An interpretive exploration of beliefs and values related to professional practice in educational psychology

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I declare that the contents are the sole and original work of the author. References to existing research are cited where appropriate.

Signature: ……………………………………

Overview

My interest in this area of study is has its origins in my own professional background. Prior to commencing the Doctor of Educational, Child and Community Psychology course at the University of Exeter in 2007, I was employed as an Assistant Psychologist. Working in the private sector, my role covered both educational and forensic psychology. As an undergraduate, I gained experience of working with children through summer activity schemes in areas of deprivation. I am, therefore, a member of only the second cohort to embark on professional training in educational psychology that has recruited trainees form backgrounds other than teaching.

It is from this point onward that my interest in the relationship between professional background, credibility and the ability to be an effective practitioner has developed. Albeit anecdotal, my experience as Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) has led me to believe that the discussion around professional background, with particular regard to teaching experience is very much alive. Having assumed that the issue was consigned to history upon the introduction of the three year doctoral training, I have since encountered individuals who harbour strong views about teaching experience. This is true for individuals within and outside of the profession, and in both groups research suggests that opinion is polarised. Reading around this area of study has increased my motivation to explore this issue in greater detail.

My belief, which has been further reinforced by my professional experience as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), is that teaching experience is not a necessary prerequisite to work effectively as an Educational Psychologist (EP). This being said, I am extremely interested as to why opinions that contrast with my own are held. My review of relevant literature has gone some way to answering this question, but the answers I have found do not provide the depth with which I wish to explore this issue.

Through this research, I aim to develop a greater understanding as to the relationship between professional background, role and credibility in educational psychology. Also, I hope that this research will prove illuminating and thought provoking for those who read it, particularly those who may disagree with my personal beliefs as outlined above. I must emphasise that this thesis should be read with the acknowledgement that although I have made every effort to reflect upon and eliminate my personal bias, I cannot remain entirely objective. This is reflected in the content of the thesis.

This study employs a two-stage design with a small group of professionals from a range of services from within my Local Authority (LA) and a neighbouring LA. Each stage of the study is described in a separate paper, which comprise this thesis along with the appendices. Stage one involves interviews with the participants, which aims to elicit their perceptions of role, credibility and the relevance of professional background. Paper one uses semi-structured interviews to explore participant views, and is contextualised by an overview of the literature regarding the EP role and training. In stage two a smaller sample of the original participants are revisited and are interviewed using a technique derived from Personal Construct Psychology (PCP). Paper two therefore uses a psychological framework through which to interpret the data and this is reflected in the literature, tone and presentation of the paper.

Essentially the research design has provided me with the opportunity to research this topic with two different, yet complementary approaches. The findings presented in paper one suggest that there is a link between how the role of the EP is perceived and professional background. The findings also pose wide-ranging questions about the attributes perceived necessary to practise as an EP and the degree of influence professional background has in their development. The findings from stage two indicate that the participants' core values about EP practice predominantly relate to personal qualities that do not necessarily have their origins in professional background. For these participants, the make-up of an EP is complex and many of the qualities they need are less tangible than others, which questions the role of professional background.

There is a great deal of literature, data, and analysis that has not been included in this thesis due its sheer volume. There is also some overlap in the content of the two papers, which has been unavoidable for reasons of continuity. Exploring this area of study has been an enlightening experience, and I hope you find this exposition of it both original and engaging.

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Paper one: Perceptions of role and professional background.

Paper two: Using personal construct psychology to elicit core beliefs around professional practice.

An interpretive exploration of beliefs and values related to professional practice in educational psychology. Paper one: Perceptions of role and professional background.

Abstract

In 2006 a new training route for Educational Psychologists (EPs) was introduced, which extended the entry criteria to applicants from a range of professional backgrounds. The related literature indicates that this was a contentious issue. The aim of the current study is to explore the relationship between the role of the EP and professional background using an interpretive methodology. Twelve participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. The participants were four EPs, four primary Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCos), three secondary SENCos and a Portage Worker. The aim of the study is also to establish what skills and qualities the participants perceive to be necessary to be an effective and credible practitioner. Following analysis of the interview data, a number of themes emerged. In terms of desirable EP attributes, the participants' responses fell into three broad categories, interpersonal skills, psychological skills and other qualities. The participants perceived the EP role as either expert or collaborative, although some expressed a degree of uncertainty about the nature of the role. All of the participants alluded to a link between experience and credibility, although the nature of desirable experience varied between personal and professional experience. Participants who viewed the role of the EP within an expert model favoured teaching experience over other forms of pre-training experience.

Introduction

This research is set in the context of the changes to the entry criteria for professional training in educational psychology. Prior to the 2006/07 academic year, applicants were required to have a first degree in psychology that is recognised by the British Psychological Society (BPS) as conferring Graduate Basis for Registration, which became Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership in 2009 (BPS, 2010). In order to be eligible for the one year Masters training programme, applicants were required to hold Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and a minimum of two years' teaching experience. Following successful completion of a Masters programme, EPs were required to complete a year of supervised practice. This training model therefore comprised three distinct elements, with QTS and teaching experience being an integral part of EP training. In 2006, applicants from professional backgrounds other than teaching were eligible to for entry to the new three year doctoral programme, providing they had relevant experience working with children (BPS, 2005). The move to a three year doctoral model gained wide support (Frederickson, Malcolm & Osborne, 1999; Gersch, 1997; Leadbetter, 2000; Maliphant, 1997), although the debate over relevant previous experience proved to be a sticking point (Farrell, 1996; Frederickson et al., 1999).

It is acknowledged that the profession of educational psychology is in a period of change (Cameron, 2006; Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010; Gersch, 2009; Love, 2009), to which the changes in training have contributed. At present the new training programme is in its fourth year, which means that there will be a number of individuals either practising or training whose professional backgrounds are other than teaching. Given that the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC, 2008) is committed to monitoring the progress of the new training programme, further exploration of this contentious issue is timely.

The purpose of this stage of the research is to ascertain the views of Educational Psychologists (EPs) and those who work with them in order to explore the relationship between perceptions of role and professional

background. Stage two develops the ideas explored in paper one by using Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) (Kelly, 1955) to gain a greater understanding of the participants' belief systems regarding EPs' professional practice. I feel that given my current status as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), it was important to bring a psychological aspect to this research. The intention of this study is that its findings will be both illuminative and relevant to the development of educational psychology.

Selected Literature

In order to develop my research questions, a review of the related literature was undertaken. The purpose of this was to critically review the existing literature and identify the gaps in the knowledge base relating to this area of study. This has helped me to develop a novel approach to this subject matter. A selection of the literature is included in this section, which covers the most salient information. A complete version of the literature review can be viewed in Appendix 5.1. This offers a detailed analysis of the selected literature in addition to wider reading and information on literature search strategies.

