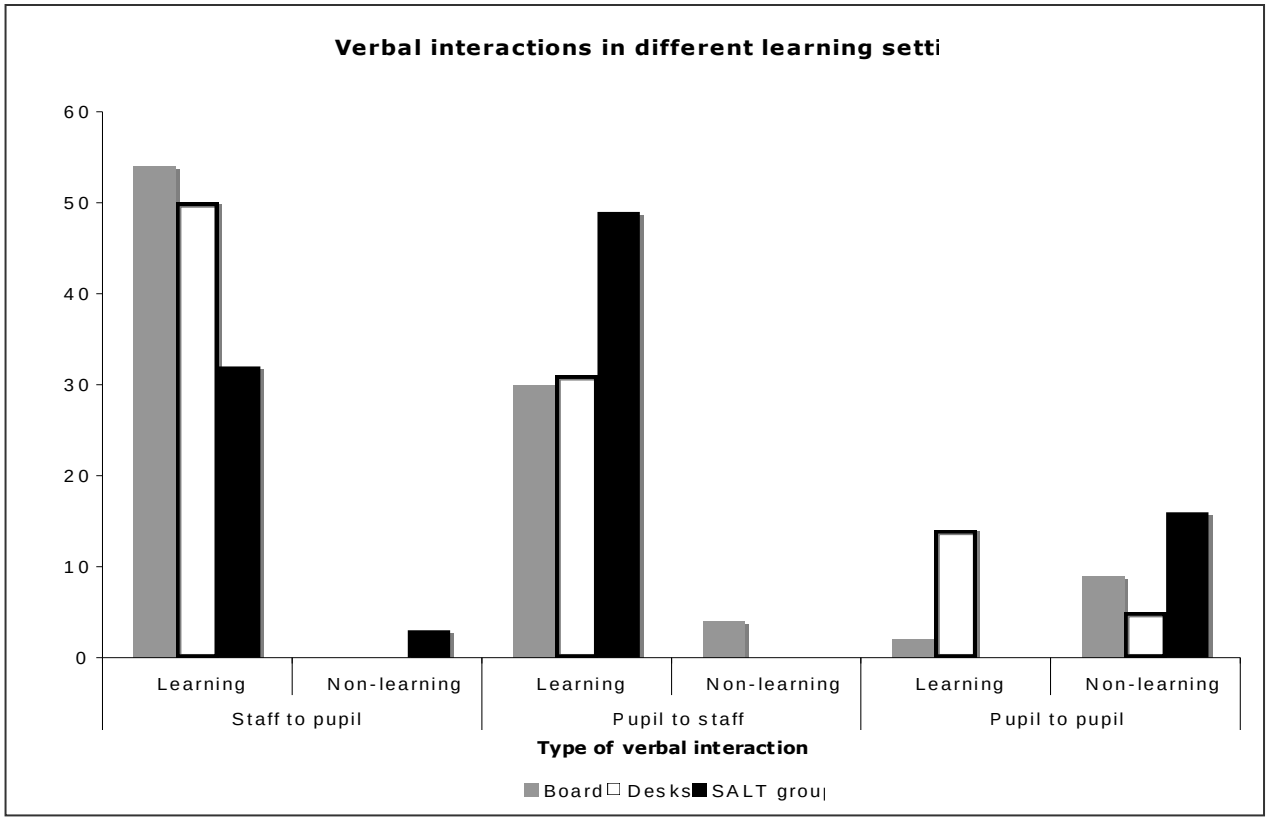

Figure 3: A graph showing percentages of verbal interactions involving pupils in different learning settings.

In the Unit class, while there was little difference in patterns of talking between staff and pupils when seated at desks or around the board, it did appear that there were differences in pupil-to-pupil interactions. Not only were there more pupil-to-pupil interactions, generally, when pupils were seated at desks, but more of these interactions were related to learning. Having pupils seated at desks, thus appeared to offer better opportunities for them to use and practise their language skills with their peers. It is notable, however, that pupil-to-pupil verbal interactions were relatively rare, constituting less than one-fifth of all interactions within each of the three settings.

2.3.5 Staff perceptions of the effectiveness of Unit provision

Following the observations I interviewed the CT using a semi-structured interview schedule, and the CT and two of the TAs attended a feedback meeting, where I gave information about the project's findings and the opportunity to discuss these. The semi-structured interview with the CT involved him rating his agreement with seven statements about the Unit on a ten-point scale (from 1 = complete disagreement, to 10 = complete agreement), and then being asked to explain his ratings. Numerical ratings are shown in Table 7, over.

	Statement	Rating
1.	*Pupils in the Unit have access to a good amount of support and/or resources.*	8
2.	*Effective and appropriate adjustments are made to allow pupils in the Unit to access the curriculum.*	7
3.	*Effective and appropriate adjustments are made to promote the speech, language and communication skills of children in the Unit.*	7
4.	*Effective and appropriate support is given to pupils in the Unit for other special educational needs.*	8
5.	*Pupils in the Unit make good progress in their learning.*	7
6	*The Unit is 'inclusive' and promotes/supports reintegration into mainstream effectively.*	8
7.	*Pupils in the Unit receive appropriate support for social and emotional development.*	8

Table 7: CT ratings of agreement with statements about the Unit. (1 = complete disagreement; 10 = complete agreement).

The CT's ratings show broad agreement with all of the statements, although for some of them (those that received a rating of 7) this agreement was more equivocal than for others. For statement (1) he explained that support was good due to the number and skills of staff in the Unit. For statements (2) and (5) the CT talked about the challenges of providing a curriculum that was both accessible and challenging for all of the pupils, given their different ages and the broad variation in their levels of attainment. The Unit comprised pupils from four year groups (Years 3-6), some of whom had attended or were expected to attend the Unit for four years. Consequently it was not possible for the pupils to follow established schemes of work (e.g. from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) as a class. The CT was in the process of developing schemes of work that would follow the National

Curriculum but over a four-year cycle which could be differentiated so that pupils could join them at any point along the four years. He did feel, however, that focusing on core subjects and life skills was more important for most of the pupils attending the Unit, saying: “it is not important to do, say, History or Geography as most or many of the pupils could not access it”.

With respect to statement (3) the CT mentioned the amount of support that pupils received, but also felt that he lacked a specialist knowledge of SLCN and consequently was less than certain that he was doing all that he could or should to support the specific SLCN of the Unit’s pupils. This was contrasted with statement (4) and statement (8) where the CT felt that, particularly in areas of promoting literacy and supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils, the Unit made good provision for pupils’ non-SLCN SEN. For statement (7) he explained his rating by referring to those pupils who were reintegrated into mainstream for some or all lessons. However when prompted to discuss other pupils, he responded that perhaps the rating of 8 was somewhat high, and felt that more could be done to reintegrate pupils to prepare them for progression to secondary education. Nonetheless, he maintained that this preparation should “not necessarily be into a mainstream class of 30 children, as most [of the Unit’s pupils] go on to special school”.

The feedback meeting with the CT and two of the Unit TAs involved me telling them about the findings from the observations. This included discussion of data shown here in Tables, 2, 3 and 5. They were presented with information about types of mediation that they could employ, in relation to the data about

the types of support that were observed in the class, and also information about strategies for promoting speech, language and communication skills (see Appendix 3 for presentation slides). There followed a discussion of what the strengths of the unit were and what were areas for development.

Within this discussion, a number of strengths were identified including the staff and support they give to pupils, the access to targeted support groups (e.g. SLT group), the supportive environment, small class sizes which allow all to participate, the good relationships between pupils and with staff, the reward system and high levels of praise. Regarding the support given by staff, there was some recognition that pupils might sometimes be ‘over-helped’ and not given sufficient opportunities to show what they could do independently. Against this there was also a view from one of the TAs that levels of support might appear high to an outsider, but staff knew what the pupils could and could not do and they offered support accordingly. Moreover it was suggested that they might have been helping more than was usual as they were aware that I was in the classroom.

In terms of areas for development, all of the staff shared the belief that there was a need for training in and greater use of augmentative communication systems, both in the Unit and throughout the mainstream school. They also identified a need for facilities for role play activities though which pupils could learn both practical and communication skills.

2.4 Discussion

2.4.1 Conclusions about the setting

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a Unit for pupils with SLCN. In particular it sought to address three broad questions: what were the needs of the pupils attending the unit; what was additional or specialist about the provision in the unit; and, what were staff perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the unit.

Regarding the first of these questions, two things were particularly notable. Firstly, SLCN appeared to be necessary but not sufficient for pupils to attend the unit. Indeed, none of the pupils has SLCN identified as their sole area of special educational need. This may be a function of genuine concurrence of needs, that the evidence mentioned above highlights, or may be a product of the Statutory Assessment procedure, whereby identification of a primary area of difficulty (speech, language and communication) leads to broader assessment and integration of other potential areas of difficulty, which raises the potential for otherwise innocuous or apparently “normal” behaviours and dispositions to be pathologised in a manner analogous to that which occurred to Rosenhan’s pseudo-patients in psychiatric settings in his study *On Being Sane in Insane Places* (Rosenhan, 1973). A further possibility is that some of the difficulties are iatrogenic, a product of the “treatment” (attending the Unit). This possibility is explored further below.

Moreover, regarding the nature of pupils' needs it is worth noting that there was great variation between pupils in terms of the types of needs that they were identified as having, with literacy and social interaction difficulties most common, but a total of thirteen areas of SEN or relevant diagnoses listed on the ten pupils' Statements. And within the area of SLCN too, there was a good deal of variation. All of the pupils had difficulties in areas of either language use or production (or both), and many had receptive difficulties also. Nonetheless this ostensible commonality masks great variety in terms of whether pupils encountered difficulties which are primarily physical (i.e. articulation of speech) or cognitive (i.e. syntax and language understanding) or related to the social dimensions of communication (i.e. pragmatics), or a combination of these. And again, concurrence of difficulties was the norm not the exception. Whatever the explanation(s) for these diversities of need it seems fair to say that the Unit is not simply an additional resource for children with SLCN *tout court*, but rather for children with SLCN and (identified as having) various additional areas of educational need also. The homogeneity of the group is defined by its heterogeneity.

In terms of what additional provision the Unit offered and what made it a specialist resource for pupils with SLCN, the most obvious difference between the Unit and a mainstream setting was the level of staffing. There were ten pupils attending the Unit and it was staffed by one teacher and three TAs. The school also employed a SLT who conducted assessments, advised on programmes, and ran withdrawal individual or group interventions for the pupils (and for some mainstream pupils too).

Observations that focused on staff behaviours and interactions with pupils indicated that pupils received high levels of adult support across different learning activities. In particular, when pupils were working at their desks one-third of them were observed to be receiving support at any given time. Indeed staff were seldom, if ever, observed to be not helping pupils and the seating arrangements within the class mitigated against this. It is open to question whether this level of support was needed or beneficial, and whether the support offered addressed the specific needs of the pupils.

As an observer it was difficult to assess how much pupils were learning. Some pupils completed activities with little or no support and without apparent difficulty, which suggested that they were doing tasks that were within their existing level of skill; others received so much support, sometimes to the extent of a TA completing the work for them, that it was difficult to conclude that they ended the lesson able to do what they couldn't at the start. Moreover, it appeared that there was a reluctance of staff to not help. One particular observation illustrates this. Pupils were given a handwriting exercise that involved copying particular words. All of the pupils appeared to understand the task and had the requisite skill to complete it. Nonetheless, within 120 seconds of the task being given six of the nine pupils had received some kind of support from staff. On another occasion all of the pupils at one table had just started a particular task, and all were engaged in it, until the CT came over and started a conversation with some of the children, and then, some minutes later said to one, "Come on J, you haven't got any [words] cut

out yet"! Sometimes staff appeared to be looking for pupils to "help" whether or not they actually needed it, and the positioning of staff, seated among the pupils, meant it was difficult to move away and watch pupils learn independently.

At worst, one might conclude that the level of support available in the Unit fostered dependency, both by pupils and by staff. When pupils were seated around as a group, the availability of support meant that tasks did not need to be explained in a way that everyone could understand, as those who didn't could have it re-explained later. Similarly the CT did not need to worry about pupils' concentration difficulties, and pupils did not need to make any additional effort to concentrate. The presence of staff meant that lessons did not need to be sufficiently paced or stimulating to maintain pupils' interest in order to reduce disruptive behaviour, as staff were on hand to keep individual pupils in order, and to re-explain things that pupils had not attended to earlier.

For pupils the availability of staff meant that as soon as they encountered challenge or difficulty, or even before, there would be someone to help, possibly reducing their capacity to be an independent learner. They did not need to check their work or solve problems themselves as someone would help to do this. On a number of occasions pupils were observed to employ a strategy of 'guess until correct' in their interactions with staff, identifying a number of possible answers to a question or problem and saying them until the TA told them they are right.

In this context it is worth considering some of the pupils' identified non-SLCN areas of SEN. Four pupils were said to have difficulties with concentration or attention, two with self-esteem or confidence, and one with independence and self-help skills. Arguably the Unit setting and the availability and nature of support may be factors which exacerbate rather than address these difficulties. There is a fine line between providing support which enables pupils with these kind of difficulties to access learning opportunities that would otherwise prove too challenging, and providing support which means that difficulties do not need to be addressed and new skills do not need to be learnt. The CT expressed the view that many of the pupils did not need support for integration into mainstream primary classes as they would be going to special schools for the secondary phase, and the CT and TAs all shared the view that many of the pupils could not cope in a mainstream class. To me it seemed that sometimes the level of support erred too much on the side of accommodating and thus entrenching difficulties and fostering dependence, and thus the support created or exacerbated difficulties that were not so serious before pupils were in the Unit. Similarly seven of the pupils were identified as encountering difficulties in respect of their interpersonal or social skills. While it is overly simplistic to suggest that such skills can simply be acquired by exposure to appropriate role models, it is nonetheless possible that educating children and young people with such difficulties in a group where poor social skills are the norm rather than the exception will deprive them of positive role models and lead to an erosion of expectations of adaptive social skills. Again, the Unit might be said to

accommodate and thereby entrench some difficulties, rather than address them.

To be sure there was much good support that was observed. Relating to SLCN specifically, both in the Unit class and in the SLT group observations based on the TILRS identified the use of a range of strategies to support pupils with SLCN. Perhaps unsurprisingly such strategies were employed more consistently within the SLT group than in the Unit class. Similarly pupils talked more, and took more of a lead in talking, in the SLT group.

Staff felt that the level of support and the experience of staff were strengths of the Unit. While the initial concerns of the CT initially focused on a perceived lack of specialist knowledge of SLCN and specific strategies for teaching pupils with SLCN, at the end of the project staff felt that the main areas for development concerned the curriculum, environment and resources. In this sense they could be said to have come to accept what Norwich and Lewis (2001; 2007) describe as a “unique differences position”. This holds that whilst there are both common and unique pedagogic needs to all children and young people, there are not group-specific (i.e. SLCN specific) pedagogic needs (Norwich & Lewis, 2001; Norwich & Lewis, 2007). Thus, while there were perceived to be areas where pupils could be supported better or differently (e.g. using augmentative communication, with role play facilities, encompassing a better differentiated curriculum), these were related to the individual needs of specific pupils that had been identified through experience of working with them rather than the needs of pupils with SLCN generally.

Indeed, this research has suggested that the perception of homogeneity among the group of pupils attending the Unit is illusory.

The general conclusion from the observations was that in the Unit pupils were able to access a lot of additional support from staff. Some of this support focused on their SLCN; some supported them with their learning more generally; some served a social function of reducing disruption or inappropriate behaviour; and some involved doing work for pupils, thereby impeding their learning. Certainly, there much good support to be observed, and it is important to note that the Unit appeared to be a place where pupils felt safe and happy. They worked well together and with staff and appeared to enjoy their time in school. These social benefits should not be overlooked. Nonetheless, one was left with a sense that some of the support being offered was not appropriately targeted and might even be counter-productive,

2.4.2 Reliability, validity and generalisation

With any research one must be always mindful of limitations, and question the reliability, validity and generalisation of its findings. With this research this is particularly true. The research was limited to one setting and one moment in time. As such it cannot be assumed to be representative of other similar settings, and cannot yield conclusions that can be generalised more broadly without much caution. Not only that, it was conducted by a TEP who worked with the setting and was familiar with the staff and some of the pupils. Its design was developed based on discussions with the staff and the researcher's own reflections more than it was based on theoretically-derived

hypotheses. Inevitably, therefore, biases exist which limit the reliability and validity of findings. The measures used and the approach to the research was determined by the researcher's perceptions of what the setting would find useful and acceptable, and what he perceived to be pertinent. (Limitations of specific measures have already been identified in the Method section).

In justifying the choice of methods and approaches to data collection in the Method section of this paper, I made reference to the pragmatist epistemological position outlined by Rorty (1985). I suggested that "solidarity", consensus and understanding were preferable ends to impartial objectivity. Nonetheless, solidarity in the Rortian sense still implies a certain level of detachment from the meaning of findings and their implications, whereas solidarity in everyday life encompasses values such as respect and is to be found in established and maintaining relationships. In this context it is relevant that I was someone who worked with the school and continues to do so on an ongoing basis, and the aim of the research was to engage with staff as a means to improving provision. In such a context one is inevitably mindful of the implications of the findings of a piece of research. Will they be understood? Will they cause offence? Will they damage established relationships?

2.4.3 Reflections on the process – the role of the "scientist-practitioner"

In the introduction of this paper I made reference to the "scientific attitude" (Robson, 2002) and to the tenets of the scientist-practitioner model of applied

psychology (Shapiro, 2002). There were a number of ways in which I could be said to have tried to be scientific in this study. The presentation of this paper follows conventions which imply a scientific position. Reporting the results in the third person gives the impression of objective detachment, the researcher standing back and peering into the world which he or she studies, whereas in fact I was part of that world, and part of the system of the school. This, and the structure of the report, also give the impression of a systematic, methodical approach, with research questions derived from an existing body of literature, leading to the adoption of particular methods and an impartial analysis of the data.

The reality was that the questions that were addressed in this study emerged from discussions that I had with staff. Through these discussions my understanding was that the questions that the staff wanted answering were simply ‘are we doing the right thing?’ and ‘what could we do better?’. These were questions that I took and interpreted in a way that they made sense to me, and I felt able to answer through the research project. In particular I felt it was important to identify what the needs of the pupils were and what the nature of the support that they were receiving was. This was information that I could find, both from existing sources of data (e.g. statements, IEPs) and also through observations. I am not sure that the questions that I asked were not determined by the data that I believed were available, rather than by the needs of the staff commissioning the research.

One of the tenets of the scientist-practitioner model is that scientific findings will be integrated to inform decisions about practice; in this case whether or not it was appropriate. That sounds relatively straightforward, but the situation that I found myself in was one where, having conducted literature searches, I was able to find extensive literature about provision for pupils with SLCN on a macro level, but where there was little that described what good practice looked like when observing pupils in a class and their interactions with staff. That is, there is much research about where pupils with SLCN should be educated, how decisions should be made, how professionals should deliver services and so on, but a paucity of research about what constitutes effective intervention in a school setting. On reflection this is probably to be expected; it is difficult to compare different levels or types or support or interaction in a class situation in a controlled way that would yield meaningful data.

Fox (2002) distinguishes between research and audit, where the former is concerned with discovering new information usually about the effectiveness of intervention or provision, and the latter is concerned with evaluating which pre-existing standards have been achieved. Using this distinction my study would be described as audit rather than research. Indeed Fox (2002) reports that audit is much more common than research in the literature on education of children with SEN. The problem that this poses for the EP as a scientist-practitioner is how it is possible for scientific findings to be used to make judgements about intervention, if such findings do not exist. In the context of this study I was left to rely on a more general understanding of the psychology of learning and education. Again this is informed by the ‘unique differences’

position that argues that effective provision for pupils with SEN is not about having pedagogies or interventions tailored to specific types of need, but to having a detailed understanding of children's individual needs and the needs of all children, and using this to inform decisions about provision.

Thus the foci of investigation in this study were informed by personal, professional judgements, which were based on my general understanding of psychology and my own values. Having got to know the setting I had formed a number of judgements about it before and while conducting this study. For example, I believed that pupils in the unit were not sufficiently included in the mainstream school; were not (in many cases) expected to make an appropriate amount of progress in their learning or given sufficient levels of challenge; and were given too much support on which they became reliant. But I also felt that the staff working in the Unit were kind, skilled and hard-working people; that the Unit provided a safe and nurturing environment for it pupils; and that there were features of effective provision for pupils' needs.

I might conclude that applying the veneer of science to my study enabled me to confirm my preconceptions and yet present them in a way that appeared dispassionate and impartial. But I might alternatively conclude that this appearance of scientific respectability was not simply an expedient, or worse adopted in bad faith, but was a means of subjecting my assumptions to scrutiny, of attempting to remove them from subjectivity, and of grounding them in empirical data in order to reach an understanding that could be shared and built upon. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in between. A

tension in the scientist-practitioner role is that of adopting the position of the ‘expert’ practitioner with that of the sceptical scientist: claiming to know and not know at the same time. With the challenges and imperfections of ‘real world’ settings where knowledge is incomplete, questions are poorly formed, and answers often illusory, I chose to perform a particular role; one that fits with my beliefs and assumptions (and my beliefs and assumptions about others’ beliefs and assumptions) about what scientist-practitioners and EPs should do. Understanding this role is surely something of significance in becoming an effective scientist-practitioner.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Support observation schedule

Date: **Time/activity:**

At point of observation record with a ✓ or a ✗ if pupil is on-task (OT), receiving support (Sup – note type of support), and/or concentrating (Con)

Pupil 1			**Pupil 2**			**Pupil 3**			**Pupil 4**			**Pupil 5**			**Pupil 6**		
OT	**Sup**	**Con**	**OT**	**Sup**	**Con**	**OT**	**Sup**	**Con**	**OT**	**Sup**	**Con**	**OT**	**Sup**	**Con**	**OT**	**Sup**	**Con**
Pupil 7			**Pupil 8**			**Pupil 9**			**Pupil 10**			**Pupil 11**			**Pupil 12**		
OT	**Sup**	**Con**	**OT**	**Sup**	**Con**	**OT**	**Sup**	**Con**	**OT**	**Sup**	**Con**	**OT**	**Sup**	**Con**	**OT**	**Sup**	**Con**

Plan:

Comments:

Appendix 2 : Language Use observation schedule

During observation period record each incident of talking in the relevant column. Record which pupil is talking using a number code from the class plan.

	Teacher to pupil		Pupil to teacher		Pupil to pupil	
Time	**Learning**	**Non-learning**	**Learning**	**Non-learning**	**Learning**	**Non-learning**

Plan: Comments:

Appendix 3: Slides from presentation to Unit staff

[School] KS2 Speech & Language Unit

Objectives:
- Give feedback from observations in the Unit
- Discuss ways of supporting children in the unit
- Identify strengths and areas for development

What's 'special' about the Unit?

- The children
- The staff
- The environment
- The curriculum
- The ethos/ atmosphere

The children

- Speech, language & communication needs

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Expressive - Articulation			x	x	x	x	x		x	x	7
Expressive - Syntax	x		x		x	x		x		x	6
Expressive - Vocabulary			x	x							2
Pragmatic		x						x			2
Receptive	x		x	x	x				x		5
Reluctance in language use			x						x		2

The children

- Other special educational needs

Statement identified needs/ difficulties	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Language and communication	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	10
Literacy	X		X	X		X	X	X		X	7
Social interaction / interpersonal skills	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	7
Numeracy	X		X	X				X		X	5
Concentration / attention	X				X			X		X	4
Autism Spectrum Disorder		X						X		X	3
Articulatory Dyspraxia			X	X							2
BESD		X								X	2
Gross motor	X		X								2
Self-esteem / confidence						X	X				2
Cognitive skills (general)									X		1
Fine motor	X										1
Oppositional Defiant Disorder										X	1
Self-help / independence	X										1

What I observed: support

Observations of pupil activity		
	At desks	Around board
On task	94%	81%
Receiving support	33%	11%
Concentrating	97%	73%
What does support look like?	Encouraging/keeping on task, modelling task, checking, questioning, prompting, modelling word sounds, gluing, good sitting.	Prompting good sitting, questioning, guiding/scaffolding, clarifying meaning, prompting.

What I observed: talking

Observations of 1:1 verbal interactions						
	Staff-> Pupil		Pupil -> Staff		Pupil -> Pupil	
	Learning	Non	Learning	Non	Learning	Non
SLT group	32%	3%	49%	0%	0%	16%
Around board	54%	0%	30%	4%	2%	9%
At desks	50%	0%	31%	0%	14%	5%

Why support?

- To enable children to access learning opportunities (differentiation)
- To develop skills in areas where children have particular needs

Where do we mediate?

- Three stages of a learning task:
  - **Input** – receiving, gathering, organising information.
  - **Elaboration** – using information, understanding problems, planning and solving.
  - **Output** – expressing the solution

How do we mediate?

Different levels:

1. **Hand over hand**
2. **Demonstration** – modelling, imitation
3. **Instruction** – give organisation & meaning
4. **Questioning/ prompting** – draw attention to characteristics & defining features
5. **Refer back** to previous experiences
6. **Emphasise** rule formulation
7. **Acknowledge** spontaneous use of strategies
8. **Independent** problem solving

Two principles

1. Use formative assessment:
   TEST – MEDIATE – RETEST
2. Start off with little/ no mediation and increase until you find the right amount.

Good practice for children with speech & language needs (1)

- Integrate language and curriculum learning
  - Know and work to SALT targets in class
  - Select vocabulary relevant to curriculum
  - Repeat vocabulary in different contexts
  - Teach in an explicit, structured way
  - Teach before, after and during learning experiences
  - Encourage metacognition (thinking about thinking) – ask "how did you do that?"

Good practice for children with speech & language needs (2)

- Promote communication:
  - Wait & listen
  - Follow child's lead
  - Join in and play
  - Face-to-face
  - Variety of questions
  - Turn-taking
  - Imitate (i.e. demonstrate)
  - Variety of labels
  - Expand
  - Extend

What are current strengths

What might need development? How?

3. Ethical issues for trainee educational psychologists and the grounds for a professional ethics

> *Ethics in educational psychology is very much an embryonic form of enquiry.* (Franey, 2002, p. 47)

The above comment reflects a concern expressed by some authors (e.g. Lindsay, 2008) that ethical issues have not been given sufficient attention within Educational Psychologists' (EPs) practice and their decision-making. For Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs), alongside the demands of acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for joining a new profession, there is a need to understand, develop and apply an awareness of ethical requirements and associated challenges or dilemmas. This paper concerns ethical issues experienced by TEPs. I begin by discussing the role of ethics within a profession, and consider reasons why there may be differences between professional ethics and everyday morality. Ethical codes and guidelines pertaining to the work of EPs are discussed, as are ethical issues identified by TEPs from their own practice in training. I conclude by suggesting that understanding the grounds for EPs' professional ethics can help to guide decision-making in situations where ethical dilemmas are identified.

3.1 The role of ethics in a profession

It is suggested that one of the key features of a *profession*, as opposed to an occupation or trade or job, is that it is regulated or constrained by a distinctive

set of ethical values or principles (Carr, 1999; 2000; Francis, 2002). This is not to say that ethical concerns do not apply in other spheres, but rather that "what distinguishes the professions from such trades and services is the *centrality* of such ethical norms and principles" (Carr, 2000, p.249, emphasis retained). Someone who, for their own financial gain, exploits a client's vulnerability, to proffer goods or services that the client does not need may be regarded as a good salesperson, but not as a good doctor (even if the goods and services cause no harm and the individual is effective at treating illness). It is worth noting that professional ethics can give licence as well as imposing obligations: a doctor may ask their patient to remove their clothes when it would be unethical for others to do the same (Freedman, 1978). The fact that it is morally acceptable for doctors to do this, but it would be unethical if the request were made by, say, a lawyer, illustrates the fact that not only can professional ethics be distinct from non-professional ethics, but also that different ethical standards apply in different professions.

The philosopher Alan Gewirth refers to the distinction between professional ethics and non-professional morality as the *separatist thesis*: "according to this thesis, professionals, by virtue of their expertise and consequent roles, have rights and duties that are unique to themselves and that may hence be not only different from, but even contrary to, the rights and duties that are found in other segments of morality" (Gewirth, 1986, p. 282). It appears then that professional ethics are grounded in the fact that professionals have specific expertise, which makes them able to achieve certain desirable ends (the provision of valued services), and the pursuit of these ends justifies

deviations from everyday morality. It could be suggested, however, that good character (i.e. benevolence and wisdom) and requisite expertise are sufficient for a professional to behave morally, and that there is not the need for professions to adopt separate ethical codes. Against such a position, it is argued that what constitutes good character is a philosophical question (Gillon, 1985), and as such there is a need for guidance by a set of professional standards. Moreover Davis (1991) makes the point that a professional ethical code is a convention between professionals that enables them to pursue a common ideal whilst protected from certain pressures of competition. Professionals can thus be confident that fellow professionals will not engage in corner-cutting practices which undermine each others' purposes or the aims of the profession more generally by bringing it into disrepute. This does not mean that a professional ethical code is merely self-serving, as a mark of a profession is that it is organised to help its members serve others (Davis, 1991). Thus professional ethics enable professionals to achieve ends that are publicly valuable. The justification for different moral considerations applying to individuals practising a profession rests on four key ideas:

- that professionals have expertise that enable them to achieve certain ends;
- that professionals are engaged in an activity of service to others;
- that professionals could not serve others as effectively without some deviations from ordinary moral considerations (both in terms of additional duties and addition rights); and

- that professionals could not serve others as effectively if fellow professionals did not follow the same standards as themselves.

The importance of this last point is illustrated in an example described by Davis (1991) involving an engineer working on a space shuttle. The engineer had recommended against launching the shuttle on a particular day, because he judged that the weather was too cold for a safe launch. The space centre disagreed with his reasoning, and moreover there was political pressure for the launch to go ahead. The company that the engineer worked for wanted the launch to go ahead too, because of the commercial implications of frustrating the space centre's wishes. Thus the vice-president of the company urged the engineer to alter his advice, asking him to think like a manager rather than like an engineer. This the engineer did, and he changed his advice, and the Challenger shuttle disaster occurred. Davis argues that the engineer "should, *as an engineer*, have responded, 'Sorry if you wanted a vice-president who would think like a manager *rather than* an engineer, you should not have hired an engineer'" (1991, p. 155, emphasis retained). Note that he does not say the engineer should have replied, "Well you should have hired a different engineer". Davis' point was that because of his professional status, the engineer had a duty to put certain concerns (safety) above others (his company's commercial interests), because that is an expectation of all engineers. If some do it and others don't then it not only damages public safety, but it also damages the profession of engineering, and the publicly beneficial ends that engineers seek to achieve, through the resultant loss of

confidence caused by engineers who are willing to do their employers' bidding even when it puts safety at risk.

3.2 Ethical codes and ethical frameworks

In the foregoing section it was suggested that one of the features of a profession was that its members are bound by ethical considerations that are in some way particular to themselves and distinct from everyday ethics. The justification for such ethical considerations rests on professionals possessing expertise, providing a socially useful service, and providing a service from which greater public benefit accrues if there is some deviation from normal ethical considerations and if all members of the profession limit their behaviour in a similar manner. Given that professional ethics appear to justify deviations from normal ethics, it is important to have clarity regarding how the former are distinct from the latter, in order that professional ethics should not simply be seen as a principle of "anything goes" or as solely dependent on the professional's good character and judgement. Similarly, such clarity is needed in order for professionals collectively to agree ways of regulating and limiting their behaviour in a publicly beneficial manner. It is for such reasons that professions devise and adopt formal ethical codes and sets of principles.

For psychologists generally, and for applied psychologists such as EPs in particular, a number of ethical codes exist. Different national psychological associations, such as the British Psychological Society (BPS) (British

Psychological Society, 2009) and the American Psychological Association (APA) (American Psychological Association, 2002), each have their own sets of principles, as do organisations for particular professional sub-disciplines such as counselling and psychotherapy (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, 2009) and educational psychology (Division of Educational and Child Psychology, 2002). It is not the place here for an extended examination of the similarities and differences of different formal codes, suffice to say that the extent of agreement and overlap that exists between them is striking. In part this is because no one framework is designed in isolation; the authors will look to existing codes for guidance. Moreover, as (Francis, 2002) puts it: “one of the prime functions of codes of ethics is to capture past experience, to find the underlying principle, and to express it in such a way as to guide future action” (p. 14). In this way the development of an ethical code is analogous to the development of a scientific theory.

Of course, codes will differ in terms of to whom they are intended to apply, and this will in turn affect the level of generality or specificity of the ethical requirements in the code. Thus there are nested ethical codes. The International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS) has adopted a “Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles” as a common moral framework for all psychologists worldwide (International Union of Psychological Science, 2008), and the European Federation of Professional Psychologists Associations (EFPPA) has a “meta-code” of ethics (European Federation of Professional Psychologists Associations, 1995). These are expressed at the highest level of generality; identifying overarching principles that can apply to

psychologists engaged in research and applied practice across the range of sub-disciplines. In the UK, the BPS has a Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2009) for all chartered psychologists, with a similar focus to the IUPsyS and EFPPA frameworks, as well as Generic Professional Practice Guidelines for all applied disciplines (British Psychological Society, 2008), and specific Professional Practice Guidelines for EPs (Division of Educational and Child Psychology, 2002).

Table 1, over, summarises the key principles for six ethical codes. The three main codes which apply to UK EPs are the BPS Code of Conduct, the DECP Professional Practice Guidelines and the Health Professions Council (HPC) Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (Health Professions Council, 2008). Strictly speaking, the first two of these only apply to EPs who are members of the BPS/ DECP, but given the significance of these bodies within educational psychology they have strong moral force for all UK psychologists, and set standards to which EPs are trained; they represent a strong consensus view. Since 1 August 2009, EPs have been regulated by the HPC and are thus expected to follow its standards. While the HPC framework is written more prescriptively, identifying specific duties, as opposed to principles to guide practice, in practical terms there remain great similarities between the HPC standards and other codes, although the injunction to deal safely and effectively with infection risks is evidence of the origin of the HPC standards within medical practice, and something that other frameworks, not unsurprisingly, overlook.

BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2009)	APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (APA, 2002)	Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists (IUPsyS, 2008)	DECP Professional Practice Guidelines (DECP, 2002)	BACP Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP, 2009)	HPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics - Your duties as a registrant (HPC, 2008)
Respect – respect for diversity; confidentiality; informed consent; client self-determination. **Competence** – decision-making; acknowledging limits of competence; impairment. **Responsibility** –avoiding harm; responsibilities to research participants; continuity of care; avoiding misconduct. **Integrity** – honesty accuracy; conflicts of interest; personal boundaries; addressing others' misconduct.	**Beneficence and non-maleficence** –benefiting others; avoiding/ minimising harm; avoiding misuse of influence. **Fidelity and responsibility** – establishing/ maintaining trust; responsibilities towards society/ the profession; addressing misconduct. **Integrity** – accuracy; honesty; avoiding deception and misrepresentation. **Justice** – equality of access; respect for diversity; acknowledging limits of competence.	**Respect for the dignity of persons and peoples** – informed consent; respect for privacy; respect for diversity; confidentiality. **Competent caring for the well-being of persons and peoples** – promoting wellbeing; avoiding and mitigating harm; competence. **Integrity** – recognising and managing potential biases; honest and open communication; disclosure of information; avoiding exploitation; conflicts of interest. **Professional and scientific responsibilities to society** – training; promoting and developing ethical ideals; promotion of psychological knowledge; use of psychology for the wellbeing of society.	**Relationships between client and professional power issues** – informed consent; confidentiality; open communication. **Professional behaviour** – avoiding misconduct and disrepute; honesty and openness; competence; professional boundaries. **Professional practice** – fair and accurate assessment and interpretation; avoiding intrusive/ irreversible interventions; evaluating interventions; responsibilities within research. **Promoting good professional conduct and training** – appropriate training, supervision and support; management of other people.	**Fidelity** – honouring trust; confidentiality. **Autonomy** – informed consent; protecting privacy; respecting the client's right to self-governance; openness and clarity in contracting. **Beneficence** – promoting well-being; working within competence; monitoring of practice and outcomes; engagement in supervision. **Non-maleficence** – avoiding and mitigating harm; avoiding exploitation; incompetence and malpractice; addressing misconduct. **Justice** – respecting rights and dignity; fair and impartial treatment; conflicts between legal and ethical obligations; respecting diversity; fair provision of services. **Self-respect** – using supervision; accessing support; engaging in professional development.	• act in the best interests of service users; • respect confidentiality; • keep high standards of personal conduct; • disclose relevant information about conduct and competence; • keep knowledge/ skills up-to-date; • act within limits of knowledge, skills and experience; • communicate properly with service users/ other practitioners; • effectively supervise tasks delegated to others; • obtain informed consent; • keep accurate records; • deal fairly and safely with risks of infection; • limit work/ stop practising if performance/ judgement is affected by health; • behave with honesty and integrity, and avoid damaging public confidence; • ensure advertising is accurate.

Table 1: Summary of ethical codes and frameworks.

3.2.1 What is the role of a code of ethical conduct?

It might be thought that the abundance of ethical codes and the generally high level of consensus between them means that there is little else to be said about the matter of ethics in educational psychology practice – an ethical practitioner is one who applies and upholds the relevant code and that's that. Would that it were so simple! It is acknowledged in ethical codes that they are neither comprehensive in scope, nor exhaustive in application. As the BPS (2009) Code of Conduct emphasises:

> This code uses the word 'should' rather than the more coercive 'must' or the permissive 'asks' to reinforce the advisory nature of the code as a framework in support of professional judgement. Any scrutiny of this process will consider situations in terms of decisions made, the outcomes and the process involved. *Thinking is not optional*. The code has been written primarily to guide not to punish. (BPS, 2009, p.5, my emphasis)

The DECP (2002) Professional Practice Guidelines state that:

> The guidelines offer general principles and their implementation is intended to assist and clarify the judgements of individual practitioners subject to their particular circumstances. Actions and practices which are contrary to the recommendations warrant serious and careful consideration in consultation with supervisors. (p.3)

Some authors suggest that there is not an expectation of complete adherence to an ethical code because such codes are aspirational rather than obligatory (Webster and Bond, 2002). On the contrary, a number of professional codes do suggest that they set out minimum standards of acceptable practice (e.g. DECP, 2002; HPC, 2008). Nevertheless, in order to articulate general

principles and concerns that can be applied broadly, codes and guidelines lack specificity and use sufficiently ambiguous language (Carrington et al., 2002) to render them inadequate as a straightforward means for determining what to do in a given situation. As Pritchard (1999) puts it: “those who attempt to rely on a professional code of ethics as an algorithm for deciding what to do are likely to be extremely disappointed” (p. 400).

Opposing the adoption by the APA of its first ethical code Hall (1952) argued, “I think that it plays into the hands of crooks on the one hand and … it makes those who are covered by the code feel smug and sanctimonious on the other hand” (p. 430). While Hall did not win the argument, his point about the danger of professionals feeling smug and sanctimonious while not exercising caution or judgement remains a relevant concern. The BPS Code is quite clear that “no code can replace the need for psychologists to use their professional and ethical judgement” (2009, p. 4).

If judgement is important and an ethical code cannot determine specifically how a professional should act, why have an ethical code at all? Hall suggested that “Decent, mature people do not need to told how to conduct themselves” (1952, p.430). Along similar lines, Gillon (1985) poses the question: “Conscience, good character, integrity, and to hell with philosophical medical ethics?”. Here, though, the question is rhetorical, and Gillon answers with a resounding “no”. To be sure conscience, decency and maturity are all important (or even necessary) for maintaining ethical behaviour, but neither

individually nor collectively are they sufficient to guide professional ethical behaviour.

Pritchard (1999) considers professional ethics from a Kohlbergian perspective. Kohlberg (1981) distinguishes three levels of moral reasoning: (1) pre-conventional (personal interest) , (2) conventional (maintaining norms), and (3) post-conventional (principled). The expectation that members of a profession follow a code of ethics is an expectation that they follow a convention. However Pritchard argues that it is not enough for a professional to follow an ethical code *simply because* it is a convention (i.e. to apply level 2 reasoning). Conventions are apt to change and should not be accepted uncritically, and there is a need for recognition, not just of the importance of rules and standards, but also of reciprocity, moral ideals and moral judgement. “From the standpoint of professional ethics, it should be evident that the postconventional schema is preferable to the maintaining norms schema” (Pritchard, 1999, p. 399). A similar point is made in the BACP Ethical Framework with regard to personal moral qualities. A number of qualities, such as respect, empathy and humility, are identified in the framework. It states that “the practitioner’s moral qualities are of the utmost importance to clients”, but “it is inappropriate to prescribe that all practitioners possess these qualities, since it is fundamental that these personal qualities are deeply rooted in the person concerned and developed out of personal commitment rather than the requirement of an external authority” (BACP, 2009, p. 4).

It is important to note that neither Pritchard nor BACP are saying that there is not a need for an accepted and agreed code of ethics. Rather they are suggesting that adherence to the code *because it is the code* is not enough. Professionals should see the value of the principles within an ethical code independently of the code's existence. They should also accept that a code is not fixed, but is open to question and revision, and that it is thus important to maintain a critical attitude towards it. And a code cannot cover all eventualities, nor can it solve all problems such as when a professional's responsibilities within the code appear to conflict. So there will be the need for judgements in uncertain situations to be based on values and principles with a stronger force than the code, and a higher level of abstraction. An ethical code is no substitute for personal morality.

Still the question remains of why a code is needed at all, if the personal moral qualities of the professional are so important. There are two main reasons, which have been mentioned thus far, and which it is worth reiterating to clarify why an ethical code is important. Firstly, as Francis (2002) argues, an ethical code offers a way of reflecting on a profession's past experience to guide future actions. Each professional is unlikely to anticipate all potential ethical issues anew. An ethical code represents a form of accumulated wisdom, which is useful even if one possesses the most developed moral qualities and skills of moral reasoning. Secondly, as mentioned previously, part of the justification for the separatist thesis is that, for a profession to be genuinely publicly useful, it is necessary that there is public trust that members of the profession will use the powers afforded to them appropriately. Without such

trust the public would not afford professionals the power and licence that they do, but without that power and licence, the profession would not be able to provide (such a) publicly useful service. A formal ethical code is a way of establishing this trust; it represents an agreement between a profession and the wider public: “Professional ethics should express the moral bond linking the professions, the individuals they serve, and society as a whole” (Jennings et al., 1987, p. 3). Thus rather than viewing it as a risk management strategy (Francis, 1999), a code of professional ethics for EPs is a way of making explicit their commitment to clients, wider society and their profession, and a means for EPs to base their practice on principles developed from the experiences of their peers and forebears.

3.2.2 Principles and values beyond the code

It has been argued that ethical practice means more than simple adherence to a professional code of ethics. This is because a code is meant to be a guide, a way of highlighting concerns that are important, rather than a way of passing judgements or settling disputes. Arguably, for EPs there are ethical principles and considerations that are not identified (explicitly) within codes of ethics, but are nevertheless outwith the realms of everyday morality, such that it is more appropriate to view them as forming part of an EP’s professional ethics.

The DECP framework for psychological assessment and intervention is show in Figure 1. Here assessment and intervention are represented as occurring

within a context not just of ethics, but also equality of opportunity, politics and values. In one way or another these are all moral considerations. Webster and Bond (2002) suggest that there are a number of sources for a professional ethic in addition to professional codes, including values and principles, EPs' therapeutic orientation, and the law.

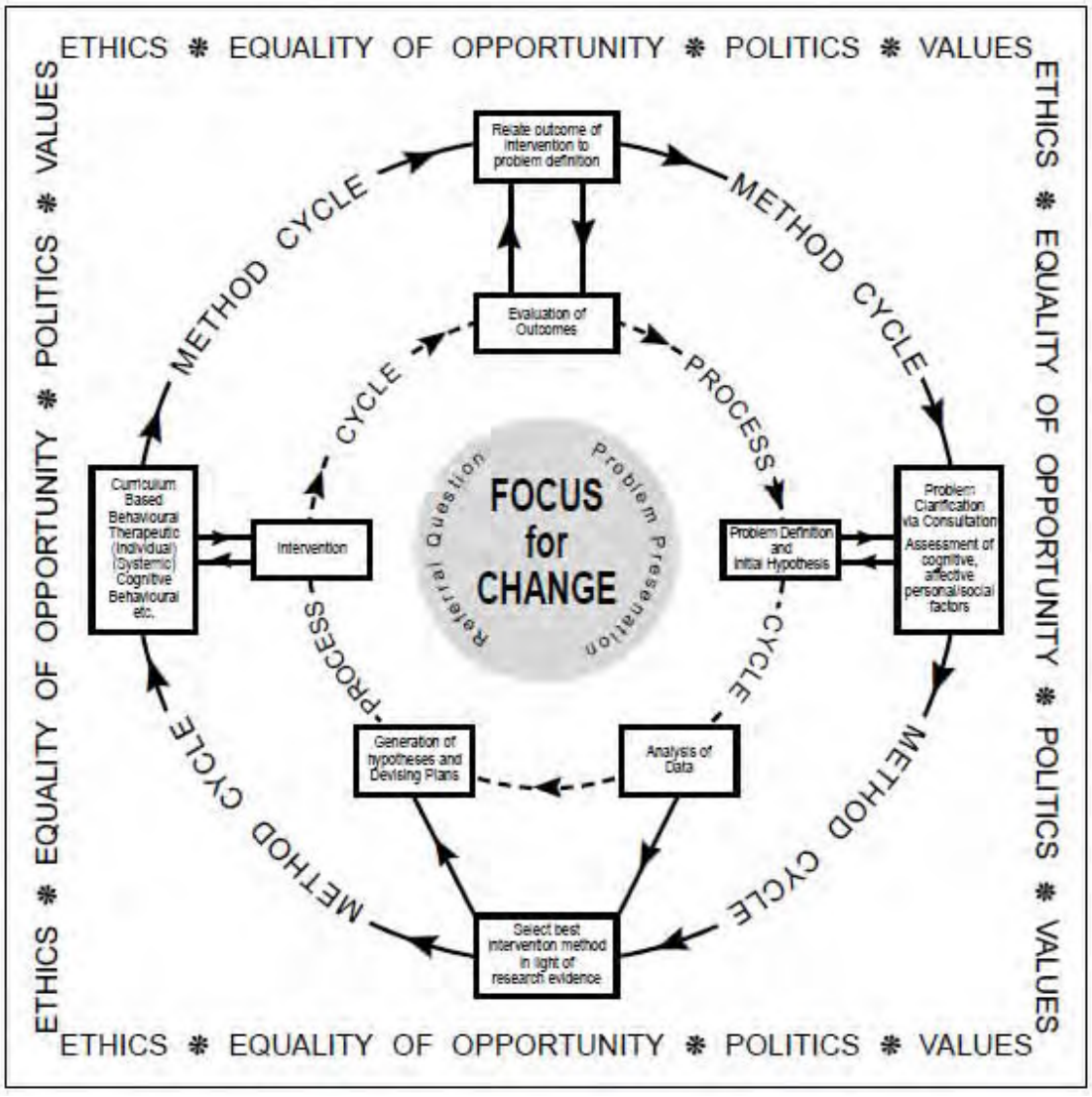

Figure 1: DECP Framework for psychological assessment and intervention (from DECP, 2002, p. 27)

It is argued that one such ethical concern for EPs, aside from those identified within professional codes, regards inclusive education. Lindsay (2008) identifies inclusive education as a policy agenda that is grounded in ethical considerations. Inclusion is said to offer a means of upholding children's rights to "a normal educational and the opportunities to be with typically developing peers" (p. 53), and these rights are prioritised over and above other rights (e.g. in relation to parental choice) and considerations of practical effectiveness. Certainly, to me, as someone acquainting myself with the culture of educational psychology through professional training, pro-inclusion norms appear to be both strong and expected. Candidates for jobs and training positions are often asked about their understanding of and attitudes towards inclusion, and it is discussed at length within professional training as well as by more experienced EPs. Were an EP perceived to be overly of critical of, or anti inclusion they would be seen as violating accepted normative standards within their profession, even if they behaved in accordance to their code of professional ethics. For a non-EP (and certainly a non-education professional) this is not the case, and there appears to be less consensus, both about whether or not inclusion is a good thing, and also about whether the goodness or otherwise of inclusion is a moral or simply practical issue.

3.3 Ethical issues in practice

The professional training for EPs in England involves three discrete phases. First a prospective EP must have an undergraduate degree in Psychology or

a related degree conferring Graduate Basis for Registration with the BPS. Then they must gain significant, relevant experience of working with children and young people. Finally prospective EPs undertake a professional training course, a Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology, which involves three years of combined university study, research and professional practice experience within Local Authority (LA) Educational Psychology Services (EPSs).

As a Trainee EP (TEP) I participated, with other TEPs from the University of Birmingham, in an exchange-based learning activity involving a group discussion about ethics in practice. The participants in the activity were ten TEPs. All were at the end of their second year of professional training, and had thus completed two fieldwork placements in different LAs during their first year of study, as well as ten months' working, approximately three days per week, as a TEP within a LA EPS. Seven of the ten TEPs were employed within the West Midlands Government Office Region, with one TEP in each of the South East, North West, and Yorkshire and Humberside regions. Four worked for city council EPSs, four for metropolitan borough councils, and two for county council services.

The discussion activity was organised by members of the tutor team at University of Birmingham, but it was facilitated by TEPs themselves. Prior to the discussion TEPs were asked to identify ethical challenges, dilemmas or issues that we had encountered during our experiences on professional practice placements with Local Authority (LA) Educational Psychology

Services (EPSs). No pre-determined structure was used for the discussion and there was not an identified discussion facilitator or chairperson. During the discussion one TEP (not myself) took notes to provide to the participants and tutor team as a record of the discussion and its key points. All of the participants arrived at the debate having identified some aspects of their practice, or of practices that they had observed, that they felt were either unethical or presented ethical challenges. In the absence of an agreed or formalised structure for the debate one emerged which involved a trainee identifying and explaining a particular issue and others seeking to clarify, compare with their own experiences and then draw out the pertinent ethical dimensions, often making reference to professional ethical standards such as the BPS Code and the DECP Guidelines. It is important to note that, on the whole, participants did not seek to determine and agree whether particular practice were ethical or unethical, or to seek consensus about how a particular dilemma should be resolved; we were not trying to agree a code. Rather we were seeking to reflect on what we perceived to be the ethical dimensions of EP practice.

The discussion lasted for about an hour and was wide-ranging, focusing on a variety of issues that TEPs felt had an ethical dimension, and felt uncertain about the right course of action. Through the discussion a number of areas or dimensions of EP practice were highlighted that were a source of concern to TEPs. The group identified and agreed four broad areas of professional practice where ethical challenges were experienced. These were “systemic constraints” (i.e. the impact of local and national policies and processes on EP

service provision), the “professional role” (issues relating to expertise and accountability), the “voice of the child” (challenges to respecting service recipients’ autonomy and dignity), and “schools” (conflicts and challenges arising from EP services being provided largely through schools, with distinctive and occasionally conflicting priorities). The note-taker’s summary of discussion points is included as Appendix 1.

Following the discussion I sought to analyse it, using the agreed notes as well as my own notes and recollections, to try to identify significant themes and core areas of practice which we perceived as presenting significant ethical challenges. The data for this analysis were “ethical issues” that were identified by TEPs rather than verbatim comments *per se*. An ethical issue for the purpose of this analysis was one where a number of TEPs (i.e. more than one) reported perceiving a conflict between particular practices and ethical standards in terms of either professional ethical codes, or personal morality. It is important to note that this definition and the discussion allowed for two different types of ethical issue. Some issues could be described as dilemmas insofar as TEPs identified conflicting ethical standards and thus were in a position of trying to balance these competing ethical demands. Other issues did not have the characteristic of highlighting conflicting ethical demands, but rather were based on the perception of a conflict between identified ethical standards and (real or perceived) practical imperatives, such as the norms of the organisations within which TEPs worked, expectations of people that TEPs worked with, and practical constraints such as those on time and resources. While this latter type of issue is not an ethical dilemma insofar as

there is little ambiguity about what is the appropriate thing to do from an ethical standpoint, it nonetheless poses an ethical challenge insofar as it involves TEPs experiencing pressure (real or perceived) to act in ways that may deviate from ethical standards, and thus where an awareness of and engagement with an ethical perspective is necessary to rebuff such pressures.

This analysis was inductive rather that deductive, insofar as there was no pre-existing theoretical framework from which to categorise or analyse issues. To be sure, previous research, such as a similar focus group study by Fox and Rendall (2002) focusing on ethical issues for EPs undertaking research, has identified a number of areas in which ethical conflicts and challenges are experienced. Also, professional ethical frameworks, such as the BPS Code and the DECP Guidleines, could offer a theoretical structure from which to analyse responses. But the purpose of the present exercise was to explore TEPs' perceptions rather than see whether or not the cohered with some pre-existing structure. Hence an inductive approach was appropriate (Robson, 2002).

Thematic analysis offers the potential to undertake qualitative analysis in such an inductive manner (Braun & Clark, 2006; Coolican, 1999). This involves the researcher familiarising themselves with the data set and then categorising data according to shared characteristics, and finally identifying specific themes that provide information relevant to the specific research purposes (Braun & Clark, 2006).

When categorising data it is important that categories should be exhaustive and mutually exclusive (Robson, 2002). Seven categories were identified for the issues discussed by TEPs. These were: terms of engagement; sharing information; maintaining relationships; prioritisation of need; the role of EPs/TEPs as “gatekeepers” to additional resources; facilitating voluntary participation; and, doing good and avoiding harm. Table 2, over, shows the ethical issues identified by TEPs, organised by category and arranged by theme.

In terms of identifying themes based upon the categorised responses, the “keyness” of a theme is not necessarily determined by quantitative factors such as how often it occurs, but rather by whether it describes or reveals something important in relation to the research purposes (Braun & Clark, 2006). Furthermore, themes should meet the joint criteria of internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton, 1990). It was evident from the categorised responses that TEPs perceived ethical conflicts and challenges in relation to three distinct features: the *processes* they engage in when undertaking their work; the *function* that their role plays within a wider system; and the *impact* that their involvement has upon service users and service recipients. In terms of processes, all TEPs reported employing consultation as a model of service delivery, and the discussion identified aspects of consultative practice, working with and through others, that gave rise to ethical challenges. In terms of function, the discussion focused on TEPs’ roles within the allocation of scarce resources, both in term of how their

Working through consultation	Allocation of scarce resources	Respecting client rights and autonomy
Terms of engagement: • What consultees expect from a TEP – do they want expert advice, engagement in problem-solving/ solution-finding process, or a mere "box-ticking" exercise to progress a child through the Code of Practice? To what extent do TEPs have a duty to give consultees what they want, and/ or to explain what they are doing? • Who has responsibility for implementing advice/ interventions, and who has accountability? How should TEPs respond when they perceive that schools are not providing appropriate support? • When work starts – what constitutes involvement from a TEP that necessitates informed consent from parents/ carers/ children? **Sharing information:** • How should TEPs balance the need to share information about a child in order to support advice and help school staff to work effectively, with their duties regarding respecting confidences? • What consideration should TEPs give to how school staff/ other professionals use and/ or share the information the TEPs give them? **Maintaining relationships:** • If a TEP is expected to act as a "critical friend" towards the settings that they work with, how should they balance the demands of being critical and being friendly? What should TEPs do when they feel pressured to collude with decisions/ practices that they do not support? What weight should be given to the importance of promoting effective working relationships, when TEPs perceive a conflict with the interests of a child?	**Prioritisation of need:** • To what extent should TEPs simply respond to the cases identified by a school as being most in need? To what extent should parents/ carers/ young people have direct access to EP services? How should TEPs respond when they perceive a pupil's needs are being overlooked (e.g. those at-risk of exclusion)? **Role as "gatekeepers" of additional resources:** • How should TEPs respond to conflicts arising from a (real/ imagined) role as a gatekeeper of resources, e.g. conflict between a child's interests and broader policies/ values/ priorities such as inclusion; conflicts between wishes of settings, parents and children. • Should assessment practices be influenced by consideration of how they will affect the allocation of resources such as money, addition support or school places? • How should TEPs views/ practices in relation to diagnosing and labelling be affected by considerations of resource allocation?	**Voluntary participation:** • Difficulties arising from children/ young people being pressurised by schools/ parents to work with a TEP. • The ethics of observing children when they are not aware they are being observed. • Respecting the right to withdraw and right not to participate. How should TEPs respond when children/ young people are unwilling to talk or participate? • To what extent should children's/ parents' views be considered in determining interventions, and how much discussion should there be of alternative courses of action? **Doing good and avoiding harm:** • The tension between working within the limits of one's competence and extending competence by trying new techniques and applications of psychology. • How to assess and evaluate the potential for benefit and/or harm from a particular intervention or course of action.

Table 2: Ethical issues identified by TEPs in discussion group.

own services were allocated and in terms of the role that they played in schools and/ or children accessing resources. Regarding the impact of their work, the TEPs' discussion focused on respecting the rights and autonomy of clients (i.e. children, young people and families), in terms how the difficulties in ensuring voluntary participation, doing good and avoiding harm.

3.3.1 The ethics of consultation

It was the norm for TEPs to be working in services that adopted some form of consultation model of service delivery. This involves EPs and TEPs often working indirectly, "through" other professionals, such as teachers and teaching assistants. This mode of working was identified as something that created a number of ethical challenges.

For TEPs there was a sense that a professional code of ethics that was devised with the requirements of the laboratory and the clinic in mind may have difficulty in guiding practice in a different setting, such as a school. One major difference is that in the lab or in the clinic it is very clear who a psychologist is working with (i.e. who is the participant or the client) and when this work begins, whereas for TEPs working in schools, the focus of their work may be a specific child, but it is more common for work to start with the TEP working with a member of school staff such as the SENCO. In such a case, there can be a lack of clarity about when a TEP actually becomes involved with a case and thus when consent is required.

A number of TEPs agreed that it is fairly simple to identify involvement if the TEP works directly with the child, and thus to identify that informed consent is required. But if a child is discussed, possibly without being named, the advice that the TEP gives is likely to affect what happens to that child, and thus there is an argument that to respect that child's autonomy consent should be obtained. On the other hand, some argued that it is important to be aware that schools are institutions that – as a matter of course – do things which affect children through determining curriculum, teaching strategies, behaviour management approaches and so on, and they do this without an expectation that specific consent is required. There is an understanding that this is what schools do. Moreover, it was suggested that where a TEP consults with a member of school staff, it is often the case that the focus of the consultation is something that is a problem for the staff member, rather than for the child, and while a specific child may be involved, the TEP is trying to help find solutions to the staff member's problems, which are likely only to involve him or her doing things to the child that might be reasonably expected as part of the normal functioning of the school. Here it would seem that the TEP is not working with the child and that consent is thus not required. Nevertheless, TEPs were aware of practices that cloud the issues, such as when a child's name is not used in discussions or recorded notes, even though they and the consultee are both clear about who the focus of the discussion is. In such an instance one might question whether the child or parents would feel comfortable about knowing that such a discussion had taken place without their consent.

TEPs also identified ethical challenges associated with meeting the expectations of consultees. Ideally the interests of the consultee and those of the focus child should be aligned, but TEPs reported instances where this was not necessarily the case. For example, involving a TEP may be seen by school as a “box-ticking” exercise, a means of the school pursuing its own agenda (e.g. requesting a change of placement) regardless of any advice or support that the TEP might recommend. In other cases the school might want the TEP to work to “fix the child”, while the TEP perceives that the problem is caused by staff’s views and attitudes towards the child. Where the TEP works with staff with the aim of changing these views and attitudes, how open should they be about their purposes, if revealing them risks undermining the enterprise, but in concealing them they risk being perceived as underhand?

TEPs’ concerns about managing conflicts between consultees’ expectations and their own judgements, and about how open they should be in sharing their views with schools are exacerbated by the fact that most TEPs had ongoing relationships with the schools in which they worked. TEPs acknowledged the importance of promoting effective working relationships with schools and key staff, and some described their role as being a “critical friend” to schools. As such there is a conflict between respecting the views and wishes of schools in order to maintain a good friendship, and being candid and impartial in their advice and judgement as an applied psychologist.

3.3.2 Allocation of resources

With respect to the allocation of scarce resources TEPs were aware that access to EPS support was itself a scarce resource, and some expressed concerns that this was not always distributed fairly. One concern was that some schools prioritised some needs over others, and implicitly distinguished between pupils who were worthy of additional support and those who were not. This was said to occur particularly where concerns related to pupil behaviour, with TEPs reporting instances where children exhibiting problematic or challenging behaviour were considered less of a priority than "more worthy" pupils experiencing problems with learning, resulting in the former group of pupils being at an increased risk of school exclusion. Undoubtedly behaviour arouses strong feelings and emotions among school staff and they thus may feel that problematic behaviour is best dealt with by removing the problem (e.g. through exclusion or change of placement) rather than addressing it. For TEPs this created a dilemma inasmuch as they perceived a group of pupils at need of their professional services, who were not being given fair access to those services. Again there is an issue about balancing the wishes of school staff as consultees and the interests of children and young people. Similarly some TEPs reported occasions where pupils were prioritised for EPS involvement because they had a particularly determined or "pushy" parent. Responding to parental demands was not itself seen as problematic, and indeed many suggested that parents and children should have greater potential for making referrals or self-referral, but TEPs were sensitive to the implications of such practices in terms of allocating services according to need.

TEPs also felt keenly the pressures of being perceived as a “gatekeeper” for additional resources. They recognised that the advice that they gave could affect the resources that a pupil might have access to in terms of additional funding to a school, access to additional staff support or access to a special school placement. Here, as well as balancing the wishes of parents and staff with pupils’ interests, TEPs identified broader pressures relating both to Local Authority priorities, and the values of inclusive education. The value of inclusion was something that had been emphasised to TEPs throughout their training, but many reported concerns about cases where they felt that a child would fare better in a segregated specialist setting. Sometimes this was reported to be because particular schools failed to implement fully the practices that might be expected of an inclusive setting. In other cases it was identified as being the result of arrangements in the Local Authority that were not geared towards including all pupils in mainstream settings. TEPs were aware that recommending pupils access specialist provision in certain circumstances could undermine progress towards more inclusive education, with mainstream schools not having to adapt and develop more inclusive practices. Thus TEPs experienced a conflict between their judgement of the best interests of the pupil who is the focus of their work, and a broader view of how an education system should support pupils with SEN.

3.3.3 Respecting rights and autonomy

The third group of ethical issues raised by TEPs related to direct work with children and young people. TEPs were aware of ethical guidelines relating to

consent, confidentiality and the right to withdrawal, and had practised and developed protocols, such as standard introductory scripts, to help to address these. Nonetheless a number questioned how applicable guidelines were in everyday practice, and the extent to which their practice deviated from the spirit, if not the letter, of EPS guidance and policy. For example, TEPs were aware of cases where pupils were pressurised to agree to see them. Examples of such pressure included where parents wanted a child to have a Statement, and where a school threatened permanent exclusion if a child did not engage with the TEP. TEPs raised concerns about observing pupils in school without their permission. There was recognition that telling a pupil that they were being observed might so affect the child's behaviour as to render to observation useless, but there was also unease from some TEPs that, even if the pupil's parents/ carers had consented, the pupil had not agreed to this and thus it was unethical. Furthermore, such observations were seen as a poor precursor to establishing a relationship of trust between the pupil and the TEP.

Even when formal consent was obtained, TEPs expressed concerns about the extent to which this could be fully informed consent. They were aware that there was a balance to be struck between on the one hand putting a pupil at ease and "normalising" the experience of being sent to see a psychologist, and on the other hand explaining how the things that they say and do could be used to inform assessments and judgements about provision, and how information will be shared and reported. In addition some TEPs identified concerns relating to particular practices that they employed when working

directly with pupils. In their training they had been shown a number of techniques for interviewing pupils or discussing things that were effective at engaging reluctant pupils or helped to “open them up”. Implicit in the recommendation of such techniques is the assumption that they offer ways of getting people to say or do things that they are initially unwilling to do. One of my colleagues described the use of repertory grids thus: “they’re great because you get exactly what you want and they don’t even realise what they are doing”. Such a view would appear at odds with the idea of informed consent.

Finally, when working directly with pupils TEPs reported concerns about the kinds of approaches and interventions that they used and their competence in using them. Often they had been encouraged to try an approach such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), without feeling fully trained in the approach or without the supervision of someone who was appropriately trained. Here the concern of TEPs was not simply one of how they worked as practitioners in training, with an assumption that competence would be attained once they completed their professional training. Rather, TEPs’ concerns related to the EP role more generally, which involves applying psychology to a broad range of problems, and where most EPs are not trained specialists. The public might expect that EPs employ rigorously evaluated approaches and validated techniques, whereby they can be certain that they are doing good and avoiding harm, but in reality standardised or manualised approaches are rare. It was suggested that EPs thus aim to interpret and apply psychological theory and findings in a way that fits the demands of a

particular context or problem, and as such lack the certainty of implementing known effective interventions. It is evidence-informed rather than evidence-based practice.

3.4 Resolving ethical dilemmas

The ethical issues identified by TEPs in the previous section highlight some of the concerns that they experience in their practice. Similar issues are identified by other researchers considering the ethics of EP practice and research (e.g. Fox and Rendall, 2002; Franey, 2002). There is not space to explore each fully and suggest how such dilemmas should be resolved, but it is possible to consider general principles to guide thinking about such issues. To do this it is worth referring again to Gewirth's "separatist thesis" and the grounds of professional ethics mentioned at the start of this paper. Four linked reasons were identified for justifying the distinction between professional ethics and everyday morality:

- professionals have expertise that enable them to achieve certain ends;
- professionals are engaged in service to others;
- to serve others effectively professionals need to deviate from ordinary moral considerations; and,
- to serve effectively professionals need agreed sets of standards by which they work.