The role of EPs

There is a great deal of available literature that discusses the role of the EP, much of which has been undertaken by members of the profession. It is so abundant that some have commented on the obsession of EPs to analyse and reflect upon their role (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Gibb, 1998). In addition to personal reflection, EPs have asked other EPs what they do, asked children what they think EPs do, asked schools what EPs do and have also engaged other professionals in these evaluations (Ashton & Roberts, 2006).

The abundance of literature can be attributed in part to the continual evolution of the EP role, which has developed significantly since Cyril Burt, widely regarded as the first educational or 'school' psychologist, developed the role in the early twentieth century. Burt also undertook a great deal of research, with many studies relating to the heritability of intelligence (Hearnshaw, 1979). His role as a school psychologist was defined by identifying "educationally subnormal children" for special school selection (Hearnshaw, 1979), which continued to define the role of the EP until the 1970s. In this era, many became dissatisfied with the use of psychometrics and the expectations placed upon EPs to use them (Burden, 1973; Burden, 1974; Sutton, 1976), which is an issue that has continued to be hotly debated (Sternberg, 1996). It was Gillham (1978) who captured the zeitgeist and challenged conventional practice with his landmark publication Reconstructing Educational Psychology. He championed the case to move

towards collaborative, systemic work and away from individual casework, particularly with regard to IQ testing (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). Others such as Dessent (1992) and Sigston (1992) have also argued in support of the development of consultative and systemic practise. These developments have met some resistance, centring on the argument that rejecting casework may render the EP role obsolete (Gibb, 1998).

Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) suggest that since Gillham's contribution there has not been a common understanding of the role of the EP. Love (2009) draws a parallel between the Gillham era and the current climate, in which he feels educational psychology is having an "identity crisis" (Love, 2009, p.3). Cameron (2006) also alludes to the lack of a coherent professional identity amongst EPs, a view also supported by Gersch (2009). Thomson (1996) argues that as the profession has evolved, it has become increasingly difficult to define the role of EPs, which may be a side effect of the increasing diversity in practice (Stobie, Gemmell, Moran & Randall, 2002). Lyons (1999), however, found EPs continuing to work in a 'pre Gillham' fashion, which could be construed as a means of holding on to a distinct identity.

Some, however, argue that the profession does have a distinct identity, one that is defined by its diversity and is subject to local and cultural contexts (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010). In a review of literature regarding the EP role, they state that flexibility and adaptability are essential skills for practitioners working in the current climate, particularly in the context of commissioned services and measurable outcomes. The authors conclude that there is a need for small scale interpretive research, as larger studies such as Farrell et al. (2006), do not reflect local contexts and the more ambiguous aspects of the EP role.

A significant influence in recent developments in educational psychology has been the advent of multi-agency working in light of the Victoria Climbie Inquiry (Her Majesty's Stationery Office [HMSO], 2003) and the introduction of the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda (Department for Education and Skills [DfES] 2004). Maliphant (1997) predicted that multi-

agency working would broaden the role of the EP and throw into question the role of professional background. There is a substantial body of research to suggest that multi-agency working has resulted in additional challenges with regard to having a clear and shared understanding of the EP role (Barclay & Kerr, 2006; Dearden & Miller, 2006; Hymans, 2006; Watson, 2006). In addition to ECM, other guidance and legislation has also had an impact on the role of the EP, such as the 1981 Children Act, the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) and the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009).

The development of research roles for EPs must also be mentioned (Leadbetter, 2000; Webster & Beveridge 1997).

The largest studies into the role of the EP are those that have been commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (Kelly & Gray, 2000) and the DfES (Farrell et al., 2006). The former was the first report of its kind since the Summerfield report (Department of Science and Education, 1968) and was devised with the explicit aim of assessing the current range of work undertaken by EP services, ascertaining views on the future directions of the profession and identifying the barriers that would prevent a shift in working practices. Significantly, many EPs did not feel they had the training or background to be able to adopt a wider role. The findings also indicated that at the time, there was a difference between how EPs and service users viewed the role of the EP. This disparity appears to be common. Research into teacher perceptions of EPs, frequently finds that school staff hold different expectations of the EP role compared to EP expectations (Boyle & McKay, 2007; Lovejoy, 1985; Muckley, 1981).

Farrell et al. (2006) reviewed the function and contribution of EPs in light of the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2004), which they claimed to be the most significant national strategic document since the DfEE report (Kelly & Gray 2000). One of the key findings is that EPs have been too involved in statutory work to develop other practices and widen their role. Another relevant finding is that stakeholders feel that it is EPs' academic background and training in psychology that enables them to make a distinctive

contribution, not their professional experience. Furthermore, many participants felt that another service provider could undertake some of the work that is offered by EPs, an issue that has been highlighted elsewhere (Lucas, 1989; Norwich, 2005; Wood, 1998).

Ashton and Roberts (2006) attempt to go beyond eliciting role definition by looking at what is unique and valuable about EPs in their Local Education Authority (LEA). Two questionnaires were devised, one sent to primary Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCos), the other to EPs. The SENCo group valued 'traditional' aspects of the EP role such as assessment and advising, which conflicted with EPs' views that they could offer a range of approaches to service delivery. Thomson (1998) ascertained the views of practicing EPs in Scotland, with 87% of respondents feeling that schools valued their contribution, which is interesting given that it is a country in which teaching experience is not a necessary prerequisite to training (McKay & Boyle, 1994; Boyle & McKay, 2007).

Professional training

The move to a three year doctoral training programme has been hotly debated by EPs for some time, with most agreeing that it is necessary for the longevity of the profession (Farrell, Gersch & Morris, 1998; Gersch, 1997; Leadbetter, 2000; Maliphant, 1997; Stoker, Gersch, Lown & Morris, 2001) and that it is appropriate given changes in society (Frederickson & Collins, 1997). Few have challenged this; Williams (1993) has and suggests that more emphasis should be given to life experience as opposed to academic training.

Frederickson et al. (1999) report the results of a questionnaire survey conducted by the AEP/BPS Joint Consultative Group on Extended Training. The majority of respondents (60%) were in favour of retaining teaching experience as a necessary prerequisite to training, whilst 23% did not feel it should be retained and 17% were unsure. An example of a perceived benefit of retaining teaching experience was that it enables EPs to 'mix with

teachers' and be more attuned to their attitudes and needs than those who do not have teaching experience.

The issue of credibility with the teaching profession was a frequently cited reason for maintaining teaching experience as a prerequisite to EP training (Frederickson, Osborne & Reed, 2001). Farrell et al. (1998) point out that in other countries EPs do not have to be trained teachers, and there is no evidence for an adverse effect as a result. It has also been proposed that some may view EPs as 'failed teachers' who have sought a 'way out' of the teaching profession (Farrell & Lunt, 1995).

Frederickson et al. (2001) explored the relationship between teaching experience and EPs' credibility with teachers. Based on their findings, they propose that the role of teaching experience relates to an 'expert' role for EPs, where they are seen as advisers and experts in Special Educational Needs (SEN). Questionnaires were sent to two groups, those who have had direct contact with an EP and those who have not had direct contact.

For group one, who have had direct contact with an EP, teaching experience was associated with positive ratings. In the second group, there was no difference in ratings between those who believed EPs had teaching experience and those who did not. Statistical analyses of the entire sample did not yield significant results in support of teaching experience. Analysis of the primary school sub-sample within this group does, however, indicate that teaching experience is linked to EP credibility. This is not observed in the secondary sub-sample. It is suggested that subject specificity at secondary level means that the nature of teaching experience is likely to differ greatly, and is not as important to secondary teachers. As for special schools, they do not demonstrate any strong associations either way.

Monsen, Brown, Akthar and Khan (2009) evaluated the effectiveness of a pre-training Assistant EP programme in which two cohorts of Assistant EPs were evaluated. The first cohort all had a minimum of two years teaching experience, with the second from a range of professional backgrounds including social work, youth work and applied psychology. The findings of

their research suggest that previous experience does not present a barrier to being effective and credible. An incidental outcome however, is that only three of the second cohort (out of eight) obtained funded places on training courses compared to eight out of ten in the first cohort.

Synthesis of literature

There is much literature to suggest that educational psychology is in a period of change and is lacking a coherent professional identity. This has been widely documented in personal reflections, literature review and to some extent studies which demonstrate a difference in EP and stakeholder perceptions of the EP role. This assertion has been challenged by Fallon et al. (2010) who, on the basis of literature review, claim that a coherent professional identity is characterised by EPs' diverse and contextually bound practise.

The degree to which the claims of the aforementioned papers are accurate, is questionable, as a current evidence base is not used to support them. Large government studies such as the Farrell et al. (2006) study that have explored the extent to which practise and perceptions of the EP role are standardised are methodologically flawed. The scientific methodology that underpins the design, analysis and presentation of findings does not account for differences that exist between and within local contexts. The eligibility criteria for EP training have been have not been explicitly addressed as a factor that potentially exacerbates the espoused lack of standardisation of practice among EPs. It appears that the research base would benefit from a contribution other than reflection and speculation that address the impact of recruiting EPs from diverse professional backgrounds.

The literature that explicitly addresses professional background indicates that opinion is divided with regard to the need for teaching experience in order to be an effective and credible EP. The most significant study within this field, carried out by Frederickson et al. (1999), found that 60% of EPs were in favour of retaining teaching experience. A subsequent study by

Frederickson et al. (2001) found that credibility of EPs was associated with teaching experience, particularly among primary teachers.

The positive association between teaching experience and EP credibility that is suggested appears to contradict research from countries such as Scotland in which EPs do not have to be teachers, yet are rated positively. These studies are, however, limited by their scientific methodology and predominantly quantitative design in that they do not offer an elaborate explanation as to why such views may be held and do not account for the subjective qualities that EPs/stakeholders to which they may assign more importance. The studies that employ questionnaire are effective in terms of reaching a wide audience, but they predefine pros and cons of teaching and other professional experience. The findings cannot be said to portray an entirely accurate representation of EP/stakeholder views, nor has an opportunity for elaboration been presented.

Based on a review of related literature, the current study aims to expand the existing knowledge base by employing an alternative methodology which will allow for a detailed exploration of views relating to professional background. By adopting an alternative approach this will allow for further comparison with the related literature. The study will also be framed within the context of changes to professional training as much of the literature regarding professional background preceded this era.

Research Aims

The aim of this stage of the research is to explore the relationship between the role of the EP and professional background. Part of this involves obtaining the participants' views on the attributes EPs need to be effective and credible practitioners. As previously alluded to, much of the available literature does not seek to explore this relationship by using interpretive methodology. This research, however, aims to build on the existing literature by gaining a deeper understanding of the issues raised in the existing literature and why certain views about professional background may be held.

The research questions for stage one are:

1. What attributes do EPs and SENCos interviewed in this study believe EPs need in order to be effective and credible practitioners?
2. How is the role of the EP perceived?
3. How important is professional background perceived to be?
4. In what way are perceptions of role and professional background linked?

Design and Methods

Epistemological stance

In order to decide how best to address the research questions, my initial consideration was that of my epistemological stance. Epistemology can be described as a set of assumptions about reality and what constitutes truth (McGhee, 2001). My epistemological stance is situated within with the interpretive paradigm. Interpretive research aims to understand and account for the meaning of human experiences and actions (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). It accepts that there is not a single objective truth or reality, rather there are multiple realities that are constructed by individuals through their interactions with others (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This is also known as social constructionism (McGhee, 2001).

Methodological approach

Methodology refers to how a research question or problem should be studied (McGhee, 2001). This is influenced by the researcher's epistemological stance, which in this case is interpretive. There are several methodological options available to the interpretive researcher, which have been outlined by Creswell (2003). Both stages of this research employ a phenomenological methodology. Phenomenology seeks to understand the nature of lived experience, and the meaning that individuals give to this experience. Phenomenological study is grounded in the disciplines of philosophy, sociology, and importantly for me, psychology (Creswell, 2003). It is important to me because as a psychologist, I want to bring a psychological perspective to this research problem. This permeates both stages of my research and is particularly apparent in stage two, which draws upon the theoretical framework of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) (Kelly, 1955).

Participants

A total of twelve participants were recruited from two Local Authorities (LAs), which is an appropriate number for phenomenological research (Creswell, 2003). Participants from schools were recruited from the LA in which I work. The EPs were recruited from a neighbouring LA as I believe that interviewing EPs from within the same service as me may have influenced their responses. In addition to this, the nature of the interview questions meant that there was a strong possibility that I may have heard something that I am personally uncomfortable with, which may have adversely affected my relationship with my colleagues. My interview schedule was piloted with a member of the Portage Service in my LA. I had not originally intended to use the content of this interview but as it has yielded rich data I have opted to include it in the full data set.

Participants were invited to take part through an open invitation. No incentive was offered as a reward for participating, so I had to rely on the good will of the participants or their personal motivation to take part. The participants comprised four EPs, four secondary SENCos, three primary SENCos and a member of the Portage Service. In order to preserve the anonymity of the participants I have given them pseudonyms. In addition to this, I have protected the anonymity of the EP group by not disclosing their full job title, e.g. Senior EP, Trainee EP. The gender of the participant group was entirely female. The possible significance of this is discussed in paper two, with particular attention to gender bias and gender of interviewer effects given that I am male researcher working with a female participant group.

Design

This research employs a two-stage design, using qualitative data collection methods in both stages. The overall design is, therefore, qualitative which lends itself to study in an interpretive, phenomenological paradigm (Fossey et al., 2002). Qualitative research aims to understand and represent the experiences of those being studied, based as much as possible on their perspective (Elliot, Fischer & Rennie, 1999). I have chosen to use two

separate data collection methods to approach this research problem, one in each stage of the research, which has allowed me to triangulate the data.