It is my contention that the first and third of these reasons are often overlooked or downplayed by EPs and lead to the perception of certain ethical dilemmas. I believe that few EPs would disagree that they provide a valuable service or that they should follow an agreed set of standards. However, “EPs have tended to be ambivalent about their expert knowledge base” (Lunt, 2002), p. 75). Indeed, it is a feature of consultation that expertise is eschewed for collaboration. Moore (2005), advocating social constructionism, suggests that “the primary role of the expert is one in which they facilitate, with others, the construction of a contextually relevant truth” (p.111). It is questionable, however, whether EPs object to adopting an “expert role” *per se*, or to a particular kind of expert role, one which is views itself as all-knowing and fails to recognise the power imbalances inherent in adopting the position of an expert. If EPs are not experts, then one would wonder why they need to be trained and certificated as they do. As Lunt suggests: “The public is asked to trust “properly qualified” EPs in part because of their expert knowledge and competence” (2002, p. 76). And Francis (2002) states that: “Educational and child psychologists work with other professionals in peer relationships, and here the operative word is “peer”. Where someone is not formally trained or qualified the psychologist is enjoined not to behave as if the unqualified person were a peer” (p. 12).

EPs *are* experts, and are accorded a social role and responsibilities based upon their expertise. While it is, of course, incumbent upon EPs to acknowledge the potential difficulties that can arise from this role, it is also important to recognise that as professionals they are trusted to use their

expertise to achieve particular beneficial ends, namely supporting and promoting the development and wellbeing of children and young people.

Carrington et al. (2002) describe a number of ethical dilemmas in EP practice and suggest ways of resolving these by applying specific principles. One of their dilemmas involves a case where the EP felt that a child with learning difficulties should transfer to a mainstream secondary school, but the parents and the child's primary school teacher felt that the child should move to a special school. They invoke the principle of integrity, which they describe as avoiding behaviours which will bring the profession into disrepute, and suggest that:

> The principle of integrity gave the EP a source of comfort, if not direct guidance. It would have been the course of "least resistance" to have acceded to the demands placed on the EP by the school and parent. It would have saved a great deal of conflict, prevented some very harrowing and angry exchanges, been beneficial to the long-term relationship with the school, and would have prevented the anxiety of a tribunal if she had taken the course of action demanded of her. (p. 44)

Surely avoiding bringing the profession into disrepute means something more than avoiding upsetting parents' and schools' views by offering a contrary opinion? Indeed, I would argue that such a course of action shows a lack of integrity. The trust placed in professionals, such as EPs, is based on the assumption that they will apply their expertise rather than take the course of least resistance. To be sure, EPs should certainly seek consensus, and endeavour to engage and collaborate with others, but this is a means towards an end (positive outcomes for children and young people), not an end in itself.

A member of staff in a school that I work in suggested to me that the school was the EP's customer or client, and as such should be able to determine what the EP did and what ends I should be working towards. Other TEPs have experienced similar pressures, although stated less explicitly. Where EPs identify a conflict between the wishes of a consultee and their professional judgement, Lindsay (2008) suggests that "Rather than ask who is the client, the EP [should] ask: 'To whom do I owe responsibility? And what is its nature?'" (p. 60). Arguably EPs have multiple sources of responsibility, to schools, to employers, to children and young people, and to their profession. Where these conflict, identifying the primary purpose of one's role as using professional expertise to achieve specific valuable ends can help to guide which responsibilities should be give the greatest weight. Just as the engineer who is expected to think like a manager should refuse to override his concerns as an engineer, so too an EP should resist pressures to stop thinking like a psychologist, in spite of other responsibilities he or she might have.

So much for being an expert, but what of the deviations form everyday morality required to bring about desirable ends? Well, one such deviation is precisely to recognise that while everyday morality might tell us to avoid upsetting people, such as parents and teachers, by offering views that are contrary to their own, *as a professional* an EP has a responsibility to fulfil their professional role and explain their judgements without fear or favour. This does not mean wilfully upsetting other people, and EPs should recognise their

duties towards those with whom they work, but to alter their judgement to placate others would seem to lack integrity.

Other ways in which EPs are expected to deviate from everyday morality include both making and breaking confidences. To work effectively professionals need to demonstrate that they can be trusted by those whom they work with, and this may involve respecting confidences. As Bok (1983) states: “Professionals … must not only receive and respect such confidences; the very nature of the help that they can give may depend on their searching for even the most deeply buried knowledge” (p. 24). This is certainly the case for EPs. But for EPs the question of whether or not to respect a confidence is clouded by two other concerns. Firstly, EPs work with children and young people, where it is expected that parents/ carers have certain rights to know, and secondly, EPs work with and through other professionals such as teachers and education officers, and would not be able to work effectively if they did not share any information with these colleagues.

Certainly there are cases where it is clear that an EP should disclose information, even if the giver requests nondisclosure. Where information suggests a genuine risk of harm this would be the case. But even where the risk of harm does not exist, EPs may need to share information given in confidence in order to achieve positive outcomes. If, for example, a child states that they hate their teacher, and this is believed (by the EP) to represent a significant issue to be resolved in order to help the pupil, while the child may not wish this information to be shared (for fear of getting into

trouble), the EP may feel that they need to refer to it in some way in order to resolve the difficulty. EPs can attempt to resolve this dilemma by discussing disclosure with the child, by disclosing euphemistically (e.g. “the child doesn’t feel valued in the class”), by depersonalising it and so on. But in doing so they are always seeking to disclose information in a more palatable way, and as such finding ways of balancing their obligation to the pupil’s wishes, with the pupil’s interests.

This commonplace dilemma illustrates the inadequacy of hard and fast rules when working in an applied context. Again, EPs need to make reference to the foundations of their professional ethics, specifically the ends that they are seeking to promote, in order to guide their judgements. It is also important that EPs guard against abuses of confidentiality, as Bok (1983) argues:

> The sick, the poor, the mentally ill, the aged, and the very young are in a paradoxical situation in this respect. While their right to confidentiality is often breached and their most intimate problems openly bandied about, the poor care they may receive is just as often covered up under the same name of confidentiality. (p. 30)

Regarding methods of conducting assessments on children and young people, some TEPs had misgivings about conducting observations without consent, and about methods for eliciting information from interviewees. This would appear to be another area where it can be ethical for EPs to do things that would be unethical in other circumstances. For an EP to do their job, it is sometimes necessary to observe a person when they are not aware (or not aware that they are the focus of the observation), and to elicit information that

a person might ostensibly be unwilling or reluctant to share. Providing a valuable service justifies such deviations from everyday morality, but it is important for EPs to recognise that they *are* deviations, and they *do* need justification. An EP should not engage in practices that leave children and young people feeling uncomfortable as a matter of course, only as a matter of necessity, just as a doctor should not ask their patients to undress as a matter of course.

The discussion thus far has emphasised the importance for EPs in acting ethically to understand the foundations of their professional ethics, and to consider the reasons why they are expected to work within a distinct set of ethical priorities. I have argued that EPs should recognise that their professional expertise gives rise to certain duties, and that the utility of the services that they provide allows certain deviations from everyday moral considerations. Evaluating these factors is a matter of judgement and reflects why professional ethics involve more than simply applying an established code. It implies the kind of postconventional moral reasoning emphasised by Pritchard (1999).

There is also a need for awareness and consideration of the contextual factors that impact on EP practice and ethical decision-making. These include issues relating to working through consultation, working with non-EP colleagues, and working within local and national priorities and agendas. Franey (2002) advocates a number of steps towards promoting “ethical mindfulness” within educational psychology, such as adoption of professional

codes, ethics education during induction, establishing EPS ethics committees, using an ethical ombudsman and ethical mentors, establishing ethical case conferences, and increased opportunities for conscious consideration of ethical issues within supervision. Bracher and Hingley (2002) also argue that "ethical maturity" is something that needs to be developed at an organisational level.

Ethical practice involves more than simply following a code of conduct. There are, as Verkerk *et al* (2004) put it, "no moral cookbooks – no algorithms for whipping up moral confections to suit every occasion" (p. 31). Nevertheless, a number of authors have suggested possible frameworks and processes for developing greater awareness of ethical issues and enhancing ethical decision-making (e.g. Webster & Bond, 2002; Carrington *et* al., 2002; Verkerk *et al*., 2004; Lindsay, 2008). In this paper I have argued that understanding the principles underlying EPs' professional ethics and how these are grounded in considerations of the public utility of the EP role are central to exploring and resolving satisfactorily ethical challenges encountered in practice. The thoughts and reflections of TEPs that have been discussed in this paper highlight the range of ethical concerns encountered by those at the start of the journey of becoming a professional and serve as a reminder of the importance of affording ethics appropriate significance within the training and supervision of EPs.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Notes from TEPs' discussion activity

Systemic constraints

- EP's position in the CoP can make following ethical principles difficult.
- How is work prioritised? EP vs. School agendas. EPs are paid for by tax payers.
- Time allocation model: how are hours decided?
    - Children who are withdrawn do not have equal access to our service.
    - There are a large proportion of kids who get excluded, but who have not been prioritised for EP input.

Professional role

- Level of expertise – is it ethical for trainees to 'have a go' at CBT PCP etc
    - do supervisors have appropriate understanding of these things to supervise us?
    - Different to clinical psychologist. Cross disciplinary supervision.
- Lines of responsibility – These are clear in clinical and medical organisations, but consultation makes accountability more blurred.
- If we are not being introduced as 'trainee EPs', do schools make unjust assumptions about our level of expertise.
- To what extent to we use records and reports to cover our backs?.
- What is our role in diagnosing ASD? Are EPs gatekeepers? E.g by not referring onwards to CAMHS?
- What is our stance on labelling? Is it ethical not to label when labels are linked to resources. E.g. Exam dispensation and Dyslexia.

Voice of Child

- Observing a child – do we always ask consent to observe them?
- Use of 'techniques to make people talk' (when perhaps they don't want to)
- Adults can choose to go to therapy, can children?
- Do children have a choice whether or not to see the EP? / when to see the EP? Can they voice an objection?
- How much of a say do CYP and parents have in designing an intervention?
- Do children feel they have an option 'not to' agree to information being shared.
    - To what extent do we follow the BPS Ethical Guidelines?
    - Balance of power.
- How much of a say do CYP and parents have in designing an intervention?

Schools

- Schools' understanding of our ethical principles. E.g. discussing named pupils at planning meetings, before parental consent has been gained.
    - Does this need to be tackled at an organisational level?

    - Does having a named EP make upholding ethical principles more difficult – need to maintain a relationship.
    - Schools are privileged in their access to EP services – should parents be able to refer directly?
    - Should services look at referral levels across schools?
    - Are parents involved in the referral process?
    - Should CYP have direct access to the EPS?
- When you assure a pupil of confidentiality and then have to feed back to the school
- Schools sometimes want more detail than you feel you can provide.
- How bothered are staff about outcomes? Are EPs just there for ticking boxes / moving further along the CoP?

4. A Small-Scale Action Research Project to Improve Pupil Motivation in a Primary School

4.1 Introduction

It seems self-evident that positive engagement in learning activities is a necessary (but not sufficient) determinant of educational progress and success in school. Gilman and Anderman (2006) make the case that in the US, in spite of educational reforms that have improved engagement and attainment, there is a persistent problem of students not being motivated, and not valuing school and learning. Consequently, it is unsurprising that student motivation has become an increasingly important and popular focus of study for educational and psychological researchers (Pintrich, 2003).

4.1.1 Theories of motivation

Psychologists have long been interested in how individuals are motivated. Early theories of motivation, influenced by psychodynamic psychology, emphasised the role of individual needs and drives, but this focus was replaced by behaviourist explanations of motivation in terms of reinforcement contingencies (Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006). Contemporary theories tend to adopt a social-cognitive focus, and motivation seen as being influenced by an individual's thoughts and beliefs, which are shaped by social and contextual factors (Pintrich, 2003; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006). Along these lines, a number of specific theories explaining motivation have been proposed. Table

1 (pp. 3-6) outlines key features of six significant theories and perspectives in relation to student motivation: need achievement and self-worth (Covington, 1992); self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 1985); achievement goals (Ames & Archer, 1988; Ames, 1992); attribution theory (Weiner, 1985); self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997); and expectancy-value theory (Eccles , 1983). Given their broad social-cognitive focus, these theories are not necessarily competing, mutually exclusive explanations of motivational processes. Rather, there is considerable overlap between different theories; many are complementary and amenable to synthesis (Gilman & Anderman, 2006; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006).

The need achievement/ self-worth perspective and self-determination theory both appeal to the existence of certain basic human needs in explaining motivation. However, while the former identifies one core need (self-worth), the latter suggests that three basic needs (relatedness, autonomy and competence) are relevant. The self-worth perspective has a relatively narrow view of motivation in relation to experiences of success or failure, focusing on the anticipated outcomes of engagement in activities, whereas within self-determination theory is greater scope for need-fulfilment as a by-product of engagement. Indeed, this is at the very heart of the notion of intrinsic motivation. Both perspectives do however share the criticism that they postulate the existence of needs which cannot be validated empirically, but only inferred post hoc. As such, it could be argued that they are non-parsimonious explanations, by invoking an additional explanatory mechanism (the need) to explain how motivation is mediated by particular cognitions.

Theory	Key points	How it explains motivation
Need achievement and self-worth	• Views motivation in terms of an individual's motives for avoiding failure and approaching success (Atkinson, 1957; Covington, 1998; McClelland, 1965). • (Covington, 1998) proposes the existence of one core need in explaining motivation: the need for personal self-worth. • Three broad typologies of student are identified: success-oriented, failure-avoidant and failure-accepting.	• Schooling has the potential to influence significantly the way in which individuals perceive themselves. In educational situations students experience successes and disappointments, and they experience regular explicit or implicit social comparison through formal assessments and everyday classroom activities and practices. In order to maintain personal self-worth, students approach or avoid different types of academic tasks (Covington, 1998). • Success-oriented students are those who display adaptive patterns of behaviour. They are confident, proactive and not deterred by setbacks (Martin et al., 2001). • Failure-avoidance results from students perceiving a threat to their ability perceptions, and thus engage in avoidance behaviours such as self-handicapping (i.e. intentionally withholding effort), avoiding help-seeking, and resisting novel teacher approaches (Butler and Nueman, 1995; Butler, 1998). • Failure-accepting students display learned helplessness (Abramson et al., 1978). They are disengaged and have given up to the point of not even trying to avoid failure (Martin, 2006)(Peterson et al., 1993).
Self-determination theory	• Three basic needs are identified: needs for relatedness, competence and autonomy. • Distinguishes between intrinsic motivation, linked to fulfilment of basic needs, and extrinsic motivation, based on external rewards.	• Relatedness refers to feelings of security or belonging within a social environment. Competence is a determinant of self-worth and derives from effective functioning. Autonomy refers to an individual's perception of choice and control over his or her actions (Deci and Ryan 1985). • Instructional practices that help meet students' basic needs enhance motivation (Urdan and Schoenfelder, 2006). • Intrinsic motivation is enhanced through challenge, curiosity and control (Wang , 2001). These can be seen as ways of developing and extending competence and experiencing autonomy. • "Over-justification effect" (Lepper et al., 1973) suggests that tangible rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation. • If students feel that they are doing activities because of external coercion, they do not have the opportunity to develop feelings of competence and autonomy (Urdan and Schoenfelder, 2006).

Table 1: Theories of motivation

Achievement goals and motivation orientation	• Motivation orientation refers to a student's judgements about why an activity is worth engaging in and striving to do well at. • An achievement goal defines an integrated pattern of beliefs, attributions and affect (Ames, 1992). • Distinguishes between mastery and performance goals.	• Mastery orientation is considered more adaptive than performance orientation. Mastery goals contribute to motivation and positive engagement, and promote self-regulated learning (Ames, 1992) • Central to a mastery goal is the belief that effort and outcome covary; effort will lead to success and a sense of mastery (Ames, 1992). • Mastery-oriented students gain satisfaction from mastering what they have set out to do. They are resilient in the face of setbacks, endeavour to improve on past performances and learn from their mistakes in order to develop competence (Duda , 1992; Lochbaum and Roberts, 1993; Martin, 2006) • Performance-oriented students are more focused on how their performance relates to that of others around them or to external standards. They are motivated by making the grade or by positive social comparison, rather than by developing competence (Ames, 1992). • Mastery goals are promoted through tasks that are meaningful and challenging, but achievable, and also by classrooms that afford choice and autonomy (Blumenfield, 1992).
Attribution theory	• Individuals' perceptions about the cause of an outcome vary along three dimensions: controllability, stability and locus of control (Weiner, 1985). • Students' causal attributions affect their motivation.	• Students who attribute success and failure to their own effort make an internal, unstable controllable attribution are more likely to be motivated: "essentially students who are high in control are energised to perform particular tasks" (Martin, 2006), p. 20). • Students who believe that their task performance is affected by other factors such as ability (internal, stable, uncontrollable), task difficulty (external, stable, uncontrollable) or luck (external, unstable, uncontrollable) are less likely to strive when things get difficult and are less likely to feel that they have the power to succeed (Wang , 2001). • Praise for effort fosters effort attributions (Lam et al., 2008), and improved motivation compared to praise for ability (Mueller and Dweck, 1998).

Table 1 (cont'd): Theories of motivation

Self-efficacy	• Self-efficacy refers to an individual's beliefs in their capacity to organise and execute courses of action required to achieve certain goals(Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1997). • Self-efficacy judgements are influenced by past experience of successes and failure, social comparison information, and verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1986).	• Students high in self-efficacy are more likely to try alternative strategies for dealing with a problem and – *ceterus paribus* – do better academically as a result of more adaptive learning strategies, increased persistence and improved self-regulation (Bandura, 1997). • Confidence in one's own abilities can lead to improved academic performance, and result in increased effort and attention (Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham, 2006). • It is not how well a student can do that determines their motivation, but how well they *think* they can do - self-efficacy is positively correlated with interest in a subject (Collins , 1982). • Teachers can nurture self-efficacy by emphasising skill development, praising what is praiseworthy, fostering optimism, promoting mastery and success experiences, and helping students to set proximal learning goals (Liem et al., 2008).
Expectancy-value theory	• Achievement motivation is a function of motives for success, expectations of success, and the incentive value of success (Atkinson, 1957). • Behaviour is more likely to be engaged in if it is perceived to be worthwhile inasmuch as it contributes towards valued outcomes (Eccles , 1983)	• Beliefs about expectations of success and value beliefs are influenced by socialisation (Eccles , 1983;Parsons et al., 1984). • Expectations are related to competency beliefs, which are strongly related to academic performance (Parsons et al., 1984). • Competency beliefs decline over the course of schooling. There are gender differences in competence and value beliefs (Meece et al., 2006). • Task value is determined by the perceived importance of being good at an activity; perceived utility of the task; perceived interest; and perceived cost of engaging in the activity (Eccles , 1983).

Table 1 (cont'd): Theories of motivation

Ames (1992) suggests that there is also significant overlap between achievement goal theory, self-determination theory and the need achievement/ self-worth perspective, insofar as mastery goals are linked to desires for competence and intrinsic motivation, while performance goals are viewed as being related to an individual's sense of self-worth. Moreover, success-orientation and motivation-orientation would appear to be similar constructs. While goal achievement theory distinguishes between mastery and performance goals, both types of goal could be viewed as a way of defining personal success. The traditional view within goal achievement theory is that mastery goals are superior to performances goals (Ames, 1992; Daniels et al., 2008), which would imply the success orientation is too general a construct.

Research suggests, however, that a performance-orientation *per se* is not necessarily maladaptive (Daniels et al., 2008; Liem et al., 2008; Linnenbrink, 2005). Rather, researchers distinguish between performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals. Students who adopt performance-approach goals are said to be motivated to demonstrate competence relative to others, while those who adopt performance-avoidance goals wish to avoid being seen as less capable than their peers (Liem et al., 2008). Clearly, such a distinction mirrors the distinction between success-orientation and failure-avoidance. As with failure avoidance, research suggests that it is performance-avoidance goals that are associated with poor motivation, and that approach goals (whether mastery or performance) are superior (Daniels et al., 2008; Liem et al., 2008; Linnenbrink, 2005; Sideridis, 2008). It is even suggested that

mastery goals can be inferior (by some achievement measures) to performance approach goals, as a mastery orientation can mean that students focus on vague internally-defined goals, rather than on meeting external standards, and they are less likely to be motivated to learn things that are important but uninteresting, instead preferring to pursue personal interests whether or not these are relevant to the course or exam for which they are studying (Senko & Miles, 2008).

There is overlap between expectancy-value theory and these other theories too. Beliefs about the value of a task are associated with its perceived importance, utility and interest. Clearly there is a link between perceiving a task as interesting, and being mastery-oriented or intrinsically motivated. And perceptions of importance and utility might be associated with perceived outcomes either in developing competence of demonstrating performance to meet external standards (e.g. grades, qualifications).

Ostensibly it might seem that expectancy-value theory considers motivation as situational rather than dispositional, in that it focuses on the value and expected outcomes of individual tasks, rather than identifying a more stable trait, such as mastery-orientation or failure avoidance. Research in expectancy-value theory, however, implies that this is not the case. For example, Eccles et al. (1993) defined “task value” in terms of perceived interest, enjoyment, importance and usefulness of an academic *domain*. Also, longitudinal studies focused on changes in generalised competency beliefs over time (Wigfield et al., 1997; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), and much research

within expectancy-value theory has focused on how socialisation processes contribute to individual differences in competency and value beliefs (Eccles , 1983; Eccles et al., 1993; Meece et al., 2006; Parsons et al., 1984). Clearly then, within expectancy-value theory beliefs relating to motivation are viewed as relatively stable individual attributes, albeit ones that may vary over time and between domains.

Expectancy value theory also shares common ground with perspectives on motivation that emphasise attributions and self-efficacy. For each of these, beliefs about ability, competence and control are seen as playing a significant role in influencing motivation. Those who believe that they are able to succeed and that their chances of success are related to the effort they expend, are likely to be more motivated than those who do not have these beliefs. Indeed, it has been suggested that there is a great deal of similarity between Eccles' expectancy construct and Bandura's self-efficacy construct (Liem et al., 2008; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Given the amount of commonality among different theories of motivation and the constructs that they employ, it is unsurprising that authors have turned their attention to how they relate to one another. One suggestion is that there is hierarchical structure of motivation-related cognitions, with superordinate general needs or goals determining more specific cognitions and behaviours. For example, Miller and Brickman's (2004) future-oriented motivation and self-regulation framework proposes that long-term judgements about valued goals determine proximal achievement goals which in turn affect behaviour and the

development of competence and self-efficacy. Liem et al. (2008) develop this theme, proposing a hierarchical model where achievement goals mediate the relationship between expectancy-value constructs (task value, self-efficacy) and cognitive and behavioural outcomes, such as learning strategies and disengagement.

There are similarities between such hierarchical models and the view of cognition and behaviour proposed by Beck (1995) in relation to cognitive therapy, with general and stable core beliefs determining more specific intermediate cognitions which in turn affect behaviour. The therapeutic approach of Beck also emphasises that changes in cognition can lead to changes in behaviour. A similar view is taken by Pintrich (2003), in discussing relations between needs, motivation-related cognitions and behavioural outcomes (e.g. self-regulated learning strategies) and affective responses.

Martin (2007) suggests that there has been a convergence of such educational and psychological models for explaining cognition and behaviour. Martin (2001; 2003; 2007) proposes a multidimensional model of motivation that draws on theory and research in motivation as well as more general models of cognition and behaviour. This model identifies eleven dimensions of motivation, associated with different theoretical perspectives and social-cognitive constructs. Figure 1, over, shows the relation of these eleven constructs to different theoretical perspectives and to terminology used within the academic literature.

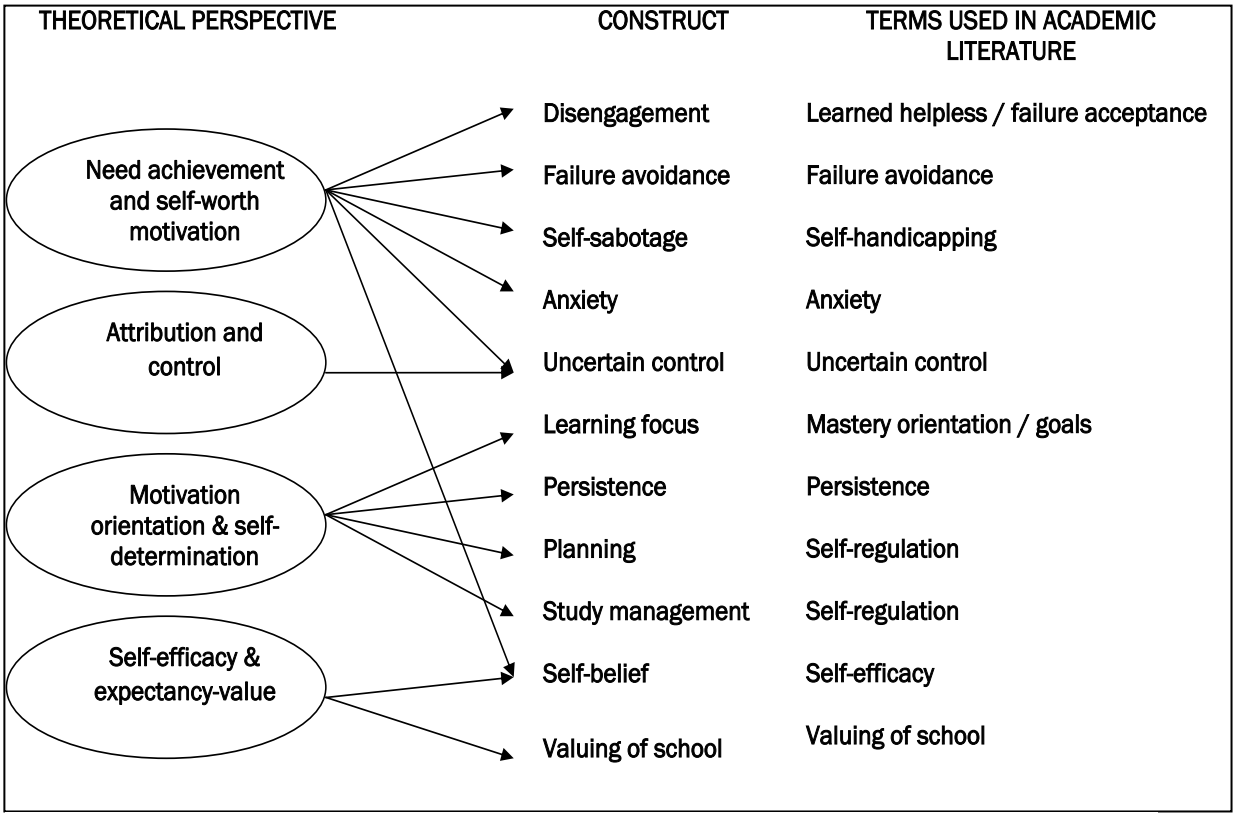

Figure 1: ***Theoretical perspectives on motivation and associated constructs with equivalent terms from academic literature.*** Source: Martin (2006)

Organising these eleven dimensions, Martin (2007) proposes the existence of a four-factor higher order structure which distinguishes and groups constructs according to whether they are adaptive or maladaptive, and whether they are beliefs or cognitions. The hypothesised model (The Motivation Wheel) is shown in Figure 2, over.

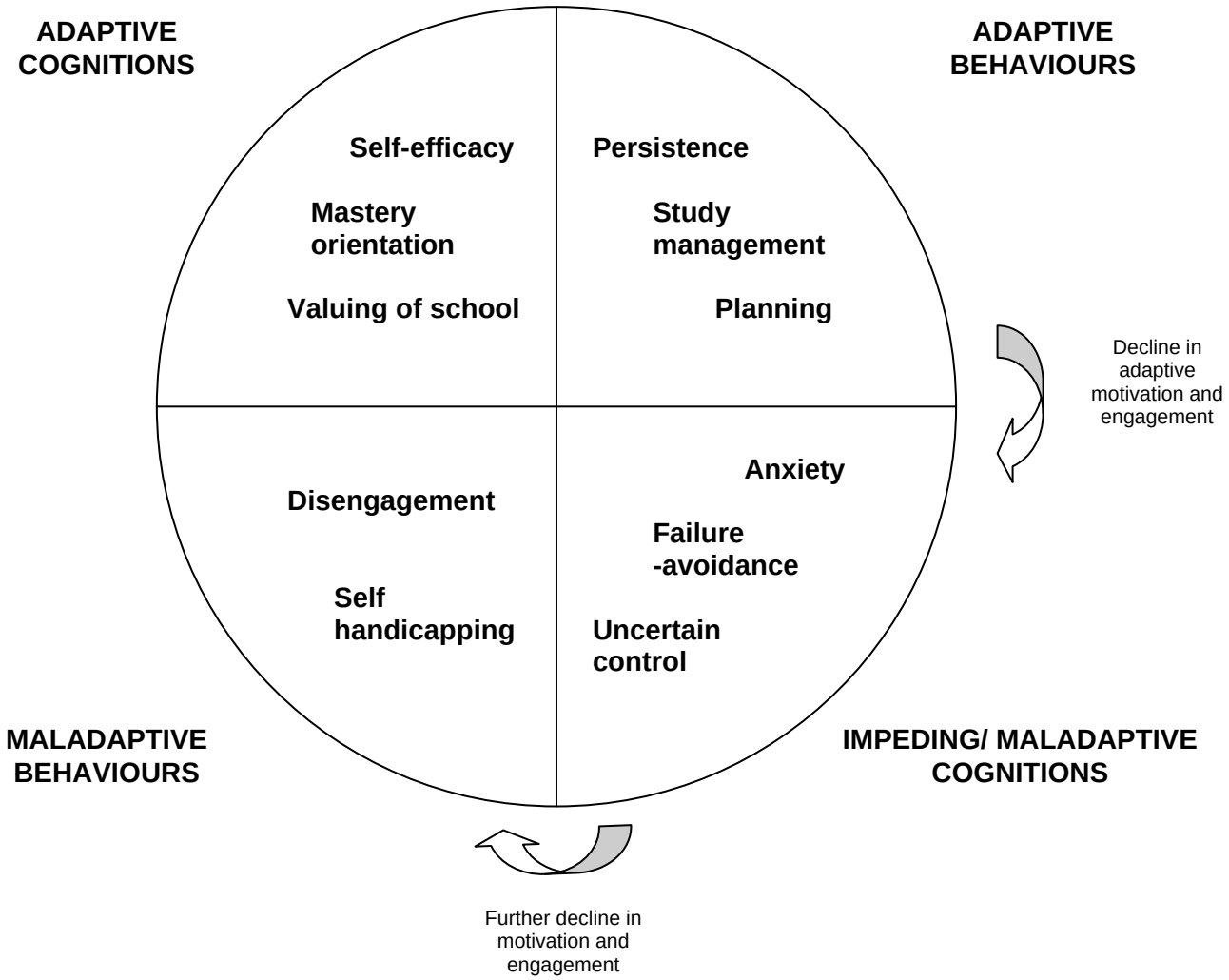

Figure 2: The Motivation and Engagement Wheel – showing the four factor model of eleven dimensions of motivation and engagement. Based on Martin (2007)

The Motivation Wheel is based on a psychometric measure, the Student Motivation and Engagement Scale (Martin, 2001; 2003), which has been statistically-validated using factor analysis on a very large (N = 12,237) sample (Martin, 2007). It should be noted that the construct validation sample were Australian students, and so there may be questions about its application to other cultural contexts. However, the constructs within the Motivation Wheel are not psychometrically derived (i.e. confirmatory factor analysis was used),

but are based on theory and research into motivation from a number of different countries. There is also a limitation of this model insofar as it is based on self-report measures of motivation, and thus there is a need for external validation.

A model of motivation based on individual differences could be criticised for implying that motivational styles or characteristics are fixed, and it could be accused of overlooking the importance of contextual or situational factors. Martin (2006; 2008), however, emphasises that motivation is not fixed, and that the Motivation Wheel is a tool to aid intervention. As mentioned above, hierarchical models of cognition and behaviour suggest that there is a range of levels of description for motivational constructs and a range of cognitive constructs and associated behaviours that vary from superordinate needs or core beliefs, which are viewed as relatively fixed, to cognitions and behaviours which a more changeable and situationally determined.

Social-cognitive approaches are interactionist perspectives and deny that behaviour can be explained in terms of either individual or situational factors alone (Bandura, 1986). We would no more expect that all students are similarly motivated in the same classroom than we would expect that each student's motivation remains the same in all different contexts. Pintrich (2003) argues that for social-cognitive approaches to student motivation to be useful to educationalists, there is a need to focus on constructs at an intermediate level, that are neither so fixed to imply change is not possible, nor so varied

and situationally determined to be unable to explain why there are individual differences in student motivation within shared educational contexts.

4.1.2 Action research

Action research is a popular approach within educational psychology, with numerous reports of EPs employing this approach in work with school staff (e.g. Atkinson et al., 2006; Burns & Hulusi, 2005; Butterfield, 2009; Hayes et al., 2007; Hodson et al., 2005; Kelly et al., 2004; McDowell et al., 2008). Action research is an approach that emphasises change: it involves the use of systematic and critical enquiry in an attempt to try to improve a practical situation (Bassey, 1999). Participation is also emphasised, with many action researchers arguing that the approach should be collaborative (Dick, 2000; Kemmis & McTaggart 1988; McNiff et al., 2003). In the case of EPs working in schools, such collaboration is likely to involve school staff being engaged as active participants in the research process (Butterfield, 2009). Thus, Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggest that the two main aims of all action research are to improve and to involve.

Action research involves understanding what is happening and evaluating it, then introducing change and evaluating the new situation (Bassey, 1999). Figure 3, below, provides a representation of the action research process. When change is introduced, it is monitored, evaluated and modified as appropriate (Butterfield, 2009). Action research involves “a self-reflective spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting” (Carr and

Kemmis 1986, p. 162). Representing action research as a spiral process emphasises that, while process cycles (of planning, acting, observing and reflecting) are repeated, it is an iterative approach, so that completing one cycle means that a new starting point is arrived at for the next. This approach of enquiry and reflection is engaged in with participants “in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out” (Carr and Kemmis 1986, p. 162). Thus, data are seen, not as end products, but as a means for focusing on where and how change should be brought about (Butterfield, 2009).

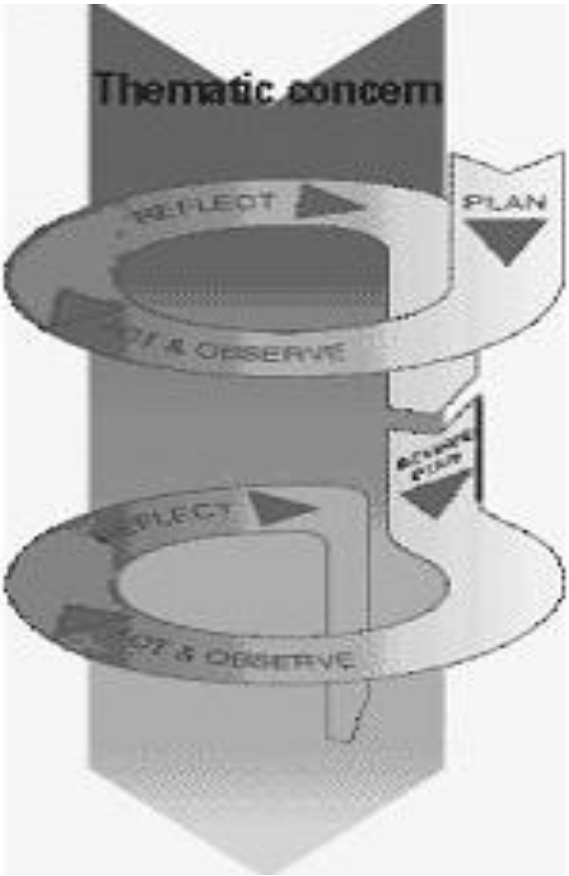

Figure 3: Action research cycles. Source: Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988)

Action research aims to facilitate improvements in three areas: practices; understanding of practices by practitioners; and the situation in which practices occur (Carr and Kemmis 1986). This emphasis on improving what practitioners do and how they think about it, means that action research should involve participation or collaboration. Degrees of participation can vary, from the researcher and the participant (practitioner) having separate and complementary roles, to removal of participant-researcher distinctions (Dick,2000). Thus, action research is described as “an interactive inquiry process that balances problem-solving actions implemented in a collaborative context with data-driven collaborative analysis or research to understand underlying causes enabling future predictions about personal and organisational change” (Reason & Bradbury 2001, p. 512).

While it is suggested that action research can contribute to the development of evidence-based practice (Thomas, 2004), limitations have been identified, particularly in terms of the relation of action research findings to theory. As McDowell et al. (2008) put it: “The evidence derived from local action research may not be externally regarded as valid and reliable; there may be a neglect of wider theoretical knowledge, leading to ‘reinventing of wheels’” (p. 144). Indeed, Atkinson and Delamont (1985) severely criticise action research for adopting an atheoretical posture and denial of the need for systematic methods. While such criticisms may apply in some particular instances, it is in no way a requirement of action research to ignore pre-existing theory.

4.1.3 Goal Attainment Scaling

Goal attainment scaling (GAS) was developed by Kirusek and Sherman (1968) as a means for evaluating mental health interventions. It is based on the idea that, in the absence of universal, agreed goals for interventions, an idiographic approach to evaluation is required (Hurn et al., 2006).

Goal attainment scaling involves constructing a five-point scale to assess the outcome of an intervention, with each point on the scale being assigned a numerical value from -2 to +2. First, the expected outcome is identified and assigned a value of 0. From this point a descriptive scale is constructed which identifies criteria for assigning numerical values to different outcomes, ranging from the worst expected outcome (-2) to best expected outcome (+2). Table 2, below, shows descriptors for different outcome levels. In order that the outcome level can be determined clearly, there should not be gaps between different levels or overlapping criteria. A goal attainment scale should be constructed before an intervention is started, and then used during or after the intervention in order to evaluate its effectiveness in relation to the pre-determined goals (Kirusek et al., 1994). Thus GAS avoids the use of post-hoc criteria to judge the effectiveness of an intervention or programme.

GAS Score	Level of outcome
+2	Much more than/ best expected
+1	More than expected
0	Expected outcome
-1	Less than expected
-2	Much less than/ worst expected

Table 2: Numerical values assigned to different outcome levels using goal attainment scaling

GAS is considered to be a very versatile focused evaluation method (Marson et al., 2009), and has be used in numerous domains beyond its origin in clinical psychology, including occupational therapy (McLaren & Rodger, 2003), special education (Oren & Ogletree, 2000), and health promotion (Becker et al., 2000). It has been suggested that GAS could provide a common approach to evaluation within educational psychology, with much to commend it for widespread use by EPs (Baxter & Frederickson, 2005).

Reviews of GAS support its efficacy as a generic evaluation tool (Hurn et al., 2006; Schlosser, 2004), however a number of authors have noted that GAS-users often do not follow agreed protocols, which threatens the reliability and validity of GAS scores (Cytrynbaum et al., 1979; Hurn et al., 2006; MacKay & Lundie, 1998). While the practice does represent a deviation from the original procedures set out by Kirusek and Sherman (1968), many studies report the benefits of service-users and service-providers being jointly involved in setting goals and monitoring progress towards them. This – it is said – empowers service-users and means that interventions can be better tailored to meet individual needs (Becker et al., 2000; Cox & Amsters, 2002; Czar, 1987; Roach and Elliott, 2005; Schlosser, 2004). Such a participatory and individual-focused approach would appear well-suited to inclusion within an action research approach.

4.2 The Present Study

The present study was carried out in a primary school in the West Midlands and involved the use of an action research approach to understand and address problems with pupil motivation within the context of a Year 4 class. I was working with the school in the role of Trainee Educational Psychologist for the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service.

4.2.1 Participants

This action research project was carried out with the teacher of a Year 4 class in the primary school. She had been teaching her class for three months at the start of the project, and was concerned that there was a small group of pupils in the class who she perceived to be disengaged from learning, and whom she found difficult to motivate. The teacher shared her concerns with the school's Deputy Headteacher (DHT), who suggested that the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) might be able to provide her with some support or means of addressing these difficulties, leading to my becoming involved.

Nine pupils from the Year 4 class also participated in the project through being interviewed as a part of the research cycle. Prior to the interviews, letters were sent to parents/carers of all of the pupils in the class, explaining that a Trainee EP was going to be working with the class, addressing issues of confidentiality and inviting them to contact the school if they had objections or questions relating to their child's participation in the project (see Appendix 1). Thus, parental consent was implied rather than explicit. The decision to use implied

consent was taken after the teacher suggested that many parents did not return forms to the school, and so the process of obtaining consent was likely to be challenging. The decision was taken after discussion with the DHT and my supervisor within the EPS. One parent objected to their child participating, so this pupil was not involved in the project.

4.2.2 Action research cycle – initial planning

The first, planning, stage of the action research cycle started with a meeting between me, the DHT and the class teacher to further explore her perceptions of the situation causing concern and the problems that she identified. The concerns expressed related to a small number of children in a Year 4 class who appeared demotivated and disaffected at school. The DHT and class teacher identified a number of possible explanations for this. Many of these appeared linked to constructs identified in Martin's (2007) Motivation and Engagement Wheel (hereafter the Motivation Wheel). Table 3, over, lists these hypothesised explanations with related motivation and engagement constructs.

During the meeting I discussed the psychology of motivation with the DHT and the class teacher. I outlined the Motivation Wheel, and provided a written handout explaining this model of motivation, as well as offering suggested strategies for class-based interventions to improve different aspects of motivation and engagement (see Appendix 2 for a copy of this handout). In discussing this I suggested ways that the teachers' comments and

explanations might be linked to particular constructs (as in Table 3), as well as using this as a stimulus to consider alternative explanations.

Suggested explanation	Related constructs
Children not valuing school or learning	• Mastery orientation
Children working below their target levels but not knowing how to improve to meet learning targets	• Uncertain control
Work not being targeted to children's preferred learning styles	• Mastery orientation • Self-efficacy
Work not being sufficiently engaging	• Mastery orientation
Children not being responsive to the class reward system	• Mastery orientation • Learned helplessness
A "can't be bothered attitude" where children don't see the point in producing a good piece of work	• Learner helplessness • Mastery orientation

Table 3: Explanations suggested by school staff for motivational difficulties with possible associated constructs from the Motivation Wheel.

Based on this discussion, the staff suggested that the two maladaptive behavioural dimensions – learned helplessness and self-handicapping – did not fit with the descriptions being offered, and were unlikely to be explanations for the concerns raised by the school. The four dimensions identified as most likely factors were: self-efficacy, uncertain control, failure avoidance and mastery orientation. As it was not clear which specific dimensions were implicated in the problems identified by the teachers, we agreed that the next step in the action research cycle would be to gather information to help to determine which motivational dimensions were relevant by seeking the views of the target group of children who were identified as demotivated.

4.2.3 Action and observation

In order to try to gain a better understanding of the factors affecting the motivation of the target children we agreed that I would conduct interviews with a sample of children from the class. For the information gathered to be more valid, we decided that interviews should not be conducted by the teacher or a member of school staff, as the children might be less willing to talk openly about features of their school experience that they did not like.

The aim, at this stage, was to find out the views of the target group of demotivated pupils. However, we agreed that it would make the information more meaningful and relevant if data were also collected from children who were not identified as being demotivated, in order that comparisons between these two groups could be made.

Measures

A semi-structured interview schedule was devised containing sixteen statements. Each statement started with the words “During the last week in school…” and was completed by describing an experience (e.g. “I didn’t know how to do well”) or a feeling (e.g. “I felt confident”). The sixteen statements in the interview were selected to correspond to eight of the dimensions on the Motivation Wheel. Self-handicapping and Learned-helplessness were not included, as these were not believed to be relevant dimensions for the target group of children. Table 4, below, shows the interview items and related motivation dimensions. Interviewees were asked to respond to each

statement by indicating the extent of their agreement on a four-point scale (from ‘disagree a lot’ to ‘agree a lot’).

Item	During the last week in school:	Relevant dimensions
1	I was nervous	Anxiety
2	I wanted to come to school	Valuing of school
3	I concentrated	Persistence
4	**I felt positive**	Self-efficacy
5	I worried about getting something wrong	Failure avoidance
6	I felt calm	Anxiety
7	I was interested in working	Mastery orientation
8	**I was confused**	Uncertain control
9	I was confident	Self-efficacy
10	I wanted to give up	Persistence
11	I worked well	Self-regulation
12	**I enjoyed learning something**	Mastery orientation
13	I was organised	Self-regulation
14	I didn't know how to do well	Uncertain control
15	I learnt something useful	Valuing of school
16	**I didn't try as hard as I could**	Failure avoidance

Table 4: Semi-structured interview items and related motivation dimensions

On four of the items (4, 8, 12 and 16) the interviewee was prompted to expand on their response (see Appendix 3 for interview schedule and script for administrators). These four items corresponded to the four most probable factors identified through consultation with the DHT and class teacher. They were also items where further elucidation was required to determine if and how a child’s response related to the relevant motivation dimension. For example, the choice of item 4 (I felt positive) is based on the idea that optimism is a feature of self-efficacy; however there are a number of non-self-efficacy-related reasons why someone might have felt positive, so further

clarification is required. Item 9 (I felt confident) also relates to self-efficacy, but does so more overtly, so there is less need for additional clarification.

Interview procedure

Interviews were conducted by myself and a Graduate Assistant Psychologist with a sample of nine children. The children were selected by the class teacher, with four selected from the target group of demotivated pupils. The teacher was asked to select the remaining five as pupils to be representative of the rest of the class, neither the most nor the least motivated. Interviews were conducted blind, so that the interviewer was not aware whether the interviewee was designated demotivated or not.

Before interviews started, interviewees were told that they did not have to be interviewed if they did not want to, and could leave at any time. We said that we wanted to interview them to find out how they felt about learning, and that while we would be talking to their teachers about what was said in all of the interviews, we would not say who said what. Children were reassured that they would not get into trouble for anything that they said, before being asked if they were willing to be interviewed.

The interviewer read out each of the sixteen statements and the interviewee responded by expressing whether or not they agreed with the statement, and whether they agreed/disagreed “a little” or “a lot”. They could either give responses orally, or by placing a piece of card printed with a smiling face on one side (to signal agreement) and a frowning face on the other side

(signalling disagreement) on a sheet with colour-coded and labelled boxes signalling “a lot” and “a little”. The children were given the opportunity to expand on any of their responses, and were prompted to elaborate on their responses to items 4, 8, 12 and 16 using prompts in the interview administration script. Interviews lasted between ten and fifteen minutes and were audio recorded.

Data analysis

After conducting the interviews the teacher identified which pupils belonged to the target (domotivated) group and which formed the comparison group. The analysis of interview data was focused on identifying differences between these two groups. Interviews yielded two sets of data – one quantitative (the measure of agreement with each item) and one qualitative (interviewees’ verbal responses).

For quantitative analysis, two approaches to examining differences between the groups’ responses were adopted. The first involved assigning a numerical value to a pupil’s item response (i.e. 1 = “agree a lot”; 2 = “agree a little”; 3 = “disagree a little”; 4 = “disagree a lot”), and calculating a mean value for each group for each item. The second approach involved counting the number of students who agreed with each of the statements from the two groups. Given the nature of the data, the small sample size and the number of comparisons to be made, it was not appropriate to use inferential statistics for quantitative analysis.

Thematic analysis was employed for the analysis of qualitative data, following a number of steps identified by Braun and Clarke (2006). The Graduate Assistant Psychologist and I had both taken notes during the interviews, and following the interviews we both listened (separately) to the audio recordings, making additional notes, in order to familiarise ourselves with the data. We each individually sought to use our notes to identify themes within the data. Braun and Clarke suggest that the “keyness” of a theme is determined by the extent to which it captures something important in relation to the research question. In conducting the analysis we were looking for two main things: (1) qualitative differences between children in each of the two groups with regard to their reported beliefs, perceptions and experiences; and (2) reports of beliefs, perceptions and experiences that related to dimensions of the Motivation Wheel.

After separately conducting this initial stage of analysis we then met to discuss and compare our initial analyses. Given the subjectivity involved in qualitative analysis I felt that by having us both analyse the data set separately, and then comparing our analyses we would be able to draw more reliable conclusions. At this stage we also referred to the quantitative data, using this for triangulation with qualitative analysis to see if difference and dimensions identified within the qualitative data were supported by quantitative data and vice versa.

Results: Quantitative data

Tables 5 and 6 (pp. 28-29) show quantitative data based on pupils' responses to interview questions. Table 5 show these mean values, and items are sorted in order of the magnitude of difference between the two groups, while Table 6 shows the number and proportion of students agreeing with each of the interview statements. These two measures indicated certain similarities and differences between the two groups of students. The two items where there appeared to be the greatest differences were the items "I felt positive" and "I was interested in working". For "I felt positive" the mean response of the more motivated group was 1.2, indicating strong agreement, and all of these students agreed with this statement, whereas the mean response of the less motivated group was 3.0, indicating some disagreement, and only two of the less motivated group agreed with this statement. For "I was interested in working" the mean response of the more motivated group was also 1.2 indicating strong agreement with the statement, compared to a mean response of 2.5 for the less motivated group, indicating some disagreement. Again, all of the more motivated pupils agreed with this statement, whereas only two of the less motivated pupils did so. There was also a difference between the groups in terms of their responses to the statement "I was confused", with four of the more motivated group agreeing with this statement, compared to just one of the less motivated students. Mean responses were 2.2 and 3.3, respectively. This suggests a relative strength on the behalf of the less motivated students inasmuch as they report being less likely to be confused by the work that they are set in school.

Item	During the last week in school…	Relevant dimensions	Mean response (1 = "agree a lot"; 4 = "disagree a lot")		Magnitude of difference
			Less motivated	More motivated	
4	I felt positive	Self-efficacy	3.0	1.2	1.8
7	I was interested in working	Mastery orientation	2.5	1.2	1.3
8	I was confused	Uncertain control	3.3	2.2	1.1
10	I wanted to give up	Persistence	2.5	3.4	0.9
13	I was organised	Self-regulation	2.5	1.6	0.9
16	I didn't try as hard as I could	Failure avoidance	3.5	2.6	0.9
9	I was confident	Self-efficacy	2.3	1.4	0.9
6	I felt calm	Anxiety	1.0	1.8	0.8
2	I wanted to come to school	Valuing of school	2.3	1.6	0.7
11	I worked well	Self-regulation	2.0	1.6	0.4
15	I learnt something useful	Valuing of school	2.0	1.6	0.4
14	I didn't know how to do well	Uncertain control	3.3	3.6	0.4
1	I was nervous	Anxiety	3.5	3.8	0.3
12	I enjoyed learning something	Mastery orientation	1.0	1.2	0.2
3	I concentrated	Persistence	1.5	1.4	0.1
5	I worried about getting something wrong	Failure avoidance	2.8	2.8	0.0

Table 5: Pupil responses to interview items

Item	During the last week in school…	Relevant dimensions	Number of students who agreed with the statement		Percentage of students who agreed with the statement		
			Less motivated (n=4)	More motivated (n=5)	Less motivated	More motivated	% difference
8	I was confused	Uncertain control	1	4	25%	80%	55%
7	I was interested in working	Mastery orientation	2	5	50%	100%	50%
4	I felt positive	Self-efficacy	2	5	50%	100%	50%
2	I wanted to come to school	Valuing of school	2	5	50%	100%	50%
13	I was organised	Self-regulation	2	4	50%	80%	30%
15	I learnt something useful	Valuing of school	2	4	50%	80%	30%
10	I wanted to give up	Persistence	2	1	50%	20%	30%
9	I was confident	Self-efficacy	3	5	75%	100%	25%
11	I worked well	Self-regulation	3	5	75%	100%	25%
1	I was nervous	Anxiety	1	0	25%	0%	25%
5	I worried about getting something wrong	Failure avoidance	1	2	25%	40%	15%
16	I didn't try as hard as I could	Failure avoidance	1	2	25%	40%	15%
6	I felt calm	Anxiety	4	5	100%	100%	0%
12	I enjoyed learning something	Mastery orientation	4	5	100%	100%	0%
3	I concentrated	Persistence	4	5	100%	100%	0%
14	I didn't know how to do well	Uncertain control	0	0	0%	0%	0%

Table 6: Pupil agreement with interview statements

Proportionally fewer pupils from the less motivated group agreed with the statements “I wanted to come to school”, “I was organised” and “I learnt something useful”, although for the last of these there was relatively little difference between the groups’ mean scores (more motivated: 2.0; less motivated: 1.6). Pupils from the less motivated group showed greater agreement with the statement, “I wanted to give up”, compared to students from the more motivated group (mean scores were 2.5 and 3.4 respectively), and whereas half of the former group agreed with this, only one of the more motivated students did so. Pupils from the less motivated group showed less strong agreement with the statement, “I was confident” compared to those from the more motivated group (mean scores were 2.3 and 1.4 respectively). All of the more motivated group agreed with this statement, but one of the less motivated group did not.

There were differences in the mean strength of agreement for the statements “I didn’t try as hard as I could” and “I felt calm” of 0.9 and 0.8 respectively, with less motivated pupils less likely to agree with the former and more likely to agree with the latter. These are both indicative of relative strengths, although there was little or no difference between the number and proportion of students agreeing with each of these statements. There was little of no difference between the two groups in their responses to the other items.

Quantitative analysis

The analysis of qualitative interview responses suggested a number of areas of difference between the two groups of pupils.

Interest in school and learning

One area of difference between the two groups was in relation to their reported interest in school and learning. While all of the pupils in the comparison group agreed that they had been interested in working, and wanted to come to school, only two of the four target pupils agreed with each of these statements. One of the target pupils who did say that he had wanted to come to school gave a very specific reason (because they were doing an interesting activity in Design Technology – making a torch). One of the comparison pupils stated simply: "I just like school". All of the target students identified aspects of learning that they did not like, with three of the four referring to literacy and numeracy. Indeed one of two the target students who *did* report having felt positive (compared to all of the comparison students), when asked why, responded:

> *I don't really know, cos I haven't been doing that good with my literacy. I ain't getting on all that much with literacy. [Interviewer: How does that make you feel?] Not positive. Don't know what to do.*

When it came to identifying things they did find interesting or enjoy learning, the target students responded with specific subjects and learning experiences (common ones included learning about the Tudors in History, Design Technology, Art and Games). They also tended to refer to acquiring factual knowledge (e.g. "I know about Francis Drake", "I know what a perimeter is")

rather than developing understanding or skills. Comparison students, however, identified a range of activities and subjects, with four of the five mentioning either literacy or numeracy or both. All gave multiple examples of things that they had enjoyed learning, and a number also talked about how they enjoyed school in a more general sense, referring to aspects beyond classroom learning, including friendships and participation in extra-curricula activities such as sports, music and drama. By contrast, one of the target students reported having been bullied, and another said they were usually unhappy in the playground. Only one of the target students made a reference to an extra-curricular activity, and even this positive experience was negatively framed:

> *I'm a little bit positive because I joined a football club and I feel really proud that I've joined because I've never joined any football club, and my dad's proud of me as well, but most of the time I feel really negative.*

Effort, ability and evaluation

It is interesting that the quantitative measures of agreement suggest that the comparison group were more likely to have felt confused than the target pupils, and were also more likely to say that they had not tried as hard as they could. Both of these imply less adaptive motivation than for pupils in the target group. Pupils' comments in relation to these items, however, suggest something different. The four comparison group students who reported having been confused all identified specific instances such as with a maths problem, or as a result of a misunderstanding. The one target student who reported being confused said: "I'm confused in everything really – I don't like learning".

With regard to trying hard, although the interview item referred to trying "as hard as I *could*", both of the comparison students who said that they had not done this, rephrased the statement, saying they did not try as hard as they *should*, in explaining their responses. Another of the comparison pupils stated: "I tried hard in my tests – you have to do your best". Three of the four target group pupils did not agree that they had not tried as hard as they could, and two stated that they *always* tried hard. When it came to reasons for trying hard, however, the target students identified a number of reasons relating to avoiding negative evaluation, such as not failing a test, not getting a bad report, or "so I don't get in trouble with my mum", thus appearing to endorse avoidance goals. None of the comparison students made similar statements.

More target group pupils than comparison pupils agreed that they had wanted to give up, and three of the four target group pupils expressed negative perceptions of their abilities (particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy) during the course of interviews. It appeared that a number of the target pupils perceived themselves as trying hard, but with there being little relationship between the effort they expended and the outcome that they achieved, with success attributed to uncontrollable factors. One of the target pupils stated that: "If something is easy I enjoy learning more".

In relation to Motivation Wheel dimensions, three particular areas were identified where the target group appeared to respond differently to the control group. These were self-efficacy, mastery orientation and failure avoidance.

Self-efficacy

Pupils in the target group were less likely to report feeling positive or confident than those in the comparison group. Moreover their interview responses suggested they experienced a relative lack of affirming experiences in school, and most had doubts about their ability. Most of these pupils referred to not being good in core subjects (literacy and numeracy). In relation to perceived ability, two of the comparison students appeared to draw general conclusions about their perceived competence in core areas (e.g. not being good at school because of struggling in numeracy and/or literacy). Comparison students appeared to have more general positive views about their abilities, and challenges or difficulties were identified as exceptions.

Mastery orientation

Pupils in the target group were less likely to agree with the statement “I was interested in working”. While there was no difference between the groups in terms of the level of agreement with the statement “I enjoyed learning something”, it was apparent from open-ended responses that there was a qualitative difference in the types of learning that the two groups enjoyed. Whereas the conmparison group talked about enjoying learning in a general sense, across a number of subject areas, and emphasised the utility of what they learnt and the value of improvement, the target group tended to focus on specific instances of interesting knowledge that they had acquired, viewing learning as an accumulation of facts.

Failure avoidance

This is linked to mastery orientation inasmuch as they are both concerned with a student's reasons for learning. There was no real difference, in quantitative terms, between the two groups of pupils' responses to these interview items; however it was apparent in what students in the target group were saying that the reasons for learning that they tended to hold focused on concern about external evaluation: avoiding disappointing teachers or parents, or avoiding failing tests.

At the initial planning stage, the teachers had identified possible reasons to explain why the target pupils appeared demotivated. Some of these are supported by the findings of interviews. For example, the teachers suggested that target pupils did not value school and learning, and could not see the point in doing well. While such statements possibly overstate the case, it did appear that target students had less positive views of school and learning in general, and were less mastery-oriented in particular. The teachers had suggested that these pupils might be unsure about how to do well, implying a weak sense of control. Pupils' responses did not appear to support this directly, with no target students saying they did not know how to do well, and these students being less likely to report being confused. However, target pupils did appear to identify relationships between effort, ability, tasks and outcomes, and for most it appeared that ability played the key role. Unlike comparison pupils, there was not an expectation that trying hard would lead to success; success was not anticipated unless the task was easy or the pupil was good at something.

4.2.4 Reflection and planning for action

After completing analysis of the students' interview responses, I conducted a consultation with the DHT and class teacher where I reported back findings. In discussing findings we came to use the term "reasons for learning" to cover both mastery orientation and failure avoidance, as it appeared to be the case that students from the target group did not hold positive (mastery oriented) reasons for learning indicating intrinsic motivation, but rather held negative (failure avoidant) reasons, based on external evaluation.

We discussed possible strategies to address the difficulties identified in the interviews. I had identified certain possible strategies and a number were suggested in the information handout that I had given to the teachers at the initial planning stage. It was important, however, for the teacher to choose what areas she wanted to focus on and what strategies she wished to use to address the problems that had been identified. The teacher decided that to improve student confidence and self-efficacy she wanted to focus on increasing opportunities for praising students, making this more public, and linking praise to good work or successes so that students would feel positive about their achievements. To address the issue of reasons for learning, she decided that she wanted to emphasise positive reasons for learning, especially by reflecting with pupils on why it was important to learn certain things, how learning could be useful outside of the classroom context, and why learning and improvement were interesting in their own right.

Goal attainment scaling was used at this stage to consider what outcomes would be hoped for and how the success or otherwise of targets could be evaluated. We constructed a goal attainment scale for each of the areas of concern (self-efficacy and reasons for learning). Table 7, over, shows the agreed descriptors, targets and scales.

We discussed how to evaluate the effectiveness of the target strategies in meeting their desired ends and decided that teacher observations and perceptions would be the most practical and valid measure for the purposes of this intervention. There were a total of six students about whose motivation and engagement the teacher was concerned. We agreed that outcomes would be assessed in terms of the number of these students in whom the teacher noticed improvements.

The targets were agreed shortly after the start of the Spring term. They were reviewed and evaluated on two occasions at five, and then ten weeks later. I had a final review meeting with the teacher 18 weeks (15 teaching weeks) after the start of the implementation of the targets.

		Target area	
		Confidence and self-efficacy	**Reasons for learning**
Baseline descriptor		A number of students display low levels of confidence across the board. They would struggle to say what they are good at.	A number of students do not see their own learning as relevant, meaningful or beneficial to themselves. They characterise the value of learning in terms of external evaluation or rewards.
Target		Make praise positive. Create and plan opportunities for children to receive praise, and praise openly in front of peers. Have children show successes to other members of staff.	Teacher to focus on emphasising positive reasons for learning and communicate the usefulness of what is learnt.
Levels of expected outcome			
+2	**Much more than expected**	Noticeable improvement in all target children and among other members of the class.	Noticeable improvement in all target children and among other members of the class.
+1	**More than expected**	Noticeable improvement in 4-6 children. They are more likely to contribute, answer questions and take part in class discussion.	Noticeable improvement, based on verbal feedback, in 3-6 children, where they can identify “good” reasons for learning something.
0	**Most likely outcome**	Noticeable improvement in 3 children. They are more likely to contribute, answer questions and take part in class discussion.	Noticeable improvement, based on verbal feedback, in 2 children, where they can identify “good” reasons for learning something.
-1	**Less than expected**	Noticeable improvement in the confidence of 1-2 children.	Noticeable improvement, based on verbal feedback, in 1 child, where they can identify “good” reasons for learning something.
-2	**Much less than expected**	No noticeable improvement.	No noticeable improvement.

Table 7: Goal attainment scale levels, targets and baseline descriptors.

4.2.5 GAS reviews

At the first review, the teacher reported that the most likely outcome on the GAS form had been met for the ‘confidence and self-efficacy’ target. She reported that at least three of the target children appeared happier and smiled

more, and they were keener to contribute in class and put up their hands. Moreover they were less disruptive and more engaged in their learning. For the ‘reasons for learning’ target the teacher reported that the outcome was more than expected. There were more than three of the target children who would say that they were interested in learning, and be able to explain what interested them and how what they learnt related to activities outside of school. The teacher was given the option of identifying new targets or persisting with the existing ones. She chose to keep the original targets as she felt that good progress was being made with them.

At this stage it appeared to me that the teacher had become more positive, optimistic and confident as a result of participating in the project. She had developed and refined targets; for example as well as focusing on praising students, she was saying that she was proud of them and asking if they felt proud as a way of promoting self-efficacy and self-esteem. She was also innovating. There was one student who the teacher was concerned was relatively able but particularly disengaged and also not well-liked by his peers. She assigned him a role of explaining things to is peers, acting as a tutor or a mentor, and he apparently responded well to this responsibility and the trust placed in him. It gave him reason to pay attention and make the effort to make sense of things so that he could pass his knowledge on, and it also allowed him to play a role that was valued and appreciated by his peers.

At the second review, after one term, the outcomes from the first review had been maintained or improved upon. In terms of confidence and self-efficacy

the ‘more than expected’ outcome had been achieved, with the teacher reporting that between four and six of the target children appeared more confident and were more likely to put up their hands and contribute to class discussions. Moreover she also reported that their behaviour had improved. They were getting fewer warnings and missing fewer playtimes due to disruptive behaviour. For ‘reasons for learning’, the more than expected outcome had been maintained. The teacher reported that most of the target children were able to discuss how their learning relates to activities outside of school.

At the end of the project, I met again with the class teacher. She reported that there had been noticeable improvements in a number of the target pupils and these improvements had been maintained. It was not simply the case that the pupils appeared more motivated, confident and engaged with their learning, but also their behaviour had improved in and out of class.

In terms of the benefits for the target group of students, she said:

> *I think their concentration span is probably longer because they’re realising and understanding why they are learning it – they are listening more and they know how to relate their learning to what they want to do when they get older.*

Regarding benefits for all of the students in the class, she said:

> *I think it’s made them more aware of why they’re doing the things they’re doing so they know why they’re learning, rather than just the teacher is telling you to learn something.*

4.3 Discussion

This paper has presented an action research project aimed at improving pupil motivation. The project involved two action research cycles. The first involved planning and implementing an approach involving pupil interviews in order to gain an understanding of issues relating motivation among the target group of pupils. The second cycle involved reflecting on this understanding for the class teacher to identify and implement strategies aimed at improving pupil motivation and engagement. The effectiveness of these strategies was evaluated using goal attainment scaling.

Positive outcomes were identified for the target group of children who were initially identified as being demotivated. The teacher reported that most of these children appeared more confident, were more willing to contribute in class, and were able to discuss the practical relevance of learning activities. She also reported that the behaviour of these children had improved, and they were receiving fewer consequences for negative behaviour.

There were also benefits for the teacher too. She appeared to become more confident, and was willing to refine and develop strategies to motivate pupils, including identifying a way of engaging one particularly disengaged pupil through assigning to him a role of responsibility as a peer tutor. At the final meeting the teacher noted that she felt that she had benefited from the opportunity to learn more about motivation and discuss ideas about how to support children in her class:

> *Sometimes you feel like you're in isolation – you know what your colleagues are doing in this school but it's nice to have somebody … to say, 'Well actually that is a good idea'. It's been nice to have the support and talk through ideas and discuss with other people methods of teaching that have worked in motivation and get other ideas to try.*

It is worth noting that when I was originally approached by the DHT about working to support the group of demotivated pupils, she suggested that I might work directly with them, either individually or in a group, to implement an intervention to improve their motivation. While there is evidence for the effectiveness of such group-based interventions to "teach" motivation to demotivated students (Martin, 2008), I considered that such an approach would ignore contextual (i.e. classroom) factors relating to motivation and also be disempowering for the teacher. It would also potentially be non-inclusive and involve explicitly identifying the less motivated pupils as having problems that they needed to address. From a practical point of view, such an approach would be very time-consuming to implement. Hence I suggested that an action research project that involved the teacher and focused on class-based strategies would be more appropriate.