Measures

A semi-structured interview format was used to collect data for this stage of the research. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has their 'shopping list' of topics (Robson, 2002) to which they will want responses, but they also have the freedom to explore responses to the core questions. Follow up questions can be asked at the researcher's discretion, with flexibility over the exact wording, sequencing, and time given to each topic. As the epistemological stance of this paper is interpretive, the flexibility of semi-structured interviewing makes it an appropriate method.

There are however limitations and potential disadvantages for which I have accounted. The most likely disadvantage is that the interviewer may bias follow-up questions. As a result, certain topics may be given more coverage depending on the researcher's bias. At this point, the reader should be reminded that I have openly declared my biases (in the overview section of this document). In spite of my efforts to minimise the impact of this on the data, it must be acknowledged that this inherent to qualitative research (Elliot et al., 1999).

Interview questions

The interview questions were devised following a conceptual mapping exercise (Novak, 1977). A conceptual map is a diagram which represents relationships between many concepts, which are linked hierarchically. Using the conceptual map ensured that all of the concepts were reflected in the interview questions prompts (Robson, 2002). The questions were subsequently piloted to check for ease of understanding, usefulness of prompts and timing. One revision was made to the original questions, in which the debrief section of the interview was substituted for an additional question. When piloted, the participant used this as an opportunity to discuss further thoughts on the research topic, so it was decided to include a final question to accommodate this. The interview schedule can be viewed in full in Appendix 1.1, with the amendments documented in Appendix 1.2.

Data Analysis

Following the interviews, audio recordings were transcribed by a private service, with transcripts returned to me in digital from. I did not personally transcribe any of the data. A thematic analysis of the data was then undertaken. This process involves several stages, the first being immersion in the data. The transcripts were read repeatedly, noting any points of significance. Importantly, I have also noted my own responses and feelings towards the data as this can affect the interpretive framework through which the data are analysed (Boyatzis, 1998; Smith & Eatough, 2007). Evidence of this can be found in my research diary, a selection of which can be viewed in Appendix 3.1.

The next stage was to organise the data into meaningful themes and categories, which is widely referred to as coding. Miles and Huberman (1994) make a number of points about this process. Firstly, a code is the label given to a chunk of data, and is used to assign units of meaning to words, phrases or paragraphs although it is the *meaning* not the words themselves that is important. Initial coding is largely descriptive with little or no interpretation, yet it becomes increasingly analytical as the data are revisited resulting in the abstraction of more inferential codes. These group together smaller chunks of data into larger, meaningful units. The end product is a set of superordinate and subordinate codes.

Coding could have been undertaken using either a deductive or inductive approach (Boyatzis, 1998). Using a deductive approach, the data are coded by using pre-determined codes based on existing theory or research. In contrast to this, inductive coding assigns themes to the data according to what arises. I have opted for an inductive approach as it is better suited to phenomenological study, primarily because it does not overwrite the participants' phenomenologies (Smith & Eatough, 2007). It has also enabled me to remain true to the raw data and subsequently increase the validity of the research (Boyatzis, 1998; Smith & Eatough, 2007). By coding inductively my immersion in the data was increased, which in turn helped me to eliminate contaminating and irrelevant data. In essence, inductive

coding is more suited to interpretive research as it is about illumination and discovery.

I have used the software programme NVivo to support the coding process. There are advantages and disadvantages of using software (Welsh, 2002), one of the main advantages being that it makes organising and viewing the data easier. The main disadvantage is that the researcher does not necessarily 'immerse' themselves in the data in the same way that they might if they were to physically handle the data. My approach was to use a combination of NVivo and manual coding. This allowed for clearly organised and coded text, and greater immersion in the data. As I did not transcribe the data myself, I feel it was particularly important to immerse myself in the data through coding the data by hand. Immersion is an important factor in achieving reliability and validity in qualitative research (Boyatzis, 1998).

Smith and Eatough (2007) note that research undertaken in the phenomenological paradigm has a commitment to idiography. This means that although the data set will be used to generate common themes between the participants, their individual experiences are represented. I have, therefore, analysed the data on a case-by-case basis to try and get a sense of the individual's unique experience, prior to generating common themes. The participants have been given pseudonyms so that their individual views can be traced through the research paper(s).

Validity

According to Boyatzis (1998), validity in qualitative research equates to consistency of judgement, irrespective of the paradigm from which the researcher is approaching the analysis. Often, research is undertaken by a group of researchers so that they can compare codes and achieve inter-rater reliability. As this has not been possible, I have been mindful that the validity of the data analysis should not be compromised. Boyatzis (1998) identifies barriers to validity, the most relevant to this research being 'projection'. This refers to the researcher projecting their own feelings, theories and ideas on to the data. I have been mindful to address this

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potential source of bias by reflecting my thoughts and feelings throughout this process.

Elliot et al. (1999) propose guidelines for improving validity in qualitative research. In summary these include declaring personal views, situating the research sample in a particular context, providing examples of raw data, 'double checking' the data, making consistent judgements and understanding the limitations of applying the findings. They also emphasise the importance of making the research paper resonate with the readers, so that they can engage with it and understand the nature of the phenomenon that is being investigated. I have attempted to adhere to these guidelines throughout the process of this research.

Procedures

The participants were interviewed on a one-to-one basis, at a setting of their choosing, typically their place of work or office base. All interviews were conducted in private rooms, which helped to eliminate external distractions. The sessions lasted approximately 40-50 minutes inclusive of problem-free talk prior to the interview and an opportunity to debrief. The interviews themselves lasted between 30-40 minutes. As part of the interview participants were read a standard introduction, which is included in the interview schedule and can be viewed in Appendix 1.1. All interviews were audio recorded, which allowed me to focus on questioning and taking field notes, a selection of which can be viewed in Appendix 1.6.

Ethical issues

Ethical issues relating this stage of the study were considered and addressed within the broad framework of the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines (2006) for conducting research with human participants. I have also drawn upon the ethical guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the Health Professions Council (HPC). Ethical consent was also obtained from the University of Exeter and the relevant documentation can be viewed in Appendix 4.2. Links to all documents referenced in this section are provided in Appendix 4.1. The ethical issues and steps taken to address them are present below in relation to an abbreviated version of the BPS framework:

Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in this study. Participants were made aware of the nature of the study, including a broad description of what each stage of the study would entail. Participants were asked to consent to both stages of the study but were also made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any point. Participants were made aware that the first stage of the interview process would be audio recorded.

Deception: One possible aspect of the research design that was addressed with regard to deception relates to the disclosure of my professional background. As I was inviting the participants to openly express their opinion on pre-requisite experience for professional training in educational psychology, this could have led to an ideological clash between the participants and researcher. It was, therefore, decided that my professional background would not be disclosed so that the participants could express themselves freely without concern for offending the researcher. In order to maintain personal and professional conduct, regular supervision with my research supervisor was sought in order to discuss the impact of collecting data that contradicted my own ideological position. The participants were informed of the aims of the study and given an opportunity to discuss these in more depth either during problem free talk or debrief sections of the interviews. If at any stage a participant requested that I disclose my professional background this was answered honestly.