Action research emphasises the importance of participation. Within this project the degree of teacher participation varied at different stages. At the initial planning stage both teachers were involved in identifying concerns and possible hypotheses. Following this, they were much less involved in gathering and analysing data relating to pupils' views, but were more involved in identifying strategies and evaluating them, with the class teacher's views here taking priority over other perspectives. There were some pragmatic

reasons for this, such as the belief that more valid data could be obtained if pupils were not interviewed by school staff. This variation in levels of participation also sought to capitalise on the complementary strengths of the individuals involved and to identify complementary roles.

Action research has been criticised for being atheoretical (Atkinson & Delamont , 1985). This was not the case here. I saw it as part of my role to contribute a theoretical perspective and apply it to enhance the understanding of the problematic situation that the teacher identified. There are debates about what the distinctive role or contribution of an Educational Psychologist is (Cameron, 2006; Norwich, 2005). Here, my distinctive contribution involved applying psychological theory in relation to motivation, and also identifying a framework (action research) for addressing the teacher's concerns.

This research is, of course, not without its limitations. In particular there are questions about the reliability and validity of a number of the measures used. For example the semi-structured interview was not a validated tool, but something that I had developed based upon the Motivation Wheel. It is not clear, therefore, that all of the items did correspond to particular constructs or that from pupil responses one could reliably infer particular patterns of behaviour. Certainly it is a tool that would benefit from further refinement. In asking about pupil's experiences "in the last week" there is the potential for responses to be altered by recent experiences that may be atypical. Given the small number of pupils who were interviewed, such potential influences would

have a significant impact on the overall dataset, potentially skewing it to suggest invalid findings.

Efforts were made to increase the reliability of interview data and analysis, by conducting them blind, using a standard script, and initial analysis of the whole dataset being conducted separately by two individuals (me and the Graduate Assistant Psychologist). Nevertheless, it is not possible to eliminate subjectivity, and given the preceding discussions with teachers, I was aware of a number of possible explanations for differences in motivation, which could have induced a confirmatory bias, both at the interview stage and the analysis stage. Also, given the theory informing the research, the meanings attributed to what pupils said were not necessarily “grounded” in the data, so that potentially significant things could have been overlooked or misinterpreted because they did not accord with my theoretical stance. Interview data collection and analysis would have been rendered more valid by adopting an iterative approach of framing initial hypotheses, and then collecting further data to test and develop these initial theories.

Judgements about the effectiveness of the project, in terms of outcomes for children, were based on the teacher’s observations and perceptions. The reliability of these is obviously open to question. For more reliable judgements about the effectiveness of the strategies that she employed to be made there would be a need for other observers to both verify the changes in children’s behaviour that she described, and also verify her use of the strategies that she had chosen to use. The validity of the findings would be improved with

additional measures of changes in the children's behaviour and perceptions, for example through follow-up interviews and analysis of school records relating to attainment and behaviour. It should be stressed, however, that the aim of the present study, and its positioning as an action research project, was for improvement, rather than for discovering generalisable knowledge. At the project's inception the teacher believed that there was a problem, and at its ending she believed that the situation had improved significantly. In this respect it can be considered to have been effective.

Given that this was a one-off action research project, focused on one teacher and a small number of children, and given the limitations identified above, it might be suggested that no generalisations can be made. Bassey (1999) suggests that research can make "fuzzy generalisations", which state what *may* happen and suggest possibility rather than certainty. Such generalisations, he argues, reflect the fact that there are many variables that affect learning, and educational research is, almost inevitably, context bound. Thus it may be appropriate to suggest that the present study indicates that the motivation theory and the Motivation Wheel may be used to improve pupil motivation.

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, an approach to motivation that focuses on particular cognitive constructs, can be criticised for implying an individual difference focus, and overlooking class-based and other situational influences on motivation. To be sure, there is a place for research into effective pedagogies to create motivating conditions for all children. But this is

as well as, rather than instead of, attention to individual differences. In the present study the problem that was identified was that there *did appear to be* individual differences, and so such a focus was merited. But as Pintrich (2003) argues, social-cognitive constructs and an individual differences focus can only be useful to educators if such constructs are amenable to change, and if there is recognition that motivation can be improved through the actions of teachers and others who work with children and young people.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – letter to parents

Dear Parent /Carer,

We are fortunate to have a trainee educational psychologist working with the school at the moment doing a project about students' attitudes to learning. As part of this project he will be working with your child's class and may wish to interview your child. Any information about specific children will be treated confidentially. It will not be shared with anyone, unless it raises concerns about the physical, emotional or educational wellbeing of the child.

If you have any concerns, queries or objections to this, please do not hesitate to contact _____.

Yours faithfully,

Appendix 2 – handout supplies to teachers

MOTIVATION

If a child appears demotivated it is important to remember three things:

- No-one simply decides not to be motivated – there is always a reason;
- Motivation and engagement are changeable, but it takes work;
- Just because a child is demotivated, it does not make them a bad person.

Motivation is not one thing; a child's motivation and engagement with learning is made up of a number of factors. One way psychologists have looked at these factors is to divide them up into cognitions (thought and beliefs) and behaviours, and into those which are adaptive (supporting motivation) and those which are maladaptive (decreasing motivation).

	ADAPTIVE	**MALADAPTIVE**
COGNITIONS	SELF-EFFICACY VALUING OF SCHOOL MASTERY ORIENTATION	ANXIETY UNCERTAIN CONTROL FAILURE AVOIDANCE
BEHAVIOURS	SELF-REGULATION PERSISTENCE	SELF-HANDICAPPING LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

What this means:

PROMOTE THESE

Self-efficacy – this is how much a child believes in themselves and their ability in a given area. The more confident they are, the more motivated they are likely to be.

Valuing of school – how much a child values education generally and the specific learning tasks that they are engaged in; how relevant they seem to their life and aspirations.

Mastery orientation – how much a student gets satisfaction from learning new things and doing them well.

Self-regulation – how well as student is able to organise and plan their behaviour so that it meets their desired goals.

Persistence – how much a student will keep trying in the face of a challenge.

REDUCE THESE

Anxiety – how much a student worries about their work. Even if a student worries about doing work well, this can be disabling as their anxiety may distract them or prevent risk-taking.

Uncertain control – how much a child feels they don't, or don't know how to, control whether they succeed or fail – e.g. "I only did well because the test was easy"

Failure avoidance – how much a child is motivated by fear of failure and doubts about their ability to do well. Often these students can work hard, but will view setbacks as confirming their doubts, and may only want to do things that they know they can already achieve at.

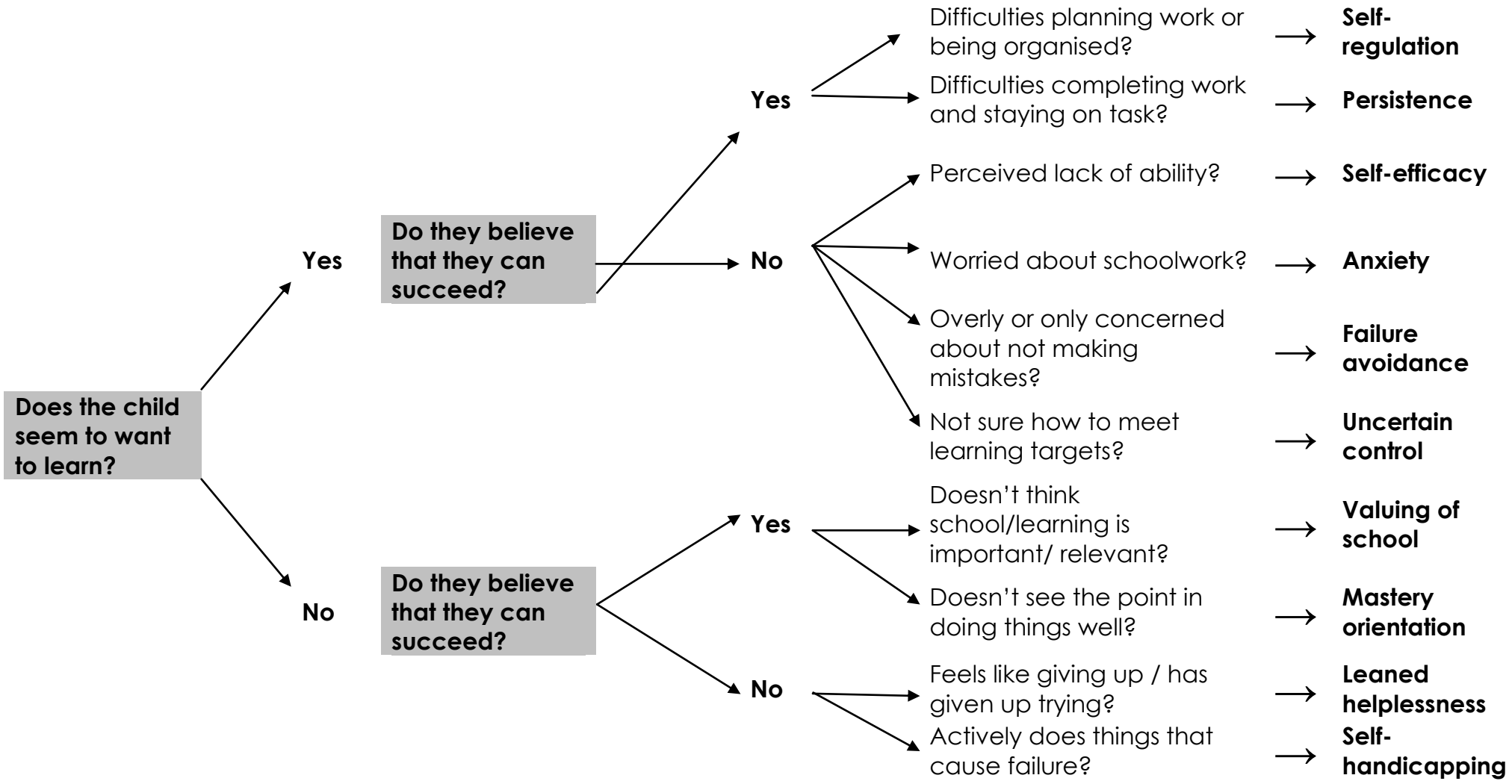
Self-handicapping – these students also have doubts about their ability, but as a result actively engage in behaviours that reduce their chances of success (e.g. leaving or rushing work). In this way they can protect their self-esteem by blaming poor performance on time-wasting rather than a lack of ability.

Learned helplessness – sometimes called failure acceptance. Having previous experience of failure, the student has given up even trying to avoid it. They don't engage because they believe their only choice is "try and fail" or "not try and fail", so they can't see the point in trying.

Points to remember:

- All students will have strengths in some of these areas and weaknesses in others
- Often there's more than one cause of poor motivation
- All the adaptive cognitions and behaviours are learnable; all the maladaptive ones are changeable

Finding out what the problem is:



	What can you do?	How do you do it?
Low self-efficacy	• Maximise opportunities for success	Chunk work into manageable bits so each one represents a success
	• Redefine success so that it is accessible to all students	Encourage students to see success in terms of "personal bests", improvement and skill development
	• Communicate positive expectations	Be optimistic that they can achieve and challenge negative beliefs
Valuing of school is low	• Try to make learning seem more relevant	Show how what they learn can be used in their life, or how it relates to their interests (e.g. to films, stories, hobbies) Be a role model by showing how you value what is being taught
Mastery orientation	• Highlight importance of **Personal Bests** (PB's)	Encourage to improve work by competing with previous performance rather than other students
	• Encourage a broader view of success	Cast success in terms of understanding something, being interested, developing new skills
	• Encourage to view mistakes as a "**launch pad for success**"	Explain how mistakes tell them where they went wrong and how they can improve
Self-regulation	• Improve planning of work	Make sure children understand what the task is, and encourage them to ask if unsure Explain the steps they need to take to complete a task
	• Improve organisation	Encourage students to write a "to do" list, and identify when they will do homework
Persistence	• Use goal-setting	With students set targets that are both SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-specific) and desirable (students must want to achieve them)
	• Focus on successes	Encourage students to think of times when they have "broken through" and reflect on how they did this
	• Achievable milestones	Break work up into, say, 15 minute blocks, with a 2 minute break after each one
Anxiety	• Reduce uncertainty	Clear objectives and expectations
	• Relaxation	Teach ways of relaxing
Failure avoidance	• Encourage to view mistakes as a "**launch pad for success**"	Explain how mistakes tell them where they went wrong and how they can improve
	• Challenge unhelpful views of learning	E.g. "I only work to avoid getting into trouble / looking dumb" (unhelpful) versus "I work hard to do the best I can" (helpful)

What's the problem?	What can you do?	How do you do it?
Uncertain control	• Develop sense of control	Give choices about ways of achieving objectives
	• Motivational feedback	Ensure feedback says why they did how they did, and how to improve next time
	• Focus on what is controllable	Show students that they can control how they work and how hard they work, but not other factors, such as luck, noisy classmates, difficulty of work etc. Encourage them to focus on what they can control
Self-handicapping	• Find out why	Ask students about why they self-handicap. This may link into other areas, e.g. if they are too competitive refer to mastery orientation, if they feel that trying hard will not help, refer to uncertain control
	• Encourage to view mistakes as a "**launch pad for success**"	Explain how mistakes tell them where they went wrong and how they can improve
	• Make it clear that their worth as a person does not depend on what they achieve	What counts is trying your best. Mistakes reflect errors in strategy
Learned helplessness	• Provide opportunities for students to "glimpse" the good things	See if they recognise some things that are OK about school – friends, activities, work etc. Provide opportunities for examples of success that can be seen as evidence of a better future
	• Discourage helplessness	Help student identify someone who can help and encourage them

Appendix 3 – Interview schedule and script

		I agree ☺		Disagree ☹		
	During the last week in school:	A lot	A little	A little	A lot	Additional comments
1	I was nervous					Q4.
2	I wanted to come to school					
3	I concentrated					
4	**I felt positive**					
5	I worried about getting something wrong					Q8.
6	I felt calm					
7	I was interested in working					
8	**I was confused**					
9	I was confident					Q12.
10	I wanted to give up					
11	I worked well					
12	**I enjoyed learning something**					
13	I was organised					Q16.
14	I didn't know how to do well					
15	I learnt something useful					
16	**I didn't try as hard as I could**					

Script for Administrators

This scale is to be completed by the administrator whilst talking to the child.

Explain the scale to children as follows:

I'm going to read out some things that you might ***have thought or felt during the last week in school.***

First of all I want you to say whether you agree or disagree.
So for example, the first one is:
'During the last week in school, I had lots of energy.'
You might ***agree*** *if that's right about you, or* ***disagree*** *if it's not right about you.*

What would you say – agree or disagree?

Once the child has given a response say,

Either (if agree)

Now I want you to say whether you agree 'a little' or agree 'a lot'. So, is it a little right about you, or a lot right about you?

Or (if disagree)

Now I want you to say whether you disagree 'a little' or disagree 'a lot.' So, is it a little wrong about you, or is it a lot wrong about you?

Record the child's response on the score sheet.

Continue in this way for each of the questions, reducing the amount of instructions as appropriate to the child's needs.

For questions 4, 8, 12 and 16 give further prompts to find out:

a) When and why they felt this
b) Whether this happens often
c) Whether they liked it, or whether they want to change it

Record the child's responses on tape if possible, to be summarised in the empty box on the response sheet later, or summarise during the interview.

5. Classroom behaviour management: Educational Psychologists' views on effective practice

5.1 Introduction

The behaviour of children and young people in schools appears to be a perennial concern to both educators and the wider public alike. The most extreme forms of behaviour, such as violence and aggression, may be those which capture the attention of the public via the media; however this does not mean that these behaviours are the source of greatest concern to education professionals. Twenty years ago, the Elton Report into Discipline in Schools (Department for Education and Science, 1989) found that teachers were most concerned about the cumulative effects of disruption caused by persistent, but individually relatively trivial, incidents of misbehaviour. More recent evidence from school inspections (Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), 2005) accords with this view: low level disruption is the most common form of poor behaviour, and is particularly pernicious in its cumulative effects.

The Elton Report stated that: "teachers' group management skills are probably the single most important factor in achieving good standards of classroom behaviour" (DES, 1989: p. 70). OFSTED (2005) emphasises as important a somewhat broader range of whole-school factors, such as leadership, training, consistency and monitoring of behaviour via information systems. Nevertheless it remains the case that a key aspect of improving the behaviour of children and young people in schools involves the classroom practice of individual teachers.

Educational Psychologists (EPs) can play a significant role in helping schools to address issues involving behaviour. They are often called upon to consult and advise in relation to children and young people exhibiting problematic behaviour, as well as to train staff in approaches to behaviour management and support. As such, classroom behaviour management (CBM) is a subject of some significant interest to EPs; it is something all are likely to need to know about in their day-to-day practice. Moreover, at the heart of the notion of CBM is an attempt to control or alter other people's behaviour through, for example, increasing motivation, engagement or compliance. This is would appear to be very much a psychological enterprise.

5.1.1 What is effective CBM?

There is an extensive literature on approaches to CBM, which is aimed at academic, professional and lay audiences, and which reflects the concern that CBM is to educators and parents. While there is no one specific technique or approach that can be identified as CBM (Little & Akin-Little , 2003), research has identified a number of elements that contribute to effective CBM.

Rules

Rules are identified as one feature of effective CBM both in evaluations of school-based programmes (Algozzine & Algozzine, 2007; Gottfredson et al., 1993; Jackman & Rosenberg, 2003) and surveys of teachers' views about CBM (Akin-Little et al., 2007; Little & Akin-Little, 2008; van Tartwijk et al.,

2009). Little and Akin-Little (2008) state that firm but fair rules are an essential element of any CBM programme, and identify certain qualities associated with good rules, such as using positive, specific and simple language, and having as few rules as possible (they suggest a maximum of five).

Reinforcement of appropriate behaviour

According to (Hayes et al., 2007), “Verbal reinforcement is possibly the most fundamental tool available to teachers and arguably the most powerful and meaningful for pupils” (p. 162). Consequently they chose to increase the rate of positive responses as a means of reinforcing appropriate behaviour, and thereby improving classroom behaviour. Unsurprisingly, reinforcement of appropriate behaviour is identified as a key element of effective CBM by school inspectors (Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), 2005; Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), 2006), teachers (Akin-Little et al., 2007; Little & Akin-Little, 2008; van Tartwijk et al., 2009), and in programmes which have been evaluated empirically (Gottfredson et al., 1993; Hayes et al., 2007).

Response to undesired behaviour

“Let them know they got consequences and punishment for their behaviour” – so said Terrance, one of the participants in Cothran et al.'s (2003) survey of students’ perspectives on effective CBM (p. 438). Teachers also identify the importance of responding to disruption or unwanted behaviour in the class, although unlike Terrance, teachers in surveys identify more subtle responses

to disruptive behaviour such as deliberate ignoring or using a long stare, as well as more punitive strategies such as a verbal reprimand (Akin-Little et al., 2007; Little & Akin-Little, 2008; van Tartwijk et al., 2009).

Staff-student relationships and interactions

(van Tartwijk et al., 2009) interviewed twelve teachers who had been identified as being successful at creating positive working environments in their classrooms. The majority of these teachers identified the importance of creating and maintaining positive relationships with their students. This finding is echoed in interviews with students, where care and respect are viewed as components of positive relationships that contribute to improved student behaviour (Cothran et al., 2003).

Expectations

School inspectors report that in lessons where staff have high expectations about the behaviour of children and young people, students' behaviour is better than in lessons where such expectations are not in evidence (OFSTED, 2005). Similarly, high expectations were seen as a feature of schools which had made progress in improving pupil behaviour following inspections where behaviour had been judged to be unsatisfactory (OFSTED, 2006). Students also report that setting out and enforcing high expectations from the start is important (Cothran, et al., 2003).

Procedures for chronic misbehaviour

Teachers accept that – in spite of their best endeavours – inappropriate behaviour may sometimes persist or escalate. Consequently having clear, agreed procedures to deal with this is seen as an important element of effective CBM (Akin-Little et al., 2007; Little & Akin-Little, 2008; van Tartwijk et al., 2009). As Little and Akin-Little put it: “The worst time to select a punisher is during an episode of student misbehaviour” (2008: p. 229). Similarly, determining a shared, consistent approach to responding to chronic and more severe behaviours is seen as a key element in CBM programmes which have been positively evaluated (Algozzine & Algozzine, 2007; Jackman & Rosenberg, 2003).

Classroom environment

A final element of effective CBM that has been identified in the research literature relates to classroom environment. For example, some teachers identify seating of students in assigned places and distribution of resources as contributors to optimal learning (Shin & Koh, 2007). (Gottfredson et al., 1993) included improving classroom organisation as a feature of their school behaviour programme. OFSTED state that “the quality of accommodation and of the learning environment has a significant impact on the behaviour of pupils and students; it should not be underestimated” (2005: p. 19). Among things they identify as being conducive to improved behaviour are displays celebrating students’ work; clean and bright classrooms; good acoustics; having sufficient space to store equipment, and having dedicated spaces for special equipment or activities.

5.1.2 The psychology of CBM

Behavioural approaches

Behavioural strategies aim to increase desirable behaviour using reinforcement, and to decrease undesirable behaviour using extinction (withdrawal of reinforcement through ignoring unwanted behaviour or using "time out") and by focusing on antecedent setting conditions for unwanted behaviour in the class environment. Behavioural psychology plays a key role in certain whole school behaviour management approaches, such as Assertive Discipline (Canter & Canter 1992) which has be shown to increase on-task behaviour and reduce disruption (Swinson & Melling, 1995). Other behavioural approaches include the use of a school-wide raffle, where pupils' appropriate behaviour is reinforced using tickets which are entered into a draw to receive a prize (Roderick et al., 1997), and the 'Good Behaviour Game' in which pupils are put into teams and compete to receive privileges or prizes based on which team receives the fewest marks for negative behaviours (Tingstrom et al., 2006).

Previous research has provided evidence of the popularity among EPS of behavioural approaches. Extrapolating from a questionnaire survey of EPs from a random selection of Educational Psychology Services, Miller (1989) concluded that between 50 and 86 per cent of EPs use behavioural approaches. As Miller puts it: "Whatever else may be said about these interventions, it is certainly true that behavioural approaches receive widespread support from educational psychologists" (1989: p. 146).

Frederickson and Cline (2002) report a survey of EPs in one Local Authority which asked what types of strategies EPs had recommended for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties over the course of one term, and also how often EPs recommended different types of strategy. Half of EPs reported having recommended behavioural strategies at some point, with a quarter having done so with what they described as high frequency. Just over a quarter had recommended cognitive interventions, but only 3.5 per cent reported doing so with high frequency. Less than one fifth of recommended interventions were systemic.

In spite (or perhaps because) of such popularity, a number of researchers have reported misgivings about the effectiveness and appropriateness of behavioural approaches. One concern is that an emphasis on the use of rewards to promote positive behaviour can lead to a reduction in intrinsic motivation for a task and reduced task performance once a reward is withdrawn. An oft-cited example of this was reported by Lepper et al. (1973) in which a group of nursery children were told that they would be rewarded for drawing and were then rewarded for doing so. In a follow-up free-play session, where no reward was promised or given, these children spent less time engaged in drawing than comparison groups who had either not been rewarded or who had been rewarded without being told about it. They also spent less time drawing than they had before the reward had been given. Lepper *et al*. (1973) refer to this as the *overjustification effect*, whereby the presence of a reward for participating in an already interesting activity gives an additional, unneeded justification, and leads an individual to perceive their

actions as being motivated by the external reward, rather than the intrinsic attraction of the activity, and consequently overlook intrinsic motivation as a subsequent justification for engaging in the activity. If managing classroom behaviour involves encouraging engagement in learning activities through rewarding task engagement, then this would appear to be counter-productive as it would reduce learners' intrinsic motivation.

A review of experimental studies looking at the effects of reward and reinforcement on intrinsic motivation by Cameron and Pierce (1994) suggests that such concerns might be unfounded. In two meta-analyses covering 101 studies they found that overall reward and reinforcement did not decrease motivation. There was only a negative effect when rewards were expected and tangible (as was the case in Lepper *et al*., 1973), they were given simply for engaging in an activity, and intrinsic motivation was measured by free time on task. Where tangible rewards were not expected or they were contingent on level of performance or completing a task, this did not negatively effect intrinsic motivation. Moreover, verbal rewards actually increased rather then decreased intrinsic motivation (Cameron and Pierce, 1994).

Further criticisms of behavioural approaches to CBM include contentions that the use of rewards to reinforce behaviour are potentially coercive, diminish pupil autonomy and do little to foster appropriate social skills (Lake, 2004; Nie & Lau, 2009), and that behaviourism offers reductionist oversimplifications of the nature and causes of behavioural difficulties (Bromfield, 2006). Indeed, it is argued that the popularity of behavioural approaches within schools owes

less to a balanced assessment of their benefits, than it does to the establishment of a hegemony within training of educators and psychologists which privileges reactive and quick-fix solutions (Braden et al., 2001; Bromfield, 2006).

Psychodynamic approaches

Psychodynamic approaches based on attachment theory emphasise the importance of secure and trusting relationships, as well as emotional containment and expression (Frederickson and Cline 2002).

It has been suggested that effective teachers play a role akin to that of good parents in terms of providing consistent, positive expectations and a disposition towards nurturing (Wentzel, 2002). The importance to children of stable, caring and trusting relationships with adults is emphasised within attachment theory, which provides the basis for nurture groups as an intervention to help children to learn developmentally appropriate behaviours (Boxall, 1976). 'Classic' nurture groups were developed and described by Marjorie Boxall in the 1970s and involve children attending a class of up to twelve pupils, with two adults, within a structured and supportive environment. The class has designated areas and involves activities which are designed to foster social development, clear communication, supporting and caring relationships, cooperation and positive interactions, as well as core curriculum areas (Boxall, 2002). Sanders (2007) reports that children attending a nurture group provision made significantly greater emotional and behavioural gains

compared to a matched sample of primary school children, with similar levels of need, who attended a primary school without a nurture group.

While it is important to note that nurture groups are a form of specialised intervention rather an approach to CBM *per se,* two considerations are relevant which imply that the theory underlying nurture groups can be applied to inform approaches to CBM. First, there is evidence that less intensive interventions which are based upon nurturing principles, rather than following the classic nurture group model, can be effective at improving children's behaviour and promoting positive development (Scott & Lee, 2009). Second, it should not be forgotten that the nurture group, in the classic model, is the site in which children are educated for almost all of their time during the intervention, and so it is where CBM happens for those children. Given that the children who access nurture groups are expected to be those identified as having social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, it would appear, *a fortiriori*, that nurturing principles provide a model for effective CBM more generally.

Systemic approaches

Systemic approaches, which focus on the social interactions where problematic behaviour occurs, with emphasis the behaviour, the social environment's reaction to that behaviour and social cognitions and/or skills (Frederickson & Cline, 2002).

Framework for Intervention (Ali et al., 1997; Daniels & Williams, 2000; Williams & Daniels, 2000) is one such systemic approach. At the heart of this approach is the idea that behavioural problems result from complex interactions between the individual, school, family, community and wider society (Daniels & Williams, 2000). Consequently it emphasises a 'no blame' approach where school staff, pupils and others are supported and encouraged to collaborate and solve problems with pupil behaviour. An effective learning environment is seen as being key to promoting positive behaviour, and this is identified as the first site for intervention within the *Framework* when concerns are raised about pupil behaviour.

Systemic approaches are not necessarily at-odds with other approaches to CBM, rather they seek to address the interplay between multiple influences. For example, from a systemic perspective behavioural CBM strategies based on reinforcement and punishment are important, as a short-term means to addressing immediate behaviour problems, but effective school discipline relies on these operant strategies being allied to preventative strategies which promote a positive climate, and the promotion of pupil self-discipline through decision-making and social problem-solving strategies (Bear, 1998). Similarly, (Lloyd Bennett, 2005) outlines a systemic framework for developing and managing behavioural difficulties which draws upon psychodynamic theories but locates these influences within a broader perspective which emphasises multiple interacting influences at different levels: e.g. individual, school, family, society.

Humanistic approaches

As is the case for psychodynamic approaches, humanistic perspectives on CBM attach significance to the relationship between teacher and pupil. For example Cornelius-White (2007) describes learner-centred education, based on Rogerian counselling, where the teacher displays empathy, unconditional positive regard, genuineness, nondirectivity and the encouragement of critical thinking. Care on the behalf of the teacher is seen as being an key element in facilitating student self-determination (Nie and Lau, 2009). Empirical findings attest to the importance of effective teacher-pupil relationships. In a study which surveyed teachers and students from 132 high school mathematics classes in Belgium, Opdenakker and Van Damme (2006) found that the relationship between teachers and students was positively influenced by the extent to which the teacher adopted a learner-centred teaching style. They report that learner-centred teaching is associated with increased opportunities to learn, better integration of students within classes, and increased student participation, and conclude that "the positive effects of a learner-centred teaching style on classroom practice … is remarkable" (p. 13). Findings from a meta-analysis of 119 studies involving over 350,000 students suggest that learner-centred teacher-student relationships are positively associated with behavioural and cognitive student outcomes (Cornelius-White, 2007).

At the heart of the humanistic approach is the idea that students' motivation, and consequently behaviour, is underpinned by certain basic psychological needs, such as needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Nie and Lau, 2009). Research has shown that encouraging opportunities for choice-

making can be effective in reducing occurrences of problem behaviour (Shrogren et al., 2004). Slavin (1987) describes cooperative learning as an approach based on humanistic principles, and in a review of 35 studies he found that where student cooperation is reinforced using group rewards it can lead to improved achievement compared to when such rewards are absent. Thus, he suggested, cooperative learning could be seen as the point at which humanistic and behavioural approaches to motivation meet. However, with regard to non-academic outcomes, such as improved student self-esteem and relations between students, Slavin reports that these benefits accrue from cooperation whether or not group rewards are given (Slavin, 1987).

Because humanistic approaches emphasise choice and student autonomy they have been contrasted with behavioural approaches, with the latter perceived as emphasising teacher, rather than student, control. External (i.e. teacher) control is said to diminish motivation (Nie and Lau, 2009), and foster powerlessness, as Lake (2004) argues:

> Under this [behavioural] approach, adults must control children's behaviour because children are not capable of controlling themselves; adults must decide what is right and wrong for children because children are not capable of deciding right and wrong for themselves. However, controlling young children hinders their development of self-esteem and self-identity. Controlling young children may also reinforce the powerlessness they feel in adult environments and could stunt their growth toward equality. The act of controlling children is the act of oppressing children. (p. 571)

5.1.3 Rationale and context for the present study

An opportunity to study EPs' views on effective CBM arose as a result of an activity undertaken by an Educational Psychology Service (EPS), in which EPs were asked to contribute towards the development of a training package for school staff on CBM. The EPs in the service were asked to complete a survey identifying effective CBM strategies, and then to participate in discussions about these strategies. While I was not involved in the design of this activity, and it was not specifically designed for research purposes, I was aware that the activity generated data which could be analysed in order to gain insight into EPs' views in relation to CBM.

Previous research has focused on the views of teachers and students in relation to CBM, and there is evidence from school inspections and evaluated CBM programmes about the utility of differing strategies, however relatively little is known about EPs' views about what constitutes effective CBM. Similarly, while there is evidence of how different psychological perspectives can inform approaches to CBM, little is known about whether EPs adopt particular theoretical positions in relation to CBM, and which approaches they perceive to be useful. Thus the present study aims to answer the following questions:

- What strategies do EPs identify as contributing to effective CBM?
- What psychological theories inform EPs' views on effective CBM?

5.2 Method

5.2.1 About the activity eliciting EPs' views on CBM

The data which form the focus of this study were obtained opportunistically, and were collected as a result of an activity that was neither designed by me nor designed for research purposes. As a consequence the method of data collection can only be described, rather than justified, and it presents a number of limitations which I note below.

Data were gathered as part of an exercise on an EPS training day. The aim of the exercise was to develop ideas for a training programme that the EPS was designing for school Behaviour Coordinators. A total of 47 members of the EPS were involved in the exercise. This represents about two-thirds of the service. Approximately five-sixths of the EPS were qualified EPs, with the remainder being either Trainee EPs or pre-training Graduate Psychology Assistants[1].

In the first stage of the exercise participants were given a sheet of paper with the following question:

> *Imagine you are conducting a classroom observation. As well as noticing that the lesson is well planned and executed you also notice that the teacher is very effective at managing the behaviour of the whole class. What behaviour management techniques and strategies do you observe the teacher using?*

[1] For convenience participants in this exercise are referred to as EPs throughout this paper, although it should be borne in mind that this refers to qualified EPs as well as Trainee EPs and Graduate Psychology Assistants.

They were asked to work on their own and list ten strategies that they might see in a brilliantly managed classroom and were given ten minutes to do this. After participants had identified strategies individually, they then compared and discussed their responses in groups of seven to eight people over a period of about 30 minutes, during which each group agreed a set of the ten best strategies and techniques.

5.2.2 Methodology and data analysis

The above activities may give the appearance of being a survey of EP views, but they were not – EPs noted strategies as a means for structuring thoughts and then a group discussion. As such it is more appropriate to consider the data corpus being analysed here as an existing artefact – a set of documents – made available to me for analysis, but not produced for that purpose. Analysis of such documents does have certain limitations, insofar as documents may be limited or partial, and the purposes for which they are produced may lead to certain biases in what is recorded (Robson, 2002a).

Data were in the form of response sheets on which EPs recorded CBM strategies, and group response sheets on which groups recorded their top ten strategies. There were 47 individual response sheets and six group response sheets. These did not contain any additional information about respondents, such as their role within the EPS, whether or not they were a qualified EP, or how long they had worked as an EP, so it was not possible to consider any of these factors within the analysis. Data were responses to an open-ended

question so there was considerable variation both in the content of responses and the amount of information recorded. Some EPs simply wrote one or two-word answers; some wrote two or more sentences; others recorded strategies in note form.

In analysing the data I was endeavouring to identify the CBM strategies that EPs considered to be effective, and to identify the psychological approaches that informed these strategies. As such my analysis involved a mixture of inductive and deductive approaches. Data were analysed to see how they fitted with strategies and theoretical approaches described in the research literature, but where these did not suffice I would try to identify additional ways of organising data and representing meanings. (Pidgeon & Henwood , 1997) refer to analysis involving a 'flip-flop' between known background theory and the organisation of new data. I chose to undertake a thematic analysis of the data as this offers the potential to conduct qualitative analysis which is informed by theory in this manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Coolican, 1999).

Braun and Clark (2006) define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). They describe a number of specific steps involved in the process of conducting a thematic analysis. The first of these steps involves familiarising oneself with the data. This was achieved by me reading the response sheets once, and then inputting all of the individual responses into an Excel spreadsheet, with one row of responses for each EP respondent.

The next step involves generating initial codes for the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Given the existence of background theory to inform the analysis a number of *a priori* categories were identified which were used to code responses (Robson, 2002), thereby improving the validity of initial codes. There were seven such categories, each referring to a type of CBM strategy identified in the research literature discussed in the introduction section of this paper (Rules; Reinforcement of appropriate behaviour; Response to undesired behaviour; Staff-student relationships and interactions; Expectations; Procedures for chronic misbehaviour; and Classroom environment). These categories did not apply to all of the responses, so in order to generate additional categories I listed the remaining responses on separate pieces of paper and sorted them into piles of responses which were substantively similar, or had similar foci. My aim was to identify categories that were both exhaustive and mutually exclusive (Robson, 2002). By completing this stage it was possible to identify which strategies were identified by EPs as contributing to effective CBM, how many EPs identified each type of strategy and also how often they were identified within the complete data corpus.

The next phase of analysis involved searching for themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) say that “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question”, and “the ‘keyness’ of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures – but rather whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question” (p. 82). The research question being addressed at this stage of analysis concerned how EPs’ recommended CBM strategies were informed by

psychological theory. As is discussed in the Results section, many individual EPs' sets of responses did not appear fit neatly or convincingly within discrete theoretical positions (e.g. behavioural, humanistic etc.). Consequently I opted to try to identify themes within the set of responses where responses implied common psychological functions or mechanisms. By this I mean that when grouping and organising responses the question that I was asking of responses was: *How or by what process is this strategy expected to lead to effective CBM?'*. Following Braun and Clarke's suggestion, themes were not simply identified by virtue of the number of responses with similar emphases, but rather by considering whether they suggested distinctive, relevant and important psychological processes were involved.

Once themes were identified, these were reviewed and then organised into a thematic map, which showed the links between particular CBM strategies and the unifying psychological functions. It is suggested that categories or themes be judged by the dual criteria of internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton, 1990) – data should cohere within themes, but also be distinctive without. In my analysis I prioritised internal homogeneity over external heterogeneity inasmuch as the uniting psychological function was seen as being key, but there was the potential for individual data items to relate to multiple themes. This reflects the fact that this was not an entirely inductive approach with theory emerging from the data. The analysis was informed by my understanding of psychological processes and theory, and part of this understanding includes recognition that the same strategy might be said to imply or involve different psychological functions depending on the

theoretical position that one adopts. For example, praising a pupil for positive behaviour may be variously viewed as a behavioural reinforcer, as a way of altering a pupil's self-efficacy beliefs, a means to establish trust or the sense that the pupil is valued.

Once the psychological processes underlying CBM strategies were identified, the final stage of analysis involved reviewing both individual sets of responses and the complete data corpus again. Here, I analysed individual sets of responses to see whether the types of psychological processes implied by particular strategies suggested that the EP adopted a particular established theoretical position with respect to CBM, and reviewed all of the strategies in relation to the identified themes in order to produce a synthesis of the different positions, that might offer a more complete approach to effective CBM.

5.3 Results and discussion

5.3.1 What strategies do EPs identify as contributing to effective CBM?

The 47 participants recorded a total of 462 individual responses. All but five participants gave ten responses each. Of these five, three participants gave nine responses, one gave eight and one gave only seven responses.

Category	Description	Examples
Child/ young person-focused	Strategies which emphasise listening to and valuing students' views; facilitating and developing choice, ownership and self-expression in class activities.	• *Levels of participation real and seen – children and young people teach at times.* • *Listening to views (and be obviously considering them).* • *Give pupils ownership over what they learn.*
Differentiation/ inclusive practice	Makes reference to matching tasks/ activities to the needs of children and young people, or providing support to meet additional needs.	• *Work differentiated properly so that all can achieve.* • *Ensure the match between curriculum and ability.* • *Inclusive classroom – all children are treated fairly and differences are acknowledged.*
Language and instructions	These strategies refer to the way in which teachers speak, how they give instructions and the type of language that they use.	• *Clear, positively-framed instructions.* • *Uses names of all individuals throughout lesson to elicit comments, check back.* • *Calm and expressive use of voice.*
Lesson content/ approaches to teaching and learning	This category refers to the content of lessons and learning activities. They emphasise variety in activities, interesting and relevant activities, and thought and planning in curriculum delivery.	• *Interesting lesson content – range of teaching and learning styles make lesson fun.* • *Clear relationship between learning outcome and teaching strategy.* • *Relevant curriculum.*
Lesson structure and routines	These refer to the timing, pace and structure of lessons, rather than the actual lesson content. They emphasise familiarity with routines and managing structure to promote interest and reduce boredom or distraction.	• *Time is managed effectively – starts, transitions, pacing, end.* • *Children are familiar with class organisation and routines.* • *Have short activity ready so class don't have opportunity to disengage inappropriately.*
Non-verbal communication/ skills	Includes strategies that involve using gesture and other non-verbal means to communicate, as well as those which are based on the teacher modelling appropriate behaviour to children and young people.	• *Teacher is smiling. Positive affirmation given.* • *Teacher moving around class and giving non-verbal cues, prompts to prevent behaviours escalating.* • *Modelling good behaviour.*
Other staff	These make reference to other school staff and their roles or involvement in promoting positive behaviour or in dealing with disruption.	• *Harmonious relationship between staff in classroom – demonstration of teamwork.* • *Recognition of good behaviour by other members of staff/ senior staff.* • *Good use of TAs [teaching assistants].*
Teacher skills/ qualities/ behaviour	Strategies that refer to teacher behaviours (e.g. vigilance, scanning, responsiveness) or dispositions, such as positive character traits (e.g. calmness, confidence).	• *Teacher is relaxed and organised.* • *Mobile teacher moving around the class.* • *Assertive teacher.* • *Teacher able to adapt to circumstances.*

Table 1: Additional CBM categories identified from analysis of non-categorised responses.

The first stage of analysis involved coding these responses into descriptive categories. Seven *a priori* categories were used, which had been identified from existing literature on CBM (as outlined in the Introduction section of this paper). These categories were: Rules; Reinforcement of appropriate behaviour; Response to undesired behaviour; Staff-student relationships and interactions; Expectations; Procedures for chronic misbehaviour; and Classroom environment.

212 of the 462 responses were identified as falling into one of these seven categories. A further 35 responses applied to a combination of two or more categories, and 215 responses did not fit into any of these pre-defined categories. Eight additional categories (listed in Table 1) were identified to code these responses. Following this 16 responses remained uncoded.

Table 2, over, shows the number of responses for each of the 15 categories used, and also the number of EPs who identified responses belonging to each of the categories. It is striking that reinforcement of appropriate behaviour is the most widely identified strategy, being referred to in over one-fifth of all responses. Given that each EP could give ten responses, this means it is referred to twice by each participant, on average. All-but-three EPs made some response to reinforcement of appropriate behaviour among their ten strategies.

Strategy category	Responses		EPs	
	N	%	N	%
Reinforcement of appropriate behaviour	100	21.6%	44	93.6%
Response to undesired behaviour	59	12.8%	34	72.3%
Rules	37	8.0%	30	63.8%
Classroom environment	37	8.0%	26	55.3%
Lesson content - teaching & learning approaches	35	7.6%	28	59.6%
Language and instructions	33	7.1%	28	59.6%
Staff-student relationships and interactions	31	6.7%	21	44.7%
Expectations	30	6.5%	25	53.2%
Differentiation/inclusive practice	28	6.1%	24	51.1%
Child/ young person focused	23	5.0%	16	34.0%
Lesson structure & routines	22	4.8%	20	42.6%
Teacher skills and qualities	22	4.8%	19	40.4%
Non verbal communication/skills	21	4.5%	18	38.3%
Procedures for chronic misbehaviour	7	1.5%	6	12.8%
Other staff	5	1.1%	5	10.6%
Other (not classified)	16	3.5%	15	31.9%

Table 2: Frequencies of responses by category, and number of EPs identifying strategies for each category. (N.B. The sum of percentages for responses exceeds 100% as there were some responses that identified a combination of strategies and were thus assigned to multiple categories).

Where responses specified the type of reinforcement, by far the most common type identified was verbal praise. Some participants stipulated that teachers should use “3 part praise” which involves praising, identifying by name the person receiving the praise, and specifying the behaviour that they are being praised for or rule that they are following (e.g. “well done Frances – you’ve put your hand up to ask a question”). Others noted that using names or specifying behaviours were important in giving praise, without suggesting the three-part structure. Aside from praise, a number of EPs suggested that there should systems of tangible rewards which are valued by students (e.g. additional free time), and that there should be reward systems which enable students to work towards greater rewards if they persist in their positive

behaviour. Some suggested that such systems should resemble token economies (e.g. using stickers, house points or star charts), although one participant demurred, stating: “Praise is meaningful – not stickers”. In addition to specifying the nature of reinforcement, another common response was to refer to the rate of reinforcement or the ratio of positive-to-negative teacher responses. There was consensus that teachers should be giving more praise or making more positive comments than negative comments. One participant suggested a four-to-one positive-to-negative ratio as ideal, while others suggested it should be “high” or “appropriate”. Similarly, many suggested that reinforcement should be frequent (e.g. “reinforcement rate is high with teacher attending to and commenting on appropriate behaviour”).

Aside from reinforcement of appropriate behaviour, consensus among participants regarding other strategies was somewhat less strong. The second most common category of response related to teachers’ response to negative behaviour. Almost three-quarters of EPs made some reference to this in their top-ten strategies, and it was the only other category that occurred, on average, more than once in every set of ten responses. That said, within this category there was perhaps the most significant variation in the content of responses. Many participants suggested that teachers should ignore inappropriate behaviour as a means of removing reinforcement. Others disagreed and suggested that unwanted behaviour should be responded to, but by using a strategy (sometimes referred to as “fair pairs”) of redirecting the offending student’s behaviour at the same time as reinforcing the appropriate behaviour of one of their peers. Still others suggested that teachers should

deal with negative behaviour through consistent application of sanctions. Finally there were a group of responses that all emphasised teachers taking problem-solving approaches and responding to negative behaviour in ways that leave young people with respect and dignity. While all of these types of response are not necessarily mutually exclusive, there does seem some disagreement about whether or not to ignore low-level misbehaviour, and whether a teacher should be consistent or more flexible and pragmatic in their response.

The strong emphasis on the consequences of behaviour in the top two response categories could be seen as suggesting a preference for behaviourist approaches to CBM among the EPs in this sample. Such a conclusion would appear to be supported by the fact that among the next most popular categories are a number relating to antecedents or setting conditions, such as environment, lesson content and instructions. Indeed a theme running through many of these responses was the need for teachers to reduce potential for distraction, ambiguity or misunderstanding, implying that these would be causes of disruption or unwanted behaviour.

It is also worth noting that CBM appears to be seen as a relatively impersonal matter. Responses referring to relationships between staff and students were the seventh most popular of all responses, and child/ young person focused strategies (which emphasise listening to and valuing students' views) were ranked tenth. Moreover, in terms of the number of EPs who identified these strategies these were ranked ninth and thirteenth respectively, suggesting that

those EPs who did identify them, valued them and made more than one mention, increasing their frequency in the complete dataset. Fewer than half of all EPs mentioned the relationship between staff and students as being a significant element of effective CBM. Around a third of EPs identified strategies that could be described as child/ young person focused.

5.3.2 The relation of CBM strategies to psychological theory

EPs in the present study were not asked to identify the theories on which their recommended strategies were based. Consequently a degree of interpretation on the behalf of the researcher is required in order to do this. By analysing all of the responses that each individual EP made as a set of ten (or fewer if they did not make ten responses), it is possible to try identify a predominant theoretical approach to CBM for each individual EP.

Table 3, over, shows the sets of strategies identified by three different EPs. These are presented as exemplars of sets which represented differing predominant theoretical positions. It is clear from these examples that none are entirely within one specific approach – what is aimed for is a paradigmatic "best fit" – and that there is a certain amount of overlap between approaches, as the assumptions stated above imply. Nonetheless, there are clear differences in emphasis between these three sets of strategies. In the first, behavioural, set of responses, emphasis is almost entirely on behavioural contingencies – positive reinforcement of desired behaviour, removal of reinforcement and punishment of unwanted behaviour. The emphasis in the attachment set of responses is very much on creating a classroom

environment in which children feel safe and secure, in which there is space for emotional expression, and where there are warm and positive relationships between staff and students. The humanistic/ child-centred set of responses also mentions relationships, but appears to place greatest emphasis on creating opportunities for children and young people to express themselves, to be heard and to develop and display autonomy.

Given the popularity of ostensibly behavioural strategies identified in the first phase of analysis, and given evidence of their popularity in the research literature, it is perhaps unsurprising that more EPs were judged to adopt a predominantly behavioural approach than any other theoretical position. A total of 20 EPs (43%) gave sets of responses that were described as being predominantly behavioural. Five (11%) were humanistic/ child-centred, and three (6%) emphasised attachment theory. There was also one EP who appeared to adopt a systemic perspective in terms of emphasising the social interactions and perceptions in relation to difficult behaviour, as well as locating the teacher's response within the wider context of a school. One EP's strategies were described as being "teaching and learning focused" as – in place of a coherent theoretical underpinning – there was an almost exclusive focus on this area: interesting learning activities, transitions between activities, teacher organisation, and lesson structure. The remaining seventeen (36%) EPs appeared to adopt eclectic approaches, combining controlling and autonomy-promoting strategies, focusing on relationships and reinforcement contingencies, but not appearing to lean towards any particular theoretical position.

	Strategies identified	
Behavioural	*- Time is managed effectively - starts, transitions, pacing, end..* *- Pupil attention is controlled through appropriate questioning and interaction to ensure high response rate from as many pupils as possible.* *- Pupils are reinforced for appropriate behaviour.* *- Reinforcement rate is high with teacher attending to and commenting on appropriate behaviour (putting hand up, looking at teacher, materials etc.).* *- Fair pairs in evidence - unwanted behaviour paired with desired behaviour from another pupil and the latter is reinforced.*	*- Selective ignoring.* *- Delayed compliance for pupils initially not following instructions.* *- Reinforcement hierarchy.* *- "Catch 'em being good" - deliberate attempt to identify positive behaviours especially in CYP with high levels of inappropriate behaviour (differentiated response).* *- Low frequency of negative responses but used appropriately when appropriate.*
Attachment	*- Levels of participation real and seen - children teach at times.* *- Kind, confident teachers that are able to provide containing environment via nurturing environment.* *- Worry tree - so place for emotions.* *- Child-friendly rules that pupils have written and drawn.* *- Good organisation in room where children can know where to go and where to get things.*	*- Pupils involved in planning classroom layout and rules for times etc.* *- Positive comments from pupils to teachers and teacher to pupils.* *- Lots of laughter, fun and respect by all.* *- Motivation – children being involved in targets and work.* *- Variety of resources - include all pupils.*
Humanistic/ child-centred	*- Involvement of children in activities before distraction/ boredom sets in.* *- Listening to views of all (and be obviously considering them).* *- Inviting a lead from children rather than lecturing them ('you talk they listen').* *- Keeping activities time-limited - fairly short and structured.* *- Willingness to discuss conflicting opinions/ invite debate.* *- Consideration of layout so that all children can see/ hear and be seen/ heard - no 'hiding place'.*	*- Accessible resources when needed, and/or identified people to disperse them when appropriate.* *- Harmonious relationship between staff in classroom (i.e. teacher, TA) - demonstration of teamwork.* *- Creativity built in - i.e. allowance for expression - e.g. moving about, performance, creative element.*

Table 3: CBM strategies identified by three EP respondents, categorised respectively as predominantly behavioural, attachment and humanistic/ child-centred.

It appeared from looking at sets of EP responses that, for a significant number of EPs, there was not paradigmatic “best fit”, and that the range of recommended CBM strategies suggested that a number of psychological approaches and processes were judged to be relevant. The thematic analysis of all EP responses identified as themes a number of psychological processes or mechanisms which could be seen as underpinning different recommended strategies. A total of eight core processes were identified which described how identified strategies contributed to effective CBM. These were:

- *Contingency management* – applying behavioural principles to reinforce positive behaviours, and punish or promote extinction of negative behaviours;
- *Feeling safe/ secure* – strategies which fostered emotional security in terms of promoting consistent, positive experiences where emotions are recognised and acknowledged;
- *Managing setting conditions* – pre-emptive strategies to reduce the occurrence of incidents which could trigger poor behaviour, such as poor communication, boredom, disengagement with learning activities and environmental distractions;
- *Promoting positive beliefs about self* – strategies aimed at altering pupil self-perceptions, promoting controllable attributions and self-efficacy;
- *Promoting pupil autonomy* – strategies which encourage the exercise of control by pupils, pupil participation and collaborations;

- *Pupils feeling valued* – creating situations within which pupils can establish positive relationships with staff and the experience of positive regard;
- *Understanding of school systems/ expectations* – ensuring that pupils are aware of rules, expectations regarding work and behaviour, and regarding the consequences of behaviour;
- *Vicarious learning* – identifying opportunities for pupils to attend to staff and peers modelling appropriate, desired behaviour.

The thematic map, Appendix 1, shows how CBM strategies are related to these eight themes. It is evident from this thematic map that certain strategies are identified as potentially having differing or multiple functions. It is here that my analysis diverges from Patton's (1990) recommendation of identifying themes or categories that have internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. Arguably this is a virtue rather than a deficit of the thematic map. The themes identified *are* distinctive processes implicated in effective CBM, but there *is* considerable overlap in how these processes are operationalised in terms of specific CBM strategies. For example there are a number of strategies that a teacher could employ to improve a pupil's self-perceptions and promote adaptive attributions, such as creating opportunities for pupils to experience success and giving feedback relating to effort rather than ability, which will also involve reinforcing positive behaviours. Moreover, it is also possible that certain themes are not only complimentary, but are actually mutually interdependent. There are likely to be reciprocal relationships between feeling valued, secure, autonomous and a pupil's self-

perceptions. Indeed this is precisely what is emphasised by both the humanistic and attachment approaches.

The story that this analysis tells, then, is one where it is perhaps more important to view effective CBM not as a specific set of actions undertaken by teachers, but rather as a set of functions that teachers, and schools more generally, are seeking to achieve. Based on the analysis of this sample of EPs' responses, effective CBM is about managing contingencies and setting conditions, promoting positive behaviour through vicarious learning, ensuring school systems and expectations are understood, helping pupils to feel valued, safe and secure, facilitating the experience of autonomy and promoting positive pupil beliefs.

5.3.3 Results of group discussions

After individual EPs had identified effective CBM strategies, they then discussed these in six groups of seven to eight EPs. Each group then identified the ten strategies that they collectively agreed were most important for effective CBM. Unsurprisingly, as groups had more time to produce their lists than individuals did, and as a long-list of strategies had already been identified from the preceding activity, group responses tended to be longer and more detailed than individual ones. So, for example, where some individuals had simply identified "praise" as a strategy, the groups tended to clarify this, for example stating that praise should be "genuine, realistic, consistent and individualised, or "meaningful, fairly distributed praise for specifics". Within this additional detail, there appeared also to be a greater

emphasis within group responses on whole school and contextual factors, such as support from school leadership and whole school approaches to behaviour.

Table 4, over, summarises all of the strategies identified from the six groups. It was apparent from these responses that strategies focused on different elements or levels of the school ecosystem. Thus the data as a whole would suggest that a range of school-level factors are important, such as rules, policies and management. The classroom plays a role, both in terms of the physical environment being ordered and functional, and in terms of the social environment, culture and norms. Also at a class level are the structure and content of learning activities. The teacher is implicated in managing behaviour through pre-emptive and reactive means, but also through establishing effective relationships and communication with pupils. However, this does not imply control or a one-way process. Rather it is reciprocal, so children and young people need the opportunities and skills to participate, to choose and to self-regulate. Finally, with respect to CBM there are a specific set of social interactions worthy of particular attention, namely those which involve responses to behaviour which is viewed as desirable or undesirable. While EPs responses identify some specific strategies for responding to student behaviour, they also reveal certain principles, such as the importance of consistency, and of maximising positive interventions and minimising negative ones, both in frequency and severity. No doubt these principles can contribute towards the class ethos as well as helping to nurture positive self-perceptions among children and young people.

At the school level…	• Rules should be clear, positive, negotiated with pupils/ students. • There should clear, agreed policies for rewarding good behaviour and responding to negative behaviour. • Teachers should be supported by school leadership in applying policies. • The school should foster and support the emotional wellbeing of staff.
At a class level…	• Rules should be displayed and referred to. • Expectations should be negotiated, shared and upheld consistently. • The classroom should be arranged with resources available and clearly labelled; space for people to move about; organised. • Children/ young people should have ownership of their environment, be involved in its planning. • The class should be calm and nurturing. • Lessons should be well-planned with clear objectives, a variety of activities, clear instructions, effective pacing and use of time, managed transitions between activities. • Learning activities should be varied, interesting, accessible to all, relevant, and differentiated to meet the needs and build on the strengths of learners. • Support should be available to all children and young people encountering difficulties with respect to learning, behaviour and social and emotional issues.
The teacher…	• Should use language that is clear and positive; that is “performance” rather than “labelling” language. • Should give clear explanations of tasks, behaviour and learning expectations, and seek feedback from learners. • Should move around the class, scan visually and be vigilant, looking for potential triggers of unwanted behaviour such as anxiety. • Should be confident, authoritative and enthusiastic. • Should use non-verbal means to prevent or reinforce behaviour, as appropriate. • Should model desired behaviour: respect, manners, interest, and tone of voice and language use. • Should show develop positive relationships with learners; get to know their strengths, weaknesses and interests; communicate warmth, positive regard and respect, and value others’ opinions. • Should look for opportunities to give praise – “catch ‘em being good”.
Children and young people…	• Should be given opportunities to have ownership over their learning and their environment, and should be given choices. • Should be involved in agreeing rules and expectations, and in making decisions. • Should have opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings. • Should be encouraged to monitor their behaviour and learning, and their progress in relation to agreed targets. • Should know how to ask for help if they require it.
Responses to behaviour	• Appropriate/ desired behaviour should be reinforced through a variety of means: verbal praise, non-verbal signals (e.g. thumbs up, approving look), and tangible rewards. • Praise should be specific, genuine, age-appropriate, realistic, linked to rules/ expectations, fairly distributed, immediate, and for both behaviour and learning. • All children and young people should be praised. • There should be a clear, hierarchical system of rewards, consistently applied. • There should be vicarious reinforcement of appropriate behaviour through the use of proximal praise. • Teachers should use “low-level” strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour, e.g.: planned ignoring, take-up time, “fair pairs”, giving choices. • Inappropriate behaviour should be responded to quickly, quietly and calmly, and the response should be linked to the rules/ expectations. • There should be a clear school policy for responding to more serious/ persistent misbehaviour that is understood by all and followed consistently.

Table 4: Strategies for promoting effective CBM at different levels.

5.4 Conclusions

The main findings of the present research can be summarised as follows:

1. The most popular CBM strategies identified by EPs as being effective are those that fit within a behavioural paradigm, with reinforcement of appropriate behaviour being identified by over 90 per cent of EPs and being listed in over 20 per cent of all of the strategies that EPs identified. This, and the next three most popular type of strategy focus ("response to undesired behaviour", "rules" and "classroom environment") were all consistent with strategies identified in the research literature of teachers', pupils' and inspectors' views of effective CBM strategies.
2. In addition to those CBM strategies identified in the literature by teachers, pupils and inspectors, EPs also identified a number of other strategies which they believed to be effective. These included child/ young person-focused approaches, specific teacher qualities, a focus on language and communication, and effective, engaging pedagogy.
3. Thematic analysis of all of the EP responses identified eight themes which described the functions of the identified CBM strategies: contingency management, feeling safe/ secure, managing setting conditions, promoting positive beliefs about self, promoting pupil autonomy, pupils feeling valued, understanding of setting conditions, and vicarious learning.
4. Groups of EPs identified effective CBM strategies that operated at different ecosystemic levels: whole school, class, teacher behaviour, child/ young person, and specific responses to behaviour.

Miller (1989) talked of “paradigms lost” when he reported his survey of EPs using behavioural interventions. He noted that while the use of behavioural techniques was widespread among EPs, faith in behavioural approaches to psychology generally, and among a significant proportion of the surveyed EPs, was much less strong. As such, he suggested that some EPs “run the risk of being seen more as diplomatic “super teachers” with little regard for psychological theory (p.147).

The present study suggests that faith in behavioural techniques does indeed remain strong, with over 40 per cent of EPs apparently adopting a predominantly behavioural approach to CBM. However it also showed that a number of EPs appeared to adopt other distinctive theoretical positions (e.g. attachment and humanistic/ child-centred), which were both coherent and psychological.

That none of these approaches were as popular as apparently eclectic ones does not mean that EPs are atheroetical in what they perceive as effective CBM. The thematic analysis of EPs’ responses revealed core psychological functions underpinning the strategies that they identified. Many of these functions are clearly linked to non-behavioural approaches. For example the importance of pupils feeling values, secure and experiencing autonomy are all emphasised by both humanistic and attachment perspectives. The emphasis on promoting positive self-beliefs is consistent with the cognitive perspective, and vicarious learning fits within a social learning paradigm.

One key question, however, is whether such diverse approaches are complementary rather than contradictory. I have argued that there is a degree of theoretical overlap between alternative perspectives. Here, for example, I side with those such as Slavin (1987) and Nie and Lau (2009) who hold that child-centred and behavioural approaches to CBM can work effectively together, with behaviourism informing responses to behaviour as it occurs, and humanistic psychology being applied to promote student engagement and development of social skills. While criticisms, such as those made by Lake (2004), which characterise a behavioural approach to CBM as controlling and disempowering are possibly merited, it is worth considering whether such criticisms apply to behavioural approaches *tout court*, or whether such approaches do have a place alongside other perspectives. The findings of the present study suggest that even for EPs who emphasise humanistic and attachment dimensions of CBM, behavioural strategies, such as contingency management and management of setting conditions, are also judged to be important. As such it would appear that, rather than saying that behavioural approaches should be replaced by other ones, EPs feel that there's more to effective CBM than behavioural approaches alone; other psychological paradigms can inform strategies that augment an overall approach to CBM.

The picture of effective CBM that emerges from the present study is a multi-dimensional one, where good CBM is seen as dependent not only on how teachers respond to particular type of behaviour, but also the environment that

pupils learn in, pupils' cognitions about themselves, the extent to which they feel valued and secure, positive social and emotional development, pedagogy, and encouraging children and young people to experience and exercise autonomy. Such dimensions are inter-related and are affected by myriad influences. Hence an ecosystemic approach which identifies positive influences at the individual, class, school and wider societal level is necessary. This is not a repudiation of any particular approach to CBM but rather an integration or synthesis.

The challenge for the EP is to apply such an understanding of CBM when they consult with teachers and others in order to identify where problems are occurring, and to articulate this understanding in order to facilitate change. It has been suggested that EPs face a dilemma insofar as if they adopt 'theoretical pure' models of assessment and intervention, these may appear distinctly psychological, but may be less effective; but if they integrate more diverse theories and work systemically through consultation with other professionals, they may be more successful in terms of achieving positive outcomes, but what they do can appear to be less distinctively psychological (Norwich, 2005). When an EP consults on an issue relating to CBM it is unlikely the situation causing concern is one where every relevant facet is underdeveloped. As such they will seek to identify those aspects of the situation which are contributing to the problem, be it contingency management, promoting autonomy, fostering emotional security, pedagogy and so on. This may lack the appearance of a distinctive psychological approach, but is a wholly psychological enterprise. Miller (1989) posed the

question of why EPs appeared to show enthusiasm for behavioural approaches to promoting positive behaviour, when faith in behaviourism was waning more generally. It have been precisely because of the prevailing assumptions about behavioural approaches that EPs needed to emphasise these, as problems could arise where behavioural approaches were rejected wholesale, and this one aspect of effective CBM was overlooked.

Miller's (1989) concern about paradigms lost rests on an implicit assumption that 'good' psychology is derived from one or other clearly defined psychological approach. I would argue the opposite: that 'good' psychology involves integrating approaches, seeking to reconcile what alternative approaches have to say and working towards a synthesis. Effective intervention is not derived simply from the application of *a priori* principles. Of course it is worth noting, by way of caution, that just because 'good' psychology may imply an eclectic approach, which lacks ostensible theoretical coherence, it does not mean that anything that lacks theoretical coherence is therefore 'good' psychology!

5.4.1 Limitations and future research

It is important to note the limitations of the present study. The data that I have analysed for this paper were from EPs in one EPS. As such they may not be representative and generalisable to the EP community more broadly. Indeed there are good reasons to believe that there would be greater similarities between EPs within an EPS than there would across different services. Many of the EPs in the present study will have attended the same training events,

been selected through the same procedures, will apply the same service policies and so on. All of which could lead to some coalescence of views.

Also, this study is based on my analysis of data that was collected for a different purpose. I did not design an activity to elicit EPs' views on effective CBM, and had I done so, it would have undoubtedly been different, and may well have resulted in a different set of results.

Finally, it is important to recognise that the present study focuses on EPs' *views* about what constitutes effective CBM. As such it provides a poor basis to inform evidence-based practice. Wolpert et al. (2006) identify evidence drawn from expert opinions and clinical experience as the lowest, least reliable source of evidence within their four-tier model, and consequently it is evidence with the weakest implications for practice. This does not mean that it is wrong, but it does mean that there is a need for this study's findings to be validated by stronger evidence. There is the potential for the principles of effective CBM identified in the present study to be integrated to develop a training package or whole school behaviour system, with monitoring of implementation and evaluation of effectiveness. Controlled or quasi-experimental studies could be used to assess the effectiveness of these CBM principles. There is also a need for further research about what approaches are best for promoting effective CBM behaviours among school staff, whether it is through initial training, whole school policies or packages, continuing professional development, advice from specialist services and so on. Given the enduring concern about CBM within education, it is likely that debates and

research about effective CBM will continue to be prioritised in the future. It is important the EPs as practitioner-researchers continue to contribute to such debates.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Thematic map of CBM strategies

6. Out of GAS? Evaluation in education psychology service delivery

6.1 Introduction

The focus for the present paper is evaluation, specifically the evaluation of the work of Educational Psychologists (EPs). Evaluation is an increasingly important consideration for EPs individually and for Educational Psychology Services (EPSs). The paper begins by discussing the context for this increased focus on evaluation, both at a local level – drawing on a research activity that I contributed towards in my EPS – and at a national and professional level, where evidence-based practice and outcomes-based accountability have become significant influences of policy and practice. In Section 3 I discuss what evaluation is, and what the purposes of evaluation are, outlining different approaches to evaluation that have been developed. I also discuss epistemological issues relating to evaluation, and argue that the utility of knowledge created through evaluation should be a key consideration in determining evaluation approaches. Section 4 focuses on different evaluation tools that have been identified for use by EPs, specifically Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS), Target Monitoring and Evaluation (TME) and the evaluation matrix. I conclude by suggesting ways in which different evaluation tools and approaches may be used to compliment one another, and by considering priorities for future research involving GAS and TME.