Debriefing: All participants were provided with a short debriefing statement following the interview. As professional competence and eligibility for postgraduate training are broadly addressed, I was aware that some participants may be sensitive to these issues. Opportunity was therefore provided for the participants to discuss any issues that may have had an impact on them. Given that the participants responded to an open invitation to participate, the nature and content of the questions was deemed suitable for this group of participants. Participants were also informed of procedures for contacting me within a reasonable time period following participation should stress, potential harm, or related questions or concern arise.

Withdrawal from the investigation: All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study.

Confidentiality: All participants were informed that the information they provide will be treated confidentially and will not be identifiable as theirs. The audio recordings were deleted following transcription. All transcripts are identifiable by the pseudonyms referred to within the thesis. Consent

forms and indicators of the participants' true identity such as email correspondence have either been securely stored or deleted.

Protection of participants: As the interviews involve questions that participants may relate to personally, additional effort was made to ensure protection from stress. Assurance was given that answers to any question need not be provided. I have also made effort to ensure that the interview questions and interview process did not include any comments that may be perceived to be discriminatory in any way e.g. sexist or racist. Participants were given the choice over the location at which the interviews took place in order to reduce stress.

Results

The superordinate and subordinate codes that have been developed are represented in Table 1 below. The codes are organised in relation to the research questions. A table of the codes and code descriptors can be viewed in Appendix 1.5.

Table. 1 Themes arising from thematic analysis

Research question	Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme
What attributes do EPs need to do the job effectively?		
	Interpersonal Skills	Ability to communicate with a wide range of audiences
		Ability to build relationships
	Psychological Skills	Applying psychology
		Theoretical knowledge
	Other qualities	Motivation
		Reflective
		Resilience
How is the role of the EP perceived?		
	Perception of role	Expert model
		Collaborative model
		Ambiguous role
How important is professional background perceived to be in the EP's role?		
	Outcomes of experience	Credibility
		Knowledge and skills
In what way are perceptions of role and professional background linked?		Experience suited to role

The results from the data analysis are presented below in narrative form, under each research question. Quotations from the raw data are included in italic font.

1. What attributes do EPs need to do the job effectively?

The following codes represent attributes that were discussed favourably by the participants. They have been coded into the following superordinate categories:

(i)   Interpersonal skills

(ii)   Psychological Skills

(iii)   Other qualities

(i) Interpersonal skills

Within this category two subordinate codes have emerged.

a) Ability to communicate with a range of audiences

Many participants made reference to EPs' ability to interact with a range of service users and professional groups. The data implies that EPs should be people who are universally good communicators.

> Clare, EP: *It's actually about being able to converse and communicate with people. Somebody who would go in and be happy to sit and talk theoretical educational psychology to a head teacher, or an advisor, or a parent with ASD who perhaps had a PhD in physics or something, but actually being able to communicate with a mum who – this is her ninth child and she has got seven husbands, not all together, that kind of parent.*

> Lisa, secondary SENCo: *to be able to communicate with us in a way that we understand, so it is clear to us, and to be able to have a good relationship with the children and be relaxed, and someone that is approachable to children and parents and staff feel they can talk to.*

> Christine, Portage Worker: *I think they need to be adaptable because they come up against so many different children and teachers and other people that they work with that they need to adapt their approaches according to who they are dealing with.*

b) Ability to build relationships

This was a prominent theme, which shares some data with the above code, yet it differs in that it specifically relates to the ability to build relationships over time as opposed to being able to differentiate one's interactions.

> Anne, secondary SENCo: *It's maintaining a good relationship with the school… I suppose it's a friendliness isn't it. The ability to empathise with and say "I know where you're coming from" and not to have this "I'm an EP and you should come and see me"… It's getting down with the people really.*

> Sally, EP: *I think it's important to be able to have a personal relationship with somebody, and actually get to know them until they trust you, building up that trust is so important.*

> Lauren, secondary SENCo: *(speaking of a colleague who would make a good EP) It's really those interpersonal relationships that she develops with all the parents she works with.*

(ii) Psychological skills

Data that are coded in this category relates to EPs' use of psychology, which is referred to both formally (use of theory) and in terms of applying psychology informally.

a) Applying psychology

This theme appears throughout the data, and relates specifically to the use of psychology in a practical scenario. Some EPs allude to the valuable role of using psychology in meetings.

> Sally, EP: *I guess it's thinking about using that psychological skill to make everything more purposeful, to keep the meeting focused on the child, not on the agendas of other agencies.*

> Clare, EP: *The application of psychology, of all levels of psychology, all perspectives of psychology and being able to use that in a meeting.*

b) Theoretical knowledge

In this sub-theme participants implied that EPs have an understanding of psychological theory that was not held by service users or other professionals.

> Sarah, primary SENCo: *I'd like to think that you can offer specific knowledge of areas we don't know about… more theory, more background stuff and more strategies.*

Clare, EP: *It's really important that people call on their knowledge of psychology.*

(iii) Other qualities

This theme uses a descriptive term to group together subordinate codes that do not belong in other superordinate categories. Some of the data in the subordinate themes are cross-referenced in other codes, but cannot be entirely assimilated elsewhere.

a) Motivation

Many participants, particularly secondary SENCos placed great value on the individual's underlying motivation to be an EP, especially with regard to wanting to help children.

> Judith, secondary SENCo: *They need to be approachable. The ones I've seen have a certain kindness about them, they care about the children.*
>
> Lauren, secondary SENCo: *(speaking of a colleague who'd make a good EP) He's not ambitious, well he's ambitious but not pushing for a headship and that sort of thing so I think he is very school and child orientated rather than personal career orientated and that shows through.*
>
> Anne, secondary SENCo: *The people who are involved with the children, who aren't just interested in teaching their subject area and going "here we go, you need to learn how to do this, sit down there I don't care what's happened". You know they don't get to know the children. I think the people that take time to get to know the children, to know the whole child, rather than "she's working at a level 5C and I need to push her to a 6B". It's people who go the extra mile really.*

b) Resilience

Only EPs made reference to this theme, in which they describe the ability to deal with emotionally challenging situations.

> Sally, EP: *I think you need resilience as a quality. I think it can be a fairly thankless job where you get quite a lot of flak from people, and people get quite angry at you for things that are almost certainly not your fault but you form a safe outlet for them to be angry at. You need to be personally resilient to do this job effectively.*
>
> Nicola, EP: *Ability to manage oneself in situations that you consider quite challenging and, people that are emotionally challenging and within that, problem solving and applying those skills in emotionally charged situations.*

c) Reflective

The data that contribute to this theme are mainly derived from EP participants. This code encapsulates discrete skills that have an element of reflection and introspection. It also relates to thinking around casework, such as trying to understand other people's perspectives and taking an holistic view of situations.