6.1.1 Context

The present paper should be read in conjunction with the report included as Appendix 1. This report discusses a research exercise undertaken by myself and a colleague within an Educational Psychology Service in the West Midlands that was commissioned by the Chief EP. GAS had been adopted as an evaluation measure by the EPS in 2006 in order that, at a service level, the EPS could adopt an approach to evaluation that went beyond asking client (i.e. school) views about the effectiveness of work undertaken by EPs, and should move to focus on assessing the impact that EPs had on outcomes for children and young people. EPs had received training in administering GAS, and were expected to submit at least one GAS evaluation of a piece of work each year. While almost all EPs were meeting this expectation, it was not the case that GAS was used either as frequently or as enthusiastically as had been hopes. The Chief EP was interested in knowing why this was, what could be done to embed further the use of GAS in EPs' practice, and whether suitable alternative evaluation approaches existed that might be used in place of GAS.

The profile of evaluation has been raised at a national level over recent years, with government increasingly appealing to evidence-based practice and focusing on 'what works' (Burton et al., 2006). As Robson (2002) puts it, "'Accountability' is now a watchword in the whole range of public services involving people, such as education, health and social services" (p.202). In particular, social policy in the UK has been influenced by 'outcomes based accountability', where services are planned and evaluated by focusing on

outcomes or results, rather than efficiency or process (Friedman, 2005; Pugh , 2008). Every Child Matters (ECM: Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2004) is one example of policy influenced by outcomes based accountability, with its identification of five broad outcomes, and a number of more specific outcomes contributing to these, that Children's Services Authorities are expected to promote.

In response to these policy agendas, and in light of debates within the profession itself, there has been an increased focus within educational psychology on evaluation and evidence-based practice. While there is evidence that EPs contribute towards achieving ECM outcomes (Farrell et al., 2006), it is also suggested that EPs need to develop approaches to evaluation that go beyond school satisfaction surveys to focus on demonstrating improved outcomes for children and young people (Baxter and Frederickson, 2005). Prompted by this, the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP), the Division of Educational and Child Psychology of the British Psychological Society (DECP) and the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP) have recently collaborated to report on evaluating the work undertaken within EPSs (AEP/ DECP/ NAPEP, 2009).

It is not only at a service level, that there are calls for a greater focus on outcomes and evaluation. It has been argued that individual EPs should be adopting the role of scientist-practitioners (Lindsay, 1998). Such a model emphasises the importance of applied practice that is both informed by and

responsive to evidence, where interventions are evaluated as hypotheses to be tested (Shapiro, 2002).

It is, however, argued that “the issue of evaluating the contribution of educational psychology is a problematic one” (AEP/ DECP/ NAPEP, 2009, p.4). In particular, the ways in which EPs work are said to render difficult evaluation of their impact. Since the ‘reconstruction movement’ of the 1970s and 1980s (Gillham, 1978) EPs have sought to move away from direct, individual casework to systemic working and working through consultation (Boyle and Lauchlan, 2009; Larney, 2003; Wagner, 2000). Typically this work involves working with and through other professionals, so that the EP’s contribution to outcomes for children may be indirect and hard to determine (AEP/ DECP/ NAPEP, 2009; Norwich, 2005). As one Principle Educational Psychologist, Ian McNab, puts it:

> Even when there is manifest success, the observable outcomes are a complex result of the activities of many people, and the connections between the outcomes and the work of the EP cannot easily be disentagled. Indeed, it is arguable that consultation has been most effective when the contribution of the EP is least obvious, since the psychology of the process is about empowering people to create their own solution. There should be no residue of the catalyst in the products of a well-designed chemical reaction. (McNabb,1999 p.4)

It is arguable that the perceived difficulty of evaluating indirect work is overstated. McNabb acknowledges that success can be manifest, and the lack of residue of catalyst need not imply that there is no evidence of the catalyst having been present. Indeed the speed of the reaction, or the fact that it has taken place at all, provides evidence of the contribution of the catalyst:

something occurred that would not have occurred had the catalyst not been present. Similarly, where the distinctive contribution of EPs is conceived as involving the application of psychology to solve problems in collaboration with other professionals (Cameron, 2006; Norwich, 2005), evidence of impact can be seen where problems are solved which would not have been solved without an EP, and where the solution of these problems leads to improved outcomes for children.

Nevertheless, it does remain a challenge for EPs working systemically and through consultation to demonstrate how their interactions with other professionals lead to tangible benefits for children and young people, especially where they work in preventative ways, trying to solve problems that have not yet manifested themselves. As Boyle and Lauchlan suggest, “It may seem perverse for EPs to move away from an area of work where they are highly valued [i.e. direct casework] to an area where tangible success is more difficult to quantify” (2009, p.76). While evidence suggests that school-based consultation is also an approach valued by consultees, such as school staff, it is also acknowledge that there is a lack of sound evidence to attest to its reported benefits (Larney, 2003).

So evaluating the work of EPs presents a challenge, especially where EPs work in diverse ways, addressing diverse problems, and where they work indirectly through consultation. But if EPs’ work is not at all amenable to evaluation, then it cannot be considered to be evidence-based practice, for there could be no way of demonstrating the value of work undertaken by an

EP. Service commissioners would simply have to have faith that EPs did the right thing and exercised good judgement, even though EPs themselves would not be able to know whether what they were doing was working. If educational psychology accepts or asserts that it cannot demonstrate its own effectiveness, then it will be willing its own demise, for such a position cannot be sustainable within a culture of accountability.

It is too early to prepare for the wake just yet. Solutions to the problem of evaluating EPs work have been suggested. EPs' professional associations have suggested the use of an evaluation matrix linking diverse measures to ECM outcomes (AEP/ DECP/ NAPEP, 2009), while it has also been suggested that GAS can provide a common approach to evaluation and has much to commend it for widespread use by EPs (Baxter and Frederickson, 2005; Frederickson, 2002). Also Target Monitoring and Evaluation (TME) is a tool approach that is a variant of GAS and has been developed by EPs in recent years (Dunsmuir et al., 2009). These approaches and innovations will be discussed further in Section 4. Before this, however, it is worth considering what evaluation is, and what different types and purposes of evaluation there are, as well as the factors affecting decisions about approaches to evaluation.

6.2 Evaluation

An evaluation is "an attempt to assess the worth or value of some innovation, intervention, service or approach" (Robson, 2002, p.202). This definition is broad, and there are a number of reasons for conducting an evaluation.

Correspondingly, different approaches and methods of evaluation exist for different purposes. Maynard (2000) states that, “Effective evaluations are those that generate information critical for addressing the needs of policy makers, program developers, program operators and/or the general public” (p.473). Thus there is a need for evaluators to consider the audience of any evaluation: what information will be useful and convincing to the specified audience?

One way of considering evaluation approaches is to distinguish between *outcome* and *process* evaluation. Outcome evaluation involves assessing the extent to which a programme meets its objectives, whereas process evaluation is concerned with finding out how or why a programme works (Robson, 2002). While ‘what if’ or ‘what happens’ questions can be answered using experimental methods, these cannot be used to answer ‘why’ or ‘how’ questions, and thus there is a need for complimentary approaches (Maynard, 2000). Hansen (2005) identifies six different evaluation models, each with different purposes:

- results models (what are the outcomes of a programme?);
- explanatory process model (following a programme from the idea stage through to implementation and results);
- system models (how well does the system work in terms of inputs, outputs, structure and processes?);
- economic models (focusing on cost-effectiveness, cost-efficiency and cost-benefit analysis);

- actor models (considers views of effectiveness from clients, stakeholders or peers); and
- theory-based evaluation (assesses the validity of the theory upon which a programme is based).

EPs are likely have a variety of reasons for evaluating their work, and are likely to evaluate for a range of audiences. While the discussion in Section 2, focused on calls for EPs to provide evidence of their contribution to positive outcomes for children and young people, they are also likely to evaluate in other ways, for example to learn how their services are viewed by schools, children and families, and how programmes or interventions are implemented, and the factors that lead to their success. As such they are likely to draw from different models of evaluation.

Theory-based evaluation is a means of testing and developing a theory applied within a specific context (Hansen, 2005). One approach, 'realistic evaluation', involves analysing relationships between context, mechanisms and outcomes (Pawson and Tilley 1997). Where a results model seeks to determine 'what works', a theory-based model seeks to develop and refine theory to learn what works for whom in which contexts (Hansen, 2005). Burton et al. (2006) used theory-based evaluation as a means of evaluating community involvement in area-based initiatives. A motivating idea behind these initiatives was the belief that community involvement led to improved outcomes through both the empowerment of individuals and communities, and improved decision-making responsive to local demands. Theory-based

evaluation allowed these authors to evaluate these underlying theoretical claims, as well as evaluating the outcomes of specific area-based initiatives in a way that results-based quasi experimental methods would not (Burton et al., 2006). Community involvement is somewhat analogous to consultation as practiced by EPs, insofar as the latter is also based on an underlying theory, namely that consultation will facilitate empowerment of the consultee, leading not only to remediation of presenting problems, but also to increased capacity to prevent and/or respond effectively to similar problems in the future (Gutkin and Curtis , 1999). To the extent that there are concerns that consultation has not been or cannot be effectively evaluated (Larney, 2003), a theory-based evaluation approach would appear to have much potential for EPs.

While theory-based evaluation may offer hope for explaining how and why consultation works, if indeed it does, there still remains the issue of how to assess effectiveness in terms of outcomes. Among the outcomes in question are student outcomes, such as progress in learning, skill development, improved behaviour and improved wellbeing. Fenwick (2001) explores the issue of using student outcomes to explore teacher effectiveness. She concludes that “student outcomes, if assessed carefully and used cautiously, may be helpful in evaluating teachers” (p.63). There are two important caveats to this conclusion. Firstly she emphasises that a number of factors additional to teacher effectiveness impact on student outcomes, including cultural and contextual factors, and student characteristics and dispositions. Secondly she argues that student outcomes should be broadly conceived, encompassing cognitive, affective, behavioural, psychological and social outcomes, and as

such a variety of measures including attainments, test scores, observation and student self-report should be combined to inform any judgements. Such caveats apply even more strongly when evaluating the work of EPs, whose influence on outcomes is even less direct, and who work to promote both more diverse and more individually specific outcomes for children and young people. In addition, authors have argued that measurements of outcomes can overlook cultural diversity (Arthur and Lalande, 2009) and that different outcome measures (e.g. narrative accounts and self-report scores) can give conflicting accounts of whether or not an intervention or programme has been effective (Campbell, 1995). There is also a problem in defining when outcomes should be measured, as there may be outcomes that are achieved because of an intervention, even though they are not achieved until long after the intervention (Arthur and Lalande, 2009; Fenwick, 2001). Considering this, it is perhaps no surprise that achieving economic wellbeing should be the ECM outcome least frequently identified as EPs making a contribution towards (AEP/ DECP/ NAPEP, 2009).

One way of mitigating for the difficulties in obtaining reliable outcome measures that are valid indices of programme effectiveness is to use multiple sources of information in order to inform judgements. The Kirkpatrick model of evaluating training programmes (Kirkpatrick, 1996) is one evaluation method that does this. Within this model training programmes are evaluated at four levels: reaction (i.e. trainees' response and attitudes to training), learning (trainees' knowledge), behaviour (how trainees' practice is affected) and results (the overall impact of training, including client outcomes and

organisational factors such as financial or morale impacts). The idea behind such an evaluation is that it can evaluate in terms of outcome and processes, and can thus be used to assess the entirety of desired training objectives (Smidt et al., 2009).

The Trident approach is an evaluation approach developed by Ellis and Hogard (2006). It is a multi-method approach where data are gathered in three areas: outcomes, process, and multiple stakeholder perspectives. The Trident approach has been used in a variety of settings, including evaluations of nurses' training practices, evaluation of a Sure Start scheme for improving outcomes for disadvantaged children, and evaluating a primary school-based mental health initiative (Askell-Williams et al., 2008; Ellis and Hogard, 2006). It is argued that each prong of the Trident is logically distinct, but equally relevant to informing an overall picture of the value of an intervention or programme. Essentially, a complete evaluation should be able to tell if something works, how it works, and what the users, clients and other stakeholders think of it. The methods for answering each of these questions are not prescribed, but again there is a preference for combining multiple perspectives and for adopting mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative.

While neither the Kirkpatrick model nor the Trident approach are specifically designed for evaluation of educational psychology, they offer lessons for evaluating the work of EPs. Both emphasise the importance of focusing on process as well as outcomes, and taking into account multiple data sources

and multiple points of view. Indeed, it should be noted that calls for outcome-based evaluation within educational psychology have seen it as supplementing, rather than replacing other tools. As Baxter and Frederickson put it, there is a need for “an evaluative focus within educational contexts that goes beyond school satisfaction surveys” (2005, p.87). When considering approaches to evaluation it is important that purposes, outcomes and objectives are agreed in conjunction with commissioners (Ellis and Hogard, 2006; Maynard, 2000). Moreover, Robson (2002) suggests that any evaluation should meet four criteria: utility, feasibility, propriety, and technical adequacy.

6.2.1 A note about epistemology

Evaluation is a form of research, but it is not entail any particular research methodology (Robson, 2002). As emphasised in this paper, a variety of approaches may be used. Given the potential diversity of research methods entailed in evaluation, it would be remiss to proceed without some mention of epistemological issues relating to evaluation. As mentioned at the start of this section, Robson defines evaluation as an attempt to assess the worth of something (e.g. an intervention, programme, service). A key question, therefore, is for whom or to whom is the worth being assessed?

The outcomes-based accountability and evidence-based practice movements focus on demonstrating or assessing value within a public context, emphasising generalisable conclusions and objectivity. As such a preference for epistemological realism is implied. By comparison, programme process

evaluators and stakeholder evaluations may be more interested in contextually bound information and the meanings attributed to programmes or interventions by implementers, users and other stakeholders. Here, the focus is on acquiring a rich understanding of the programme in context, which can inform its appraisal or development, and thus a constructivist epistemology may be implied.

'Paradigm wars' within psychological and social sciences may lead some evaluators to have an *a priori* preference for some approaches over others, based on predetermined views about epistemology. The realist may feel that only approaches that are generalisable and that eschew subjectivity are appropriate to judge the worth of a programme or intervention, although it is worth noting that realism does not preclude context-specific evaluation (Pawson and Tilley 1997). The critic of realism might argue against this and suggest that the 'scientific' values of realism are simply one form of discourse, or way that knowledge can be socially constructed, and as such is no better, and probably worse, than other more interpretive methods of conducting evaluation.

With this in mind I would argue that evaluators should seek to distance themselves from such paradigm wars, and instead focus on the fact that evaluation is a means of producing knowledge *with a purpose*. The purpose is determined by the audience for the evaluation. This may be the evaluator themselves, if they are using evaluation as a part of reflective practice to enable them to develop, refine or amend their practices. But equally, the

audience might be someone else, such as a service commissioner or a service user. Here the evaluator is seeking to provide information that is useful to someone else, to inform decisions about how to develop a service, determine how resources should be allocated, or identify future policy priorities, for example.

Thus knowledge is construed in terms of its utility, rather than its approximation to some contested notion of truth. Sometimes it may be useful to generate knowledge that leads to changing people's perceptions, and subjectivity (or multiple subjectivities) may be seen as a virtue in an evaluation methodology. Other times, for example in relation to outcomes-based accountability or evidence-based practice, useful knowledge will be that which can promote widespread acceptance and generalisability, where methodological rigour, replicability and striving for (notions of) objectivity is more appropriate. Such a view of knowledge is suggested by the pragmatic position outline in the writings of Richard Rorty.

It would be inappropriate to describe Rorty's pragmatism as an epistemological position, for his view is that epistemology itself is misconceived (Rorty, 1994). Rorty's position is interesting because he places himself firmly within the postmodernist camp as a critic of realist epistemology and the notion of discoverable truth. He argues that any attempt to understand the world is necessarily contingent and culturally determined; a "god's-eye view" is impossible. But he is concerned also that we do not discard something that is useful (such as scientific methods and approaches), and

perhaps replace it with something less useful, merely because some of the stronger claims made about that thing turn out to be unfounded. Thus he argues that the desire for objectivity be replaced with a desire for solidarity – for understanding and agreement among one's community (Rorty, 1985). Rather than adopting a realist epistemology where knowledge is taken as being beliefs which reflect the nature of reality *as it really is*, he rejects the very notion of there being any such reality *as it really is*, and argues instead for pragmatic justification where, following William James, truth is regarded simply as "whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief" (Rorty, 1994: p.32). If there is no objective way things really are, we should not be concerned with how well our beliefs and practices fit with reality, but should attend instead to what certain beliefs and practices do in a practical sense – do they explain things, predict things, help understand things, enable us to improve things? Surely this is the very purpose of evaluation – to explain, predict, understand and improve.

Rejecting realist epistemology does not, for Rorty, mean that methods associated with it should be rejected. A scientific approach can be favoured, not because it offers a way of discovering truth, but because and to the extent that it offers a way of making useful predictions (Rorty, 1997). The search for truth should be replaced with the pursuit of hope. Or, as Rorty puts it, we the questions that we should be asking of scientists and others "is not 'Do they get it right?', but more like 'What would it be like to believe that? What would happen if I did? What would I be committing myself to?'" (Rorty, 1980: p.723).

The argument advanced here is that there is no one set method or approach that is best for evaluation. Rather methods and approaches should accord with the purposes of the evaluation and should be based on the idea of producing knowledge that has utility. However, the context for this argument is one in which there is pressure for EPs to demonstrate the value of their services externally, to service users, commissioners and policy-makers. The culture is one of 'what works' and outcomes-based accountability. Consequently it is worth considering methods that EPs might use in order to evaluate their work that produces publicly useful information in terms of the demonstration of the achievement of particular valued or prioritised outcomes. The following section does this, focusing on three methods that have been identified within the EP community: GAS, TME and the evaluation matrix.

6.3 Evaluation tools for educational psychologists

6.3.1 Goal Attainment Scaling

GAS provides an individualised, criterion-referenced approach to describing behaviour change and documenting the outcomes of intervention programmes. It was developed by Kirusek and Sherman (1968) as a means for evaluating mental health outcomes. When using GAS one begins by identifying a set of goals (usually three or more) that are intended outcomes of a treatment, programme or intervention. Next numerical weights are assigned to each goal according to its perceived importance. For each goal a continuum of possible outcomes are identified on a five-point scale, from worst expected outcome (-2), through expected outcome (0), to best expected

outcome (+2). There should not be gaps or overlap between outcomes on the scale, to enable clear judgements about which outcome has been achieved. When the scale is set the programme or intervention should be carried out for an appropriate period. Following intervention or a pre-determined period performance in relation to goals is assessed, and assigned a numerical value (-2 to +2) according to the extent to which the expected outcome has been achieved (Kirusek et al., 1994).

GAS is based on the idea that there is no adequate global definition of ultimate human service goals, and thus there is a need for an idiographic approach to service intervention evaluation (Hurn et al., 2006). The fact that GAS involves the creation of a specific measurement scale for each programme, intervention or client means that while it is possible to evaluate effectiveness on an individualised and relevant scale, it is also possible to apply the scale extremely widely, to enumerate almost any kind of desired outcomes. Indeed, it is considered to be among the most versatile of outcome measures (Marson et al., 2009). Hence use of GAS has extended well beyond its original application within clinical psychology, to a broader range of applications including brain injury rehabilitation (Bouwens et al., 2009; Hurn et al., 2006;Turner-Stokes et al., 2009), occupation therapy outcomes (McLaren and Rodger, 2003), support for individuals with spinal injuries (Cox and Amsters, 2002), interventions for children with autism (Oren and Ogletree, 2000) and motor disorders (Wright et al., 2005), interventions to promote healthy behaviours in adults (Becker et al., 2000), and evaluating student progress in schools (Roach and Elliott, 2005). Reviews of GAS attest to its

utility as an evaluation tool (Hurn et al., 2006; Schlosser, 2004), however a number of authors (Cytrynbaum et al., 1979; MacKay and Lundie, 1998; McLaren and Rodger, 2003; Hurn et al., 2006) have noted that in published works use of GAS sometimes deviates significantly from the protocols set out by Kirusek and Sherman (1968).

In particular, Kirusek and Sherman (1968) suggested that when using GAS clients should be randomly allocated to treatment conditions, and expected outcome criteria should be set by someone independent from the person(s) responsible for implementing the intervention. There are likely to be practical reasons for GAS users deviating from these prescriptions. Random allocation is often neither possible nor desirable; the same goes for independent goal-setting. Certainly the use of GAS within the EPS is not characterised by these features. Moreover, it has also been suggested that there are benefits from goal-setters not being independent from those who implement an intervention. A number of authors have remarked that one of the benefits of using GAS is that where service providers and service users are jointly engaged in identifying and monitoring outcome goals it can lead to better goals, more tailored to individual needs and a sense of ownership and empowerment, contributing to more efficacious interventions (Becker et al., 2000; Czar, 1987; McLaren and Rodger, 2003; Roach and Elliott, 2005; Schlosser, 2004; Cox and Amsters, 2002). Within our own research the majority of EPs agreed that using GAS helped to ensure that agreed actions are facilitated, and certainly when I have used GAS within my own practice I found it a useful means of engaging and empowering consultees, enabling them to focus of solutions,

and increasing their involvement in the change process. It appears that, contrary to suggestions that consultation renders evaluation problematic or even impossible, GAS can be a tool that facilitates the consultation process. Furthermore, Morrison et al. (2009) use GAS as a means of evaluating the impact on students of a state-wide programme for training school psychologists in behavioural consultation.

Other reported benefits of GAS as an evaluation tool include: its versatility and ease of use (Roach and Elliott, 2005); its potential to offer an individualised and client-focused evaluation tool (Cox and Amsters, 2002); consultees' perceptions of the high utility of GAS (MacKay and Lundie, 1998); its comparative strengths over standardised measures at identifying functional improvements (McLaren and Rodger, 2003); positive correlations with other, established outcome measures (Becker et al., 2000); and, the fact that its numerical scale allows grading and comparison of outcomes (Schlosser, 2004).

While GAS is described as a "useful and important evaluation methodology [that] is psychometrically sound" (Marson, 2009, p.215), there are, nevertheless, limitations and questions about its use. Some of the perceived benefits of GAS, such as its flexibility and its individualised nature, in turn render it susceptible to criticism on grounds of subjectivity, lack of norm-referencing and potential for bias (Roach and Elliott, 2005). Questions have been raised about the reliability and validity of GAS evaluations (Cytrynbaum et al., 1979). More recent systematic reviews are generally favourable with

respect to inter-rater reliability, congruent validity as measured by correlations with other outcome measures, as well as social validity in terms of user evaluations (Hurn et al., 2006; Schlosser, 2004). It is noted, however, that reliability assessments tend to focus on inter-rater reliability of GAS outcome measures, rather than reliability with respect to scale construction (Schlosser, 2004). There is some evidence that multiple judges for the same client produce similar scales (Shefler et al., 2001), but overall the evidence here is limited.

Becker et al. (2000) point out that the value of GAS rests on the appropriateness of the goals that are set: “If the goals are too challenging or not challenging enough, then the data will be meaningless as a measure of treatment effectiveness” (p.178). Indeed, it could be argued that where a service or professional who consistently achieves outcomes that are above the expected level, this simply indicates that expectations are low. If ‘expected’ outcome is to have any meaning, it must surely entail the most likely or average outcome (given efficacious intervention), and so one would expect an efficacious service to achieve expected outcomes on average. While professionals may appear to have a vested interest in not setting challenging outcomes (in order to appear to be regularly exceeding expectations), Schlosser (2004) argues reasonably that teams of individuals, especially where consultees are involved in goal-setting are unlikely to conspire to set easy goals. Nevertheless, appropriate training is likely to play an important role in ensuring appropriate goals are set, both in terms of challenge and content (Bailey and Simeonsson, 1988).

Authors have also questioned the statistical properties of GAS scores. While Kirusek and Sherman's (1968) original proposal suggested that GAS scores could be treated as interval data, combined to produce weighted scores and translated into standard or T-scores, there is debate about the appropriateness of such practices (MacKay and Lundie, 1998; Marson et al., 2009). Space precludes examination of these arguments in detail, save to say that aggregation of GAS scores, at for example a service level, should not be done without consideration of the appropriate methods for doing this and conducting analyses.

6.3.2 Target Monitoring and Evaluation

In our survey, EPs' responses did indicate some concerns about the utility and appropriateness of GAS as an evaluation tool. In particular those EPs who were described as 'non-converts' with respect to GAS usage, were more likely (than 'converts') to suggest that GAS lacks reliability, is difficult to use, and does not benefit children or young people, facilitate collaborative working, or fit within a consultation framework. Dunsmuir et al. (2009) report that EPs have also identified other problems with using GAS within educational psychology practice, including difficulties in defining a goal scale with five discrete, mutually exclusive levels, and concerns about the time involved in integrating GAS within service delivery. In response to such concerns Target Monitoring and Evaluation (TME) has been developed as a more user-friendly modification of GAS.

Like GAS, TME involves setting one or more intervention targets and then reviewing progress in relation to these in order to assess whether it is as expected, or better or worse than expected. However TME differs from GAS in that, rather than defining a five-point scale, TME involves definition of only two levels (current baseline and target) and these are assessed on a Likert scale from 1 to 10. The baseline is assigned a value towards the bottom of the scale (usually 2 or 3) and the expected outcome is identified towards the top of the scale (between 6 and 8), so that the scale allows for progress to exceed the target or fall below the baseline level. When progress is reviewed, during or following intervention, the EP and consultee assess whether or not the target has been achieved, and assign a value on the scale reflecting their judgement of the extent of progress in relation to the initial target. So if, for example, the baseline was set at 3 and the target set at 7, and there was partial progress towards the target, a score of 4 to 6 would be assigned depending on the judgement of how close to expected achievement the actual progress was. If the expected target was exceeded, a value of 8 to 10 would be assigned, again depending on how far the target had been exceeded, and if performance had worsened in relation to the baseline, a score of 1 or 2 would be given (Dunsmuir et al., 2009).

TME is a novel procedure, developed specifically for use by EPs. At present there are only two published reports of its use (Dunsmuir et al., 2009; Monsen et al., 2009). As such there is no evidence in relation to the reliability and validity of TME. It is worth considering how TME compares at GAS and what its mooted benefits are. While TME is presented as a process where targets

are determined and assessed in consultation between the EP and consultee, and thus does not require the independent goal-setting and assessment that Kirusek and Sherman (1968) advocated, it has already been noted that GAS use frequently does not follow these protocols, and indeed there may be benefits of using GAS as part of a collaborative process.

The main difference between the two systems is in relation to the scales. Whereas GAS involves determining five discrete levels of goal attainment, TME only involves specifying two levels (baseline and expected outcome), but these are assessed on a 10-point scale. Arguably such a scale is easier to construct. Indeed, Dunsmuir et al. (2009) state that: “the strengths of GAS are maintained but the TME system is more streamlined and user-friendly” (p.67). It is, however, questionable whether the 10-point scale marks an improvement on GAS’s five-level scale. In the case of GAS each of the five levels is (or should be) clearly defined. This is part of what contributes to high reported inter-rater reliability; by specifying levels in advance that are specific and measureable, it allows for multiple raters to assess relative outcomes by applying the same criteria for assessment. With TME this feature is lost. As only the baseline and expected outcome are defined in specific, measurable terms, these are the only levels that could be expected to be reliably assessed. The numerical values assigned to baselines, expected and achieved outcomes are arbitrary. There are no criteria for judging whether assessed progress sufficiently deviates from the baseline or expected outcome to warrant a particular score. For example, one of the target examples given by Monsen et al (2009), was to reduce the occurrence of

negative social incidents involving a target pupil. In this instance the baseline was assigned a score of 0, and the expected outcome was assigned a score of 8. The achieved outcome was rated as 5 on the 10-point scale, but all that this tells us is that there was some progress but the target was not achieved. There are myriad ways that there could be some progress towards this target: negative social incidents could be reduced by ten percent or ninety percent; the may be the same number of incidents but they are less severe or better managed; there are the same number of incidents but the pupil shows greater awareness of them; negative incidents have been eliminated in one context but continue to occur in another; and so on. The fact that the score was 5 and not 4 or 6 (or 1, 2, 3, or 8 even) gives no additional information about the extent of progress towards the goal, and is an entirely subjective judgement as there are no pre-defined criteria for determining progress levels along the scale. Indeed, this is what is said to make TME more user-friendly than GAS (Dunsmuir et al., 2009).

It could be argued that the intermediate and extension levels of goal attainment are not useful, and thus there is no need to define them; the only useful information is whether a goal is partly achieved, achieved or exceeded. But, as has been reported in the literature and in our research, GAS users and consultees find the process of scale construction and goal definition a useful one. In constructing a five-level scale, one not only identifies the expected outcome, but also intervening steps to the goal and subsequent steps beyond it. For example, if a GAS scale were set up to evaluate skill development, where the target was generalised skill usage, one might identify intermediate

steps of skill usage with support, independent skill usage, skills usage with fluency in a particular context and so on. Here the GAS levels are defined in reference to a particular understanding of how skills are learnt and mastered, and this understanding will inform the type of intervention. If a target had not been met, one might focus on increasing fluency or independence, as suggested by the GAS level. Using TME one would only determine that the skill had not been fully mastered and generalised, and a score in between the baseline and expected outcome would not give information about where the individual is in terms of their skill acquisition. GAS sets a target and can identify relevant steps to get there and where to go afterwards, while TME only tells us where we are if the expected outcome is achieved, it does not meaningfully tell us where we have got to and where we are going.

The two published studies employing TME report aggregated data from EPS use of the protocol across a range of interventions. Dunsmuir et al (2009) analysed 187 targets, while Monsen et al (2009) analysed 228 targets. In the former study 46% of evaluations showed expected progress, with 40% showing better than expected progress, and only 14% showing some or no progress. In the latter study these figures were 42%, 46% and 12%, respectively. Both papers report t-tests as showing that achieved outcomes were significantly higher than expected outcomes and interpret this as demonstrating high levels of intervention efficacy. While Dunsmuir et al (2009) state that TME score are interval level data, this is surely not the case, as one cannot assume equal-spaced intervals on an undefined Likert scale. Notwithstanding the fact that the use of parametric tests to analyse ordinal

level data is open to criticism (MacKay and Lundie, 1998), these data simply show that there was a discrepancy between expectations and achievements. We do not know if this is because expectations we low and inaccurate, or because the service really did exceed expectations in any meaningful sense.

For both GAS and TME, because they measure attainment in relation to expectation, the meaningfulness of any data rests on the validity of expected outcome as a construct. For expected outcome to be a valid construct we should anticipate that expectations are, in some way, defined independently of mere subjective judgements, otherwise GAS and TME can only ever assess the accuracy of expectations, or become an elaborate form of client satisfaction measurement; precisely the thing that EPSs should be looking to move beyond (Baxter and Frederickson, 2005).

6.3.3 The evaluation matrix

EPs' professional associations have also developed a specific approach to evaluating educational psychology (AEP/ DECP/ NAPEP, 2009). The concern of the professional associations was to find a way to demonstrate the contribution of EPs to outcomes for children, specifically the five Every Child Matter Outcomes (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2004). The way that professional associations suggest that EPs evaluate outcomes involves using an evaluation matrix. The matrix has five parts: EP activity, purpose, with whom, links to ECM outcomes, and evaluation options. They suggest that prior to an intervention or project, EPs first define the activity in terms of its constituent parts or aims, and then specify who the activity is to be

conducted with, what the purpose is, and how it links to ECM outcomes. With these features identified, the EP then identifies possible evaluation options for each of the specified purposes or activities. A worked example for a thinking skills group is shown below in Table 1.

EP activity	Purpose	With whom	Links with ECM outcomes	Evaluation options
To set up group activities on thinking skills: • To run a thinking skills group	To improve children's thinking skills	Whole class	• Being (emotionally) healthy • Enjoying and achieving • Making a positive contribution	Use of pre/post intervention measures. Include use of a control group.
• To model teaching thinking skills	To enable adults to improve children's thinking skills	Adults	• Being (emotionally) healthy • Enjoying and achieving • Making a positive contribution	Use of teacher pre/post questionnaires on skills, confidence and understanding of intervention and delivery.

Table 1: Example of evaluation matrix for thinking skills group. Source: AEP/ DECP/ NAPEP (2009, p. 25)

The evaluation matrix does not suggest specific outcome measures, rather it outlines a thinking frame or process for identifying the relevant purposes and outcomes so that appropriate outcome measures can be identified. It emphasises that evaluation methods should be identified before an intervention is implemented.

Given that the evaluation matrix is a thinking and planning tool, rather than a specific method of evaluating outcomes, it is not directly comparable with GAS and TME. Indeed there is scope within the matrix to use either of the methods

as evaluation options. Arguably there is potential for integration of standard evaluation methods or protocols within the evaluation matrix in order to develop a service approach to evaluation.

While the versatility of GAS and TME are emphasised within the literature, the is evidence that these are used most frequently and most fruitfully within individual casework applications (Cox and Amsters, 2002; Dunsmuir et al., 2009). It was notable that in our research GAS ‘converts’ made much greater use of GAS within individual casework, compared with the ‘non-converts’, who used GAS more often in group-based interventions or project work. It may be the case that GAS is better suited to work focused on an individual, and thus those who used it in this way found it more useful, and were more likely to continue using it, than those who didn’t. There is reason to believe this is true when one considers that evaluating the outcomes of individual casework is akin to conducting a single-subject experiment with an A-B design (Busse et al., 1995). As control or comparison groups are not available, outcome evaluation relies on comparing post intervention performance with a baseline measure. Also, within individual-focused work (which includes direct intervention and consultation with an individual focus), part of the intervention planning involves specifying individualised targets and tailoring the intervention to achieve these. Using GAS or TME can facilitate this process.

Within project work, however, there is often a greater potential for using comparison groups, and often a greater need to focus on the process of implementation, especially where interventions are being piloted. Similarly,

desired outcomes are possibly more readily identifiable at the outset, as an individualised approach is not being adopted, and so more generic target outcomes are likely to be implied by the overarching project purpose. As such a negotiation of target outcomes, as involved in GAS or TME, may add less to the planning and implementation process than they do for individual-focused work. Here, an approach such as the trident approach may offer a better solution than simply using GAS or TME, although these may be used as part of the evaluation strategy. For training, the Kirkpatrick model may offer a good solution, with its focus on the multiple training outcomes (reaction, knowledge, behaviour and results/ impact), again augmented with GAS or TME as needed.

These are tentative suggestions, and demand more consideration to develop into a service-level approach. Also, it is unlikely that a totally prescriptive approach would be desirable, given the diversity of work that EPs are engaged in. Nevertheless there is potential for an EPS to identify the main activities that it engages is (e.g. direct casework, individual-focused consultation, project work, training) and then identify preferred evaluation approaches for each. Using the evaluation matrix to link activities to ECM outcomes would offer a simple way for the EPS to collect data about which outcomes the EPS is contributing towards.

6.4 Conclusions

In this paper I have discussed the purpose, role and practice of evaluation within educational psychology. Developing and implementing effective systems of evaluation which command public confidence is a priority for EPs and EPSs if educational psychology is to have a meaningful and hopeful future. There is an implication and an expectation that EPs evaluate outcomes to demonstrate their effectiveness, but there is also a need for EPs to evaluate processes within programmes and interventions to develop, amend and improve them. Evaluation can facilitate reflective practice. I have discussed GAS and its variant, TME. Both of these approaches have promise insofar as they facilitate evaluation and aggregation of diverse outcomes, and of the outcomes associated with consultation – something that has been identified as particularly problematic within educational psychology. I have argued that, in many ways, GAS offers a more promising tool compared to TME, given issues relating to construction of the TME metric. It is, however, suggested that TME has benefits over GAS, particularly with respect to its ease of use and the time involved in employing it. Here the case is not proven, and there is a need for further research – a comparative evaluation of these evaluation tools. It is notable however, that ease of use is one of the mooted benefits of GAS, and respondents in the research that we carried out did describe GAS as an easy-to-use and non-time-consuming tool. TME may be even better in this respect, but one must decide on whether there is a trade-off between utility in terms of the information produced, and the ease of use.

Our research did, however, indicate some difficulties and challenges in implementing GAS as a service approach to evaluation. Doing this involves changing people's behaviour; it is a psychological enterprise. As such, it should be informed by a psychological understanding of behaviour change. Our report (Appendix 1) used the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1988) as a way of conceptualising behaviour change, and suggested that certain beliefs needed to be challenged or developed in order to promote the GAS. In particular EPs need to feel that GAS is useful, accords with social norms and is manageable. Appropriate and ongoing training is likely to be necessary to maximise the potential of GAS and promote its use (Bailey and Simeonsson, 1988) .

There is also need for further research on how best to develop and implement service level approaches to evaluation. I have suggested that various tools, GAS, the Kirkpatrick model, the Trident approach and the evaluation matrix can be used to compliment one another and for differing purposes. These ideas require further development. There is also a need for further research to link GAS or other individualised outcome measures to macro-level indicators and generalised outcomes, such as the ECM outcomes, in order to further demonstrate the validity of such individualised measures. These are different challenges, but they constitute a response to an even greater challenge, namely the challenge posed to educational psychology as a profession if it is unable to demonstrate convincingly its utility and value to those who would question these things.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Summary report of research into the use of and attitudes towards Goal Attainment Scaling within an Educational Psychology Service

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December 2009

1 Introduction

1.1 Goal Attainment Scaling

Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) provides an individualised, criterion-referenced approach to describing behaviour change and documenting the outcomes of intervention programmes. It was developed by Kiresuk and Sherman (1968) as an outcome measure for mental health interventions. Since then, it has been used for a broad range of evaluations in health and education, including brain injury rehabilitation (e.g. Bouwens et al., 2009), paediatric occupational therapy outcomes (McLaren & Rodger, 2003), treatments and programmes for children with autism (Oren & Ogletree, 2000), outcome measurement in communication disorders (Schlosser, 2004), an LEA behaviour support teaching service (Imich & Roberts, 1990) and rural health services in Australia (Cox & Amsters, 2002).

GAS involves the following steps:

1. Identify the issues that will be the focus of intervention.
2. Translate the selected problems into at least three goals.
3. Select a baseline descriptor for each goal against which progress can be measured.
4. Specify the expected level of outcome for the goal (0).
5. Specify somewhat more (+1) and somewhat less (-1) than expected levels of outcome for the goal.
6. Specify much more (+2) and much less than expected (-2) levels of outcome for the goal.
7. At follow-up, examine the information to determine the outcome level for each scale (i.e. -2, -1, 0, 1 or 2).

1.2 Use of GAS in The Educational Psychology Service

Frederickson (2002) recommends GAS as an approach that could significantly assist EPs in evaluating individual outcomes, and allow collation of information across schools and support services in a common approach to monitoring and evaluating pupil progress. Following a pilot proposal in 2006, GAS is now used as a means of evaluating delivery of services within The EPS. EPS members are expected to carry out a GAS evaluation on at least one discrete piece of work during the course of an academic year. Data are collated by the Chief Educational Psychologist.

1.3 The current Study

The purpose of the study was to explore how GAS is currently used and viewed within the EPS in order to promote its future use among EPs. This study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. How is GAS used within the EPS?
2. What are Educational Psychologists' attitudes towards GAS?
3. What is the relationship between use of GAS and attitudes towards GAS?
4. What alternative methods can EPs and EP Services use to evaluate outcomes?

In order to ascertain whether there were any alternative evaluation systems comparable to GAS that should be considered by the EPS, searches of published literature and of the EPNET archive were conducted. These searches are not described and reviewed here for the sake of brevity. The main finding, however, was that, with the exception of Target Monitoring and Evaluation (TME – a variant of GAS), there do not appear to be any similar omnibus evaluation tools. The main other approaches to evaluation of EPS activities were either those which were limited to a narrow range of activities (e.g. pre-/post- quantitative measures for using particular scales); approaches that focused on consultee confidence or satisfaction, rather than actual impact; or, approached that measured activities (e.g. number of visits, consultations, Psychological Advices) as opposed to outcomes.

2 Focus Group

A focus group was conducted with Educational Psychologists (EPs) in one SDT on 21 October 2009. The focus group was facilitated by one Trainee EP, and participants were six EPs and one Senior EP. Participants in the focus group discussed how they had used GAS; why they used it and what its benefits were; what problems they had encountered using GAS; and, what other methods they used to evaluate their work.

2.1 Who has used GAS, and for what kinds of work?

All of the EPs in the focus group reported having used GAS. They reported having used it for a range of work, including casework, projects and training. Two EPs said

that they had used it on work involving Precision Teaching, and a further two had used it with Direct Instruction interventions as a means for evaluating programme effectiveness through pupil progress. One EP mentioned that they had used GAS to evaluate the effectiveness of CAF actions. One EP had used it to evaluate their own efforts to increase the involvement of pupils' parents in their own work. In relation to training one EP had identified target outcomes relating the uptake by Teaching Assistants of particular skills or activities.

A number of EPs suggested that they used GAS opportunistically, where pieces of work had the potential for an "ending", where they are time-limited, and where there is something measurable involved. Others reported using GAS to monitor multiple outcomes, such as pupil progress and staff understanding.

2.2 Why do participants use GAS, and what are the benefits of using GAS?

When asked why they used GAS, the group immediately responded with the answer, "**Because we are told to**". There was uncertainty, however, regarding why EPs were expected to use GAS. EPs did identify a number of benefits of using GAS. There were three main (related) themes in this discussion:

- **GAS enabled EPs to adopt a greater focus on outcomes** in planning interventions: "puts things under a microscope". It could help to set challenging targets, and a way to conceptualise meaningful outcomes: "it makes it easier to ask 'what would it look like?' questions". Gas could also be useful for "tracking softer variables".
- **GAS complements a consultation model of service delivery.** EPs said that consultees could find GAS useful, and the process of setting targets involved "working through the steps with the SENCO", and offered a means of joint evaluation of work. GAS was reported to be "user friendly", and EPs felt that it increased consultees' "ownership" of work: "staff are more likely to put things in place than if they are only on an IEP".
- **EPs emphasised the benefits of GAS in relation to reflective practice**. Focusing on outcomes enabled EPs to evaluate the effectiveness of their work, and modify what they did in the light of this evaluation. As one EP put it: "Even minus results can be useful".

2.3 What problems have EPs encountered in using GAS?

Three main problems were identified in relation EPs using GAS.

- The **"once-a-year" mindset**. A number of EPs reported that because they were required to submit on GAS form per year, they came to view this minimum requirement as sufficient, and saw "doing a GAS" as a job to be ticked off each year.
- **Understanding/ competence** – because of the once-a-year mindset, a number of EPs reported that they found it difficult to attain or maintain fluency because of infrequent use. One EP said, "the more I've used it the better I get", and it was suggested that it would be useful for EPs to share practice in order to develop understanding. (A number of participants remarked that they found the focus group really useful insofar as it gave them an opportunity to find out about how others used GAS). It was also remarked that GAS was recommended to be used within CAF, but they had found that – with the exception of EPs – most colleagues knew little about it, and GAS was used "very badly" when they had seen it used as part of a CAF.
- **Issues about the scale** – some EPs reported not liking the scale as negative results could give the impression of a deterioration of a situation when this was not the case, rather than simply indicating that a target had not been achieved. It was also said that the scale was unreliable and open to bias, especially if there is a vested interest (e.g. PDR, service evaluation), and that it was easy to manipulate to attain a positive result. One EP commented that the data from GAS are ordinal level, and thus this limits the kinds of aggregation and analysis that one could/ should do, e.g. if GAS were used within service evaluation.

2.4 What other means do participants use to evaluate their work?

When asked about alternatives to GAS, no comparable candidate alternative systems were identified. EPs reported using a range of quantitative measures, such as test scores and scales. Others mentioned curriculum-based assessments, using observations, IEP reviews and dialogues with stakeholders, as the means that they used to evaluate practice. Reference was also made to schools/ settings completing periodic evaluation questionnaires.

3 Survey

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Participants

Participants were 58 Educational Psychologists (EPs) and 3 Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs) from The Educational Psychology Service (EPS). A total of 35 completed questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 57.3%.

3.3.2 Questionnaire design

The structure for the questionnaire was based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1988), which is a psychological model of behaviour change (see figure 1). TPB suggests that the formation of a behavioural intention is determined by three psychological variables: *attitudes* (positive or negative evaluations of performing a behaviour), *subjective norms* (perceived social pressures to perform or not perform a behaviour), and *perceived behavioural control* over the action in question (perceived ease or difficulty of performing a behaviour). As a general rule, the more favourable the attitude and subjective norm, and the greater the perceived control, the stronger should be the person's intention to perform the behaviour. Intentions are the precursors of behaviour (Ajzen, 2006).

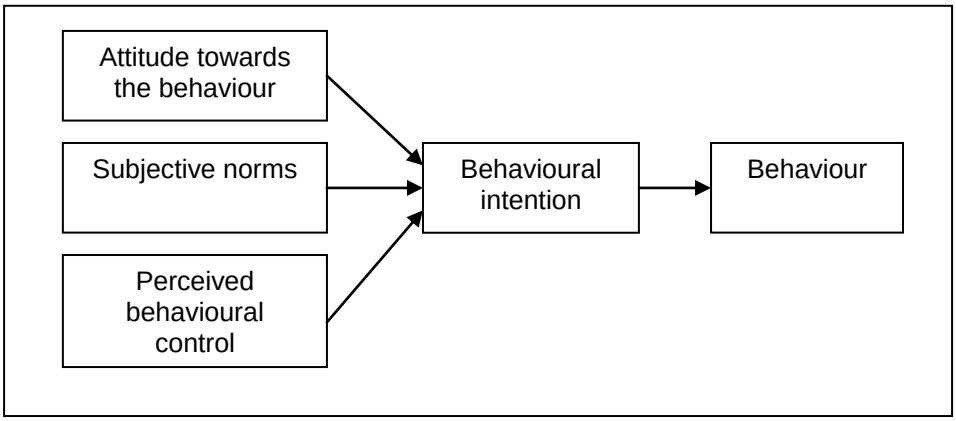

Figure 1. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Azjen, 2006)

Using the feedback from the focus group, questionnaire items were constructed with the regard to the guidelines provided by Francis et al. (2004) on how to construct a TPB questionnaire. The questionnaire contained a total of 32 items (see appendix 1). Participants were asked to indicate their actual use of GAS in the last academic year whether they intended to use GAS *less*, *same*, or *more* in the current

academic year. Two further items required participants to tick boxes to indicate their actual use and intended use of GAS in terms of type of work (e.g. individual casework, research) and consultee (e.g. class teacher, child/young person). Participants were asked to respond to the remaining questions regarding attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

The questionnaire was piloted by one member of the EPS who confirmed that the questionnaire items were clear and the questionnaire straightforward to complete. The time required for completion of the questionnaires was estimated at 4 minutes.

3.3.3 Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed to EPs and TEPs via Senior EPs at team meetings held on 4th November 2009. Time was allocated at the end of the meetings for the completion of the questionnaire, but individuals were also given the option of taking the questionnaire with them and completing it in their own time. Questionnaires were distributed to EPS members in attendance at 6 team meetings.

3.4 Results

3.4.1 Frequency of actual and intended GAS use

34 of the 35 participants reported having used GAS in the previous year. 16 had used GAS once, and 18 had used it 2-3 times. No EPs reported having used GAS more than 3 times. Two EPs said that they intended to use GAS fewer times this year than they had previously. 24 EPs said they intended to use GAS the same amount as previously, and nine said that they intended to use GAS more often compared to last year.

		How often was GAS used in 2008/09?		
		Never	**Once**	**2-3 times**
Intended use 2009/10	**Less**	0	2	0
	Same	0	10	14
	More	1	4	4

Table 1. Frequency of actual and intended GAS use by 'converts' and 'non-converts'

Table 1, above, shows actual and intended GAS use of the participants. Based on this information participants responses were divided into two groups for subsequent analysis. 'Converts' are defined as those EPs who have used GAS previously and intend to use it more than the minimum requirement (purple cells). 'Non-converts' are defined as those EPs who have used GAS previously but do not intend to use it more than the minimal requirement (yellow cells). Those who had never used GAS could not be judged to be converts or not.

3.4.2 How GAS is used

Table 2, below, shows the type of activities in which EPs reported using GAS in 2008/9 and intending to use it this academic year. Work focused at the individual or group/ class level are the most common uses of GAS.

	2008/9 (actual use)		2009/10 (intended use)	
	Responses	**%**	**Responses**	**%**
Individual casework	15	28.8	12	28.6
Group/ class focus	13	25.0	9	21.4
Whole school/ org	4	7.7	5	11.9
Research	2	3.8	2	4.8
Cluster work	5	9.6	3	7.1
CAF	0	0.0	2	4.8
INSET/ Training	11	21.2	6	14.3
Supervision	1	1.9	1	2.4
Other	1	1.9	2	4.8
Total	52		42	

Table 2. GAS use in 2008/09 and intended use in 2009/10 by type of work

The graph Figure 2, below, shows that there were some differences in how converts and non-converts have used GAS previously, with converts appearing to favour use of GAS for individual casework, and non-converts using GAS proportionately more often in group/ class-focused activities and for cluster work.

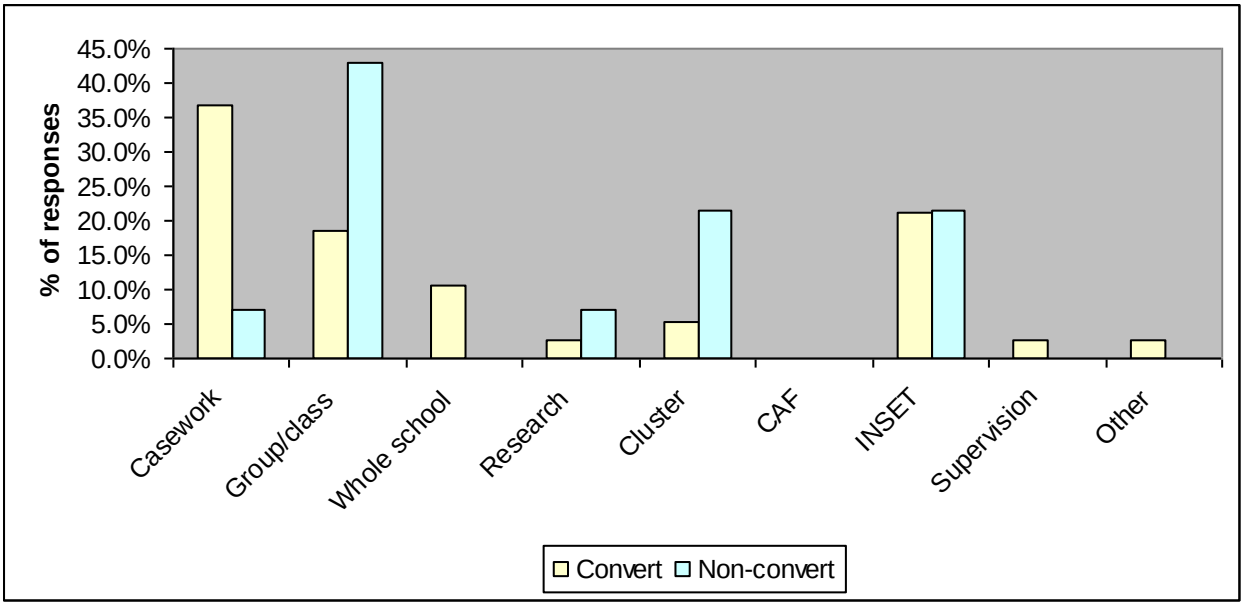

Figure 2. A graph comparing the type of work for which converts and non-converts used GAS in 2008/09

Table 3, below, shows the consultees with whom GAS is used. It is used most frequently with SENCOs/ BECOs and with other teaching staff. This was the case for both converts and non-converts.

	2008/9 (actual)		**2009/10 (intended)**	
	Responses	%	Responses	%
SENCO/ BECO	18	35.3	19	43.2
Teacher/ EY practitioner	14	27.5	8	18.2
TA/ LSA/ etc	3	5.9	6	13.6
Child/ Young person	3	5.9	1	2.3
Parent/ carer	2	3.9	1	2.3
EP/ TEP/ GP	5	9.8	3	6.8
Other professionals	4	7.8	5	11.4
School manager	2	3.9	0	0.0
Research commissioner	0	0.0	1	2.3
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	51		44	

Table 3. GAS use in 2008/09 and intended use in 2009/10 by consultee

3.4.4 Attitudes towards GAS

The questionnaire contained 28 statements about GAS which EPs responded to by indicating their level of agreement on a 7-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Table 4, below, shows the statements with which a majority of all EPs agreed and disagreed. Overall this suggests there are positive attitudes towards

GAS, with a majority of EPs agreeing that GAS helps to clarify desired outcomes, is useful and broadly applicable, helps to evaluate work, and fits well within a consultation framework, among other benefits. Similarly the statements that EPs disagreed with tended to be ones which highlighted difficulties, suggesting that, on the whole, EPs did not find GAS a problematic tool.

The majority of EPs agreed that…	The majority of EPs disagreed that…
• *Managers expect me to use GAS. (88.6%)* • *Using GAS helps to clarify desired outcomes. (77.1%)* • *When I have used GAS it has been useful. (71.4%)* • *GAS helps me to evaluate my work. (68.6%)* • *GAS fits well within a consultation framework. (68.6%)* • *GAS can be used for a broad range of outcomes. (68.6%)* • *I am confident in using GAS. (65.7%)* • *I am confident at identifying work where GAS would be useful. (62.9%)* • *The GAS form is easy to complete. (62.9%)* • *Using GAS helps to ensure that agreed actions are implemented. (60.0%)* • *Data from GAS evaluations are useful. (54.3%)* • *Other EPs use GAS more than I do. (51.4%)* • *Using GAS facilitates collaborative working. (51.4%)*	• *The additional paperwork involved in using GAS is problematic. (80.0%)* • *A negative outcome on GAS reflects badly on me as an EP. (68.6%)* • *GAS is difficult to use. (62.9%)* • *GAS is difficult to explain to consultees. (60.0%)* • *A difficulty in using GAS is that it is not well understood by consultees. (57.1%)* • *It would be helpful if I was required to use GAS more often. (57.1%)* • *I would need to use GAS more to feel more confident about it. (51.4%)* • *GAS is not a reliable means for evaluating work. (51.4%)*

Table 4. Questionnaire statements with which most EPs agreed and disagreed (i.e. item score of 5–7 or 1-3, respectively) with percentages of EPs agreeing in brackets.

Statements which the majority of EPs agree and disagree with suggest generally positive behavioural attitudes (i.e. GAS is perceived to be useful) and perceived levels of control (i.e. EPs feel confident in using GAS). Regarding subjective norms (i.e. perceived social pressure to use GAS), the picture is somewhat different. 88.6 per cent of participants agreed with the statement, “Managers expect me to use GAS”, making it the statement which elicited the most agreement or disagreement of all of the attitude items. However there was not any overall agreement with other

statements relating to subjective norms. EPs did not seem to identify subjective pressures from colleagues, service users or the benefits to children and young people as reasons for using GAS.

Table 5, below, lists the attitude statements for which there were differences in agreement or disagreement between converts and non-converts. Here, a difference in agreement is defined by a difference of more than 15 per cent in the proportion of EPs agreeing/ disagreeing between groups. It is apparent from this table that converts have a generally more positive view of GAS, and a re more likely to describe it as useful to themselves and to others, such as consultees, and children and young people. Converts are more likely to disagree with statements that identify potential difficulties and shortcomings of using GAS. Non-converts are more likely to describe GAS as unreliable and difficult to use. They correctly identify that others use GAS more than they do. They are more likely to agree that it would be helpful to be required to use GAS more often, although it is worth noting that only one-third of all non-converts agreed with this statement (compared to 18 per cent of converts). Significantly, non-converts appear less likely to identify certain benefits of GAS.

	Agree	Disagree
Converts	• *GAS helps me to evaluate my work.* • *Consultees find GAS useful.* • *When I have used GAS it has been useful.* • *The GAS form is easy to complete.* • *Data from GAS evaluations are useful.* • *Using GAS benefits the children and young people that I work with.* • *Using GAS helps to clarify desired outcomes.*	• *It is difficult to identify appropriate outcomes when using GAS.* • *GAS is difficult to use.*
Non-converts	• *Other EPs use GAS more than I do.* • *GAS is not a reliable means for evaluating work.* • *It would be helpful if I was required to use GAS more often.* • *GAS is difficult to use.*	• *Using GAS helps to ensure that agreed actions are implemented.* • *Data from GAS evaluations are useful.* • *Using GAS benefits the children and young people that I work with.* • *Using GAS facilitates collaborative working.* • *I am confident at identifying work where GAS would be useful.* • *GAS fits well within a consultation framework.* • *GAS helps me to evaluate my work.*

Table 5. A table showing difference in agreement with attitude statements between converts and non-converts. *The top row contains the statements with which converts agreed/ disagreed more often than non-converts. The bottom row contains the statements with which non-converts agreed/ disagreed more often than non-converts*

The use of a likert scale for attitude items meant that there was a measure of the strength of agreement for each item, with a higher score on the seven point scale indicating a stronger level of agreement with an item. Table 6, over, shows the ten statements where there were the greatest differences in strength of agreement, as measured by the group mean item response, between the two groups. Again it is the case that converts appear to more readily identify the benefits of using GAS. This suggests a stronger behavioural attitude than for non-converts. Non-converts agree more strongly with items relating to possible limitations of using GAS, such as a lack of reliability, implying a weaker behavioural attitude. They also perceive more strongly that GAS is difficult to use, suggesting limited perceived behavioural control, although conversely this group also agreed more strongly than converts that they were confident in using GAS. Non-converts agreed more strongly that managers expected them to use GAS, and this was the item where there was the greatest difference in strength of agreement. One possible explanation is that those EPs, who do not use GAS frequently or who do not have a favourable attitude towards it, may make external attributions in explaining their use of GAS, namely that they use it because they are told to, but use it infrequently because it is a difficult or unhelpful tool.

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Converts agree more strongly than non-converts that…	Non-converts agree more strongly than converts that…
• *Using GAS facilitates collaborative working.* • *GAS helps me to evaluate my work.* • *GAS is more suitable for outcomes that are quantifiable.* • *Using GAS benefits the children and young people that I work with.* • *Using GAS helps to ensure that agreed actions are implemented.*	• *GAS is difficult to use.* • *Other EPs use GAS more than I do.* • *GAS is not a reliable means for evaluating work.* • *I am confident in using GAS.* • *Managers expect me to use GAS.*

Table 6. The statements with which converts and non-converts agree more strongly.

Summary & conclusions

Key Points	Implications
GAS is widely used, but not frequently used. Most EPs used GAS 2-3 times in 2008/09, which is more than the minimum requirement. Most EPs intend to use GAS the same amount in 2009/10 as they had in 2008/09.	• While current GAS use exceeds the minimum requirement, there is evidence to suggest that it has reached a plateau.
Neither the EPNET archive search, nor the focus group identified any comparable alternative evaluation tools to GAS. The only alternative identified in the literature is Target Monitoring and Evaluation (TME).	• GAS (or a variant) is likely to be the preferred evaluation tool in the future. It may be worth conducting a study that compares TME and GAS to determine whether EPs have a preference.
Overall, the most popular use of GAS is for individual casework. However, non-converts do not appear to favour using GAS for this type of work.	• There is potential for using GAS across a wider range of work. • Given that casework is a common form of work there is potential for increased use of GAS by all EPs. • Encouraging non-converts to use GAS in individual casework may improve attitudes towards GAS. • Opportunities for EPs to share practice relating to GAS may increase the confidence of EPs in identifying how GAS can be used.
Benefits of GAS identified by EPs include ease of use, focus on identifying outcomes, suitability for consultation, and promotion of collaborative working.	• Concerns about usefulness are not the main reason that EPs do not use GAS more. However, some non-converts may still require convincing about the benefits of GAS.
Managerial expectation is the only normative influence on use of GAS perceived by EPs. Non-converts perceive this more strongly than	• A Service minimum requirement may motivate all EPs to use GAS once a year but may have a negative influence on encouraging broader and more

converts. Some EPs suggest that the Service minimum requirement creates a “once-a-year mindset”.	frequent use.
	• There is a need to clarify and communicate other reasons why EPs should be using GAS / evaluating outcomes from EPs’ own perspective, a Service perspective and a stakeholder perspective.
	• There is a need to clarify why GAS is valued by Service Managers. Is it for:
	  ○ encouraging reflective practice;
	  ○ requiring EPs to monitor outcomes; or,
	  ○ demonstrating impact at Service level?
	The answer to this should determine the mechanisms used to encourage use of GAS.

There is a mixed picture in relation to EPs’ confidence in using GAS. Almost two-thirds of EPs in the survey agreed that they were confident in using GAS, but focus group participants reported not using GAS often enough to feel confident. Over half of EPs did not agree that using GAS more often would make them more confident, or that it would be useful to be required to use GAS more often. Compared to converts, non-converts agreed more strongly with the statements “I am confident in using GAS” *and* “GAS is difficult to use”. Overall there is neither agreement nor disagreement that managers support EPs in using GAS.	• It is possible that some EPs overstate their confidence and identify other barriers to using GAS (i.e. they make an external, fixed attribution for not using it). • It is likely that requiring/ encouraging increased use of GAS, in the absence of measures to provide support and increase confidence, may lead to increased psychological resistance, and thus cause people to adopt even less favourable attitudes towards it.

Recommendations / Next Steps

1. Establish a clear agreed rationale for why EPs are expected to use GAS and communicate this across the Service and to relevant stakeholders.
2. If the rationale for using GAS is to encourage EPs to evaluate their own practice:
    a. Identify ways that evaluation can be promoted within the PDR process;
    b. Share examples of good practice and the range of applications of GAS through whole-service and/or SDT meetings.
    c. Include questions about EP impact on end of year school evaluation questionnaires.
3. If the rationale for using GAS is to provide data to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Service in promoting positive outcomes for children and young people:
    a. More data are needed from GAS submissions.
    b. Analyse GAS submissions in terms of types of positive outcome (e.g. improved behaviour / learning / etc.) rather than levels of outcome (e.g. +2, -1).
    c. Triangulate data from GAS with data from other sources (e.g. school evaluation questionnaires) and communicate findings both within the Service and to relevant stakeholders.
    d. Encourage use of GAS for outcomes relating to Brighter Futures / Every Child Matters.
4. Identify ways in which new EPs / TEPs / GPs can be supported to develop an understanding of GAS and ways of providing ongoing support to all EPs in developing their use of and confidence in GAS.
5. There is a need to consider how a minimum requirement affects GAS usage. A case could be made for increasing the minimum, abolishing it, altering it to require evaluation more generally (with GAS as one possible tool), or focusing evaluation on specific types of work (e.g. individual casework, HF IEPs, CAF).
6. The questionnaire survey should be repeated towards the end of the current academic year to assess whether behaviour and/or attitudes towards GAS have changed as a result of changes resulting from this report.

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Appendix 1: Goal Attainment Scaling Questionnaire

We are conducting a survey to find out about EPS members' use of Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) and attitudes towards GAS. This information will be used to help the EPS to reflect on the role of GAS within service delivery. This project also forms part of our doctoral research. All data will be presented anonymously. We would be very grateful if you could assist us by completing this short questionnaire.

1. In the academic year 2008/9 I have used GAS (please tick one box):

Never	Once	2-3 times	4-6 times	7-10 times	10+ times

2. Compared to 2008/9, this year I intend to use GAS:

Less	Same	More

Please tick all of the boxes below that describe your use of GAS for the last academic year and your use/intended use for the current year.

3. Type of work:	**2008/9**	**2009/10**
Individual casework		
Group/ class focus		
Whole school/ organisation		
Research		
Cluster work		
CAF		
INSET/ training		
Supervision		
Other (please specify below):		

4. Used with:	**2008/9**	**2009/10**
SENCO/BECO		
Class teacher/ EY practitioner		
TA/LSA etc.		
Child/ young person		
Parent/ carer		
EP/ TEP/ GP		
Other professionals		
School manager		
Research Commissioner		
Other (please specify below):		

5. *Using the 7-point scale below, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about GAS.*

		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	
1.	A difficulty in using GAS is that it is not well understood by consultees.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
2.	GAS is not a reliable means for evaluating work.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
3.	The additional paperwork involved in using GAS is problematic.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
4.	I am confident at identifying work where GAS would be useful.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
5.	Other EPs use GAS more than I do.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6.	Using GAS helps to ensure that agreed actions are implemented.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
7.	Managers support me in using GAS.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
8.	It would be helpful if I was required to use GAS more often.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
9.	Using GAS facilitates collaborative working.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
10.	GAS is difficult to use.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
11.	I would need to use GAS more to feel more confident about it.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
12.	GAS is difficult to explain to consultees.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
13.	Service users expect me to evaluate my work.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
14.	Using GAS benefits the children and young people that I work with.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
15.	A negative outcome on GAS reflects badly on me as an EP.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
16.	Using GAS is time consuming.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
17.	Data from GAS evaluations are useful.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
18.	Consultees find GAS useful.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
19.	It is difficult to identify appropriate outcomes when using GAS.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
20.	Using GAS helps to clarify desired outcomes.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
21.	I am confident in using GAS.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
22.	Managers expect me to use GAS.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
23.	When I have used GAS it has been useful.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
24.	GAS is more suitable for outcomes that are quantifiable.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
25.	GAS helps me to evaluate my work.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
26.	GAS fits well within a consultation framework.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
27.	GAS can be used for a broad range of outcomes.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*
28.	The GAS form is easy to complete.	*Strongly disagree*							*Strongly agree*