> Sally, EP: *It's about really understanding everybody's agenda in the situation and having kind of meta-cognitive skills, thinking about not just that we have to have a meeting about Fred but how that meeting would run and how we can make that meeting more effective and get more out of that meeting.*

> Mary, EP: *I think you need to be reflective, open minded, patient, to be able to look at things over a long term basis.*

> Helen, primary SENCo: *It's kind of like the whole child, not looking at the specific difficulties.*

2. How is the role of the EP perceived?

Data that reflect the participants' perception of the EP role are coded under the following subordinate themes:

(i)   Expert Model

(ii)   Collaborative Model

(iii)   Ambiguous role

(i) Expert Model

Data that were coded in this theme relate to EPs having high status or an advisory role. Some participants spoke specifically about giving advice and making suggestions. Other data imply that EPs hold superior knowledge or understanding in comparison to parents and other professionals.

> Teresa, primary SENCo: *(in relation to their staff's view of EPs) What they would think is that you have this specific role of coming in and telling us where that child is at in relation to other children of that age, giving a cognitive ability level and then making suggestions.*

Helen, primary SENCo: *Well, educational advice which you don't get from other services. They can offer parental advice, um, they might signpost you to other services.*

Judith, secondary SENCo: *The old style of EP we found very helpful, you could just ring up and talk to them about a child and advice would be given. They need to be able to give us advice but really hands on advice that teachers and TAs can use.*

One participant highlighted a possible limitation of an advisory role, where taking advice from an EP externalises the responsibility of meeting the child's needs.

Anne, secondary SENCo: *People say "I do that", but they don't really. People say "you did it wrong" and I say "well I took advice from the EP" "well, they've got it wrong" so it's people taking responsibility for their own actions. If you're only interested in what your children achieve then you're going to want from an EP quick results so they are going to ensure somebody's going to meet their targets…. I think maybe some people see the role of the EP as a quick fix – you are going to give us the answers and once that's done, "job's done" and it's not.*

One participant noted that EPs have a high status within professional circles, which reinforces the perception of being an 'expert', which brings with it expectation.

Christine, Portage Worker: *I think EPs are very well respected in general, in the education world. I think they need to live up to that really and come up with the goods... because of the training they do, and general historical reasons, and because they are clever, or supposed to be.*

(ii) Collaborative model

Data that are coded within this theme relate to a model of service delivery in which service users are viewed as partners in the process of change, as opposed to being directed by the EP. It also incorporates an ethos of empowering others.

Sally, EP: *(in relation to being collaborative) That is what's important about working together rather than people seeing you as the professional. If you share what you know then it allows other people to come on board.*

One participant spoke positively about a collaborative approach, yet questioned the terminology she used to describe it. It appears that her comment is reflecting a bigger issue around evidencing practice.

Mary, EP: *I read one quote that I thought was quite good which was "agent of change". It's about using psychological theories to facilitate that. I think those are implied but aren't often overt, but I can see the logic behind it which is that if you're telling people what to do, it's not as likely to happen... It makes it sound so, (grimaces) doesn't it? Facilitate change, that doesn't sound remotely scientific.*

(iii) Ambiguous role

Some participants expressed their ambiguity with regard to the role of the EP, which is linked in part to the job title and the meaning of the word 'psychologist'.

Lisa, secondary SENCo: *It's not the fact that you are a psychologist, because they probably don't even know what that means... parents and teachers probably have this myth of psychology.*

Mary, EP: *It's a fairly old fashioned view and I don't imagine that I'm the only person that has sort of always thought that psychologists – the word psychology is looking at your thoughts and where you're coming from. That can be – you're not quite sure what to expect.*

3. How important is professional background perceived to be?

The participants expressed a range of views that relate to the above research question. Their views fall into one superordinate category, in which the participants reference what they feel EPs gain from their experience. Both personal and professional experience is referenced. There are three subordinate themes, two of which are relevant to this research question:

(i) Credibility

(ii) Knowledge and skills

(i) Credibility

Many participants alluded to a link between experience and being a credible practitioner. The nature of the experience referenced varies between the participants, but the common theme is that experience plays a significant role in how EPs are perceived.

Christine, Portage Worker: *Well I think experience is the most important prerequisite for a job like yours, whether it's teaching or otherwise. I don't think it's something that you can do without that*

background, because you are not credible unless you can be seen to have done something yourself.

Teresa, primary SENCo: *People respect other people that have done stuff... people who have worked with little children know how little children work don't they?*

Helen, primary SENCo: *I don't think you can replace experience.*

Some of the participants mentioned credibility in relation to teaching experience.

Clare, EP: *(speaking about TEPs in their service who do not have a background in teaching) They've had experience of working with children but actually don't have teaching qualifications. I think if the Headteachers knew it would devalue their role in the school.*

Helen, primary SENCo: *I think if you've been a teacher you'd make a good EP… (speaking about changes to entry criteria) I think it will damage the credibility of the profession.*

Sally, EP: *It's not yet widely understood by schools that EPs may not have any background in education. Some credibility in schools relates to that.*

Some participants, however, challenged the notion that teaching experience improves credibility.

Anne, secondary SENCo: *When an EP comes to school or an outside agency I don't say "sit down and tell me where you've studied, what you've done and what your past history is". You're putting your trust and faith in them that they can do the job.*

Judith, secondary SENCo: *I think new EPs will have credibility with the new generation of teachers coming through. I just think everything's changing, there are new ways of doing things and it just reflects the changes going on at the moment. Some of the "old school" find these changes difficult and are more cynical about things.*

Sally, EP: *I might have experience to know what it's like to teach in a primary school or special school but I don't know what it's like to teach science in a secondary school. I don't know what it's like to be a social worker and I don't think you can rely on personal experience of such professions to make those relationships.*

Other forms of experience were mentioned in relation to credibility, such as being a parent.

Clare, EP: *Being a parent, I think that helps you tremendously because you then know what you expect, what is normal and what is not normal and you have a good baseline to go on really. Also, if you don't have children you don't understand how much love there is for a*

child….. (in reference to casework) she said to me how do you know that that hurts and I said "I've been there".

One participant made reference to how challenging the experience was as a marker for how it may affect credibility.

Sally, EP*: (speaking in terms of desirable qualities) I'd be looking for some evidence that they have had to deal with some adversity, either in their personal or professional life. It might have been that they volunteered to work in an orphanage in quite a difficult country.*

(ii) Knowledge and skills

Within this theme, participants discussed some of the advantages of prerequisite experience in terms of developing knowledge and skills. There were many arguments for retaining teaching experience as a necessary prerequisite to training or highlighting concern at the changes that have been made, particularly among primary SENCos.

Helen, primary SENCo: *(discussing colleagues who might make good EPs) I can imagine all of our teachers would make good EPs… Because they've got the experience. They're good at talking to other adults, they're good at talking to parents. I'd quite like to be an EP.*

Judith, secondary SENCo: *I feel it's very important to have an insight into what it's like to be a teacher in a classroom. If you haven't been a teacher, what would you know about managing ASD in the classroom for example? There's a chance that they'd be giving advice that might not actually work.*

Clare, EP: *They've got to know the key levels and what they mean, otherwise you're reading a report that the school have written and you won't understand it, which is pointless...that's why I think it is so important that they've got to have teaching experience.*

Other arguments put forward were less dependent on the type of experience and focussed on the skills that had been gained from it.

Nicola, EP: *Organisation is absolutely essential. Obviously that is difficult to tell, but when you look at what people might have done previously in their lives they would have to be quite organised to do certain things.*

Mary, EP: *I would very much look for someone who had those core approaches to life rather than a tick box set of skill. Obviously you need to have a certain level of understanding of psychology and have worked with children but I think if you have those core skills you can build on those.*

4. In what way are perceptions of role and professional background linked?

This theme shares data with other codes in the 'perceptions of role' superordinate theme and the 'outcomes of experience' superordinate theme. Data in this subordinate code links perceptions of role and experience. The code that relates to this question is a subordinate of the outcomes of experience superordinate theme:

(i) Experience suited to role

(i) Experience suited to role

In this theme, the participants in spoke of the need have been a teacher in relation to an 'expert model' of practice.

> Helen, primary SENCo: *Teachers are much more likely to accept advice from professionals that they know, know what the job's about rather than someone coming in and telling them what they should be doing and not knowing what the pressures are in the classroom and the support that you might have to help you.*

> Teresa, primary SENCo: *EP's don't have to do the teaching bit now do they? I think having spent time in a classroom and things like that can be really valuable because maybe EPs can suggest things that they may have not actually tried out in the classroom setting, and it may not be realistic.*

> Sarah, Primary SENCo: *when you're making suggestions for strategies and things like that, actually having done them yourself is very important.*

Some participants were not as explicit with their words, but implied opportunities would be needed in order to obtain experience required for the EP role:

> Clare, EP: *(speaking of TEPs in the service that had not been teachers) the first thing we did was get them to talk to the Learning Support Team to actually update their knowledge of the national curriculum because they didn't have a clue. It's like "sorry! You've got to know what the national curriculum is about". Now I thought that should have been in the training course, it either needs to be in the training course or we need to be told to train them.*

Discussion

The data gathered from this stage of the research has provided an insight into views held about EPs and the relevance of professional background. The findings raise many issues in relation to the research questions and existing literature. As there is a wealth of data that can inform the discussion, I have opted to discuss the points I perceive to be of most relevance to the research aims. These are discussed below in relation to the research questions.

1. What attributes do EPs and SENCos interviewed in this study believe EPs need in order to be effective and credible practitioners?

The results indicate that whilst the participants made reference to interpersonal and psychological skills, there are other attributes that stand apart from the two main categories. In many ways these are the most illuminative findings, as we might expect reference to interpersonal and psychological skills based on existing literature (Farrell et al., 2006; Gersch, 2004). The subordinate themes of 'reflective' and 'resilience' are largely commented on by EPs. Interestingly, Helen, primary SENCo said that she would like to be an EP because the role is "less stressful". Not only do there appear to be differences of perception between SENCos and EPs in terms of service delivery but also in terms of how challenging the job is. According to Helen, EPs who haven't been teachers "don't understand the pressures of the classroom" and combining this with her view that EPs have a less stressful job, it is understandable that she may feel some animosity towards them.

Motivation is represented in a number of ways, but most apparent are the participants' references to wanting to help children, or "go the extra mile". Like all of the codes that comprise the 'other qualities' theme, it is unclear how these attributes develop and how one's professional background influences this process. The same could be said for aspects of interpersonal interaction. Does having training in psychology help them to understand people and hence communicate with them more effectively? As Anne, secondary SENCo states "it's about getting down with the people really".

Perhaps the only broad theme that carries less ambiguity in terms of skill development is psychological skills, particularly the subordinate theme of theoretical knowledge. Psychologists will have to have formally studied psychology to have acquired this knowledge. Given that, there appears to be a logical rationale for including a first degree in psychology as a necessary prerequisite to professional training. Does, however, a certain professional background increase an EP's ability to apply psychology? This is widely recognised as EPs' distinct contribution (Farrell et al. 2006) and is reflected in the findings of this study. Essentially, the themes arising that relate to EP attributes are, although different in function and description, united by one common factor. This factor is the ambiguity regarding the degree to which individual EPs come to possess these attributes.

2. How is the role of the EP perceived?

It is apparent that whilst many participants appeared to have a clear understanding of what the EP role constitutes, some participants expressed a degree of ambiguity and uncertainty. Recent literature suggests that educational psychology is going through an identity crisis (Cameron, 2006; Gersch, 2009; Love, 2009). The findings from this stage of the research appear to support this notion, where stark differences in perception were apparent. Whereas EPs tended to describe their role as collaborative, the other participants still referenced an expert model of practice, which supports the findings of Frederickson et al. (2001).

Many of the participants' perceptions were coded using the descriptor of expert model. This essentially describes a way of practicing psychology in which the EP is seen as an expert who gives advice, holds high status and is seen to have a body of abstract knowledge, which is esoteric and inaccessible. This has been a longstanding perception of EPs (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Gersch, 2009; Love, 2009). It is interesting to note that some of the participants alluded to implications of perceiving the EP in an expert role. For the EP, being perceived as an expert brings expectation, as Christine, Portage Worker says, they need to "deliver the goods". There are also implications for school staff as Anne, secondary SENCo points out. She referred to the danger of school staff not taking ownership over their concerns and using the EP as a safety net when the desired outcomes have

not been achieved. In my opinion, Anne's comments reflect the target-driven culture that has become endemic within schools in recent years (Forrester, 2005; Whitty, 2008). As she puts succinctly, her colleagues may "just want a quick fix, they think it's 'job done' and it's not".

3. How important is professional background perceived to be?

Although participants expressed differing views about the nature of experience, all participants expressed the broad view that professional experience was necessary. Data from some of the participants emphasises the importance of life experiences. Personal experiences such as being a parent or as Sally, EP notes, working in a challenging environment such as an orphanage gives the practitioner credibility. Perhaps Williams (1993) was making a valid point when he claimed that life experiences should be prioritised over academic training. Williams' comment gains some support from the participants, such as Christine, Portage Worker, who comments: "I think experience is the most important prerequisite for a job like yours". On balance however, the data suggest that it is the combination of experience and academic training in psychology that enables EPs to be effective and credible practitioners as described above. The weighting that is given to academic training in relation to experience varied between the participants. Furthermore, the data include a variety of comments relating to experiences that the participants believe are relevant to educational psychology.

In terms of eligibility for professional training, the criteria stipulate that experience must include working with children. There are a number of possible roles through which prospective applicants could gain this experience. The data suggest that the credibility and relevance of such experiences are likely to be subject to individual judgement and bias. Further study could examine this in more depth by exploring value judgements that are asserted in relation to a broad selection of professional backgrounds.

It is apparent that opinion is still divided about the need to have had teaching experience prior to EP training, which is consistent with previous research (Frederickson et al., 1999; Frederickson et al., 2001). It was also the case that primary SENCos more vehemently argued the case for

teaching experience, as found by Frederickson et al. (2001). This may well be linked to their own professional identity and personal ambitions. As Sarah says, "I'd quite fancy doing the job myself", a sentiment also echoed by Helen who says "I'd like to be an EP".

4. In what way are perceptions of role and professional background linked?

Data that were coded under 'experience suited to role' incorporated a comment relating to professional background that was also qualified with an aspect of the EP role. Participants who were of the opinion that teaching experience should be retained tended to view the role of the EP within an 'expert model', as described above. This is consistent with previous research, such as Fredrickson et al. (2001). Not only do participants allude to the practical aspect of being able to advise on teaching practise based on teaching experience, but also that "teachers are much more likely to accept advice" from EPs who have been teachers. This view therefore appears to work on the assumption that for these participants EPs do indeed give advice about teaching. This perception of EPs has been frequently recorded, with SENCo and teacher groups valuing this particular aspect of practise (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; McKay & Boyle, 2007; Thomson 1998). For some of the participants who both value the expert model and believe that teaching experience is necessary to work in such a way it is clear to see how such views may become entrenched. Some EPs however rejected the notion that a particular professional background improved one's ability to build relationships, such as Sally "*I don't think you can rely on personal experience of such professions to make those relationships*".

The primary SENCOs in this study more explicitly demonstrated the link between an expert model and teaching experience, which is again consistent with the Frederickson et al. (2001) study. Although some secondary SENCos held pro-teaching experience views, they tended made comments that suggested they are more willing to embrace the changes to EP training, in relation to alternative models of practice. As Judith, secondary SENCo suggests, "I just think everything's changing, there are new ways of doing things and it just reflects the changes going on at the moment. Some of the 'old school' find these changes difficult and are more cynical about things*".*

Anne, Secondary SENCo implies that making judgements about the effectiveness or credibility of EPs should not be based on professional background: "when an EP comes to school or an outside agency I don't say 'sit down and tell me where you've studied, what you've done and what your past history is' you're putting your trust and faith into them that they can do the job, and it's only really when you start to work with someone that you go, well that person's really good at what they do, or they're not offering enough help". This particular SENCo also highlighted possible limitations of an expert model of service delivery linked to taking responsibility and ownership over interventions. This suggests that, using Anne as an example, placing less value in an advisory role may be associated with a greater emphasis on present performance as opposed to professional background.

Among the EP group, most referenced a consultative collaborative model of practice and hence did not directly reference teaching experience. One EP did, however, note that TEPs who do not have teaching backgrounds may need experiences that may better equip them for the role: "*They've got to know the key levels and what they mean, otherwise you're reading a report that the school have written and you won't understand it, which is pointless...that's why I think it is so important that they've got to have teaching experience*". This comment relates to having a knowledge of the national curriculum as opposed to giving advice, but it does imply that EPs from other professional backgrounds are lacking in something prior to training. This finding was also reported by Frederickson et al. (1999) to be a reason for retaining teaching experience as part of EP training. Also, they do not express the need for primary teachers to learn the secondary curriculum or vice-versa. A possible avenue for future study might wish to pick up on this point (among others) by ascertaining the views of TEPs and EPs from diverse backgrounds as to whether they have found this to be a barrier to working effectively.

Within this study, the participants who viewed the EP as an expert tended to believe that teaching experience is necessary for EPs. This belief appears to be exacerbated in those who perceive there to be great value in an aspect of 'expert' practise. What does this mean for new entrants to the profession?

This study can only be said to reflect the LAs within which the EP group and the SENCos/Portage worker are situated. If however, this is reflective of the context in which EPs work in other authorities, EPs from diverse backgrounds are likely to encounter negative views with regard to their professional background. The extent to which this relates to the service delivery model of EPSs is likely to vary given the concerns raised in relation to standardisation of practice (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Cameron, 2006; Gersch, 2009; Love, 2009).

Conclusion

The aim of the current study is to fill a gap in the research literature by using an interpretive methodology to explore the relationship between the role of the EP and professional background. This has provided a basis for discussion around the broader aims of the study, such as adding language and subjective meaning to the existing literature. As the research questions sought to explore individual perceptions about EPs' professional practise, this research is situated in the interpretive paradigm. This has influenced the development of the methodology and methods used to answer the research questions. The methodology and design of the study has yielded data sufficient to address the research questions. Were this study situated in an alternative epistemological paradigm, such as the scientific paradigm, the data gathered may not have been appropriate to answer the research questions.

The data gathered from the semi-structured interviews has enabled me to answer each research question. I have used the research findings to pose rhetorical questions in relation to professional background and the role of the EP. With regard to research questions one, two and three, the data analysis has resulted in the development of several codes that have allowed comparison with the existing body of literature. With regard to research question four (explicitly addressing the link between role and professional background) a revised design may have resulted in a more substantial set of data with which it could be addressed. Interview questions that relate more specifically to the research aim, which is to explore the relationship between the role of the EP and professional background may have better addressed this research question.

It is important to emphasise that the data is contextually bound to the participant group and that the findings of this study should not be viewed as widely representative of EPs, SENCos and Portage Workers. The study has been limited by the participant sample as only a very small range of professional groups has been represented in this study. The sample cannot therefore be said to representative of the context in which EPs work. The participant sample would have been richer had it have included

Headteachers, Social Workers, Third Sector agencies and Advisory Teachers, among other professionals.

Actively exploring and reporting on the background and life experiences of the participants could have improved the study. The participants' life experiences would have influenced their beliefs and values in relation to educational psychology, and in turn would have affected their answers. Examples of this are alluded to in the discussion section. This information would have helped me to better understand how their beliefs and values have developed in their social context. This would have added greater richness to the data and have further helped me to construct meaning from the data.

Regarding the degree of confidence one can place in the findings of this study, it must be stated that they are not facts or general truths but they have been socially constructed between the participants, the data and myself. This is characteristic of qualitative study. The beliefs and values that both participant and researcher bring to this interaction will influence the meaning that is created. I have openly declared my personal stance in relation to this research and this must be acknowledged by the reader. It must also be acknowledged that the quotations used to represent the participants' views are of my choosing. Another researcher may have included data that have been omitted.

In terms of validity, the findings of this stage of the research are limited by the fact that they have not been 'checked' (Elliot et al., 1999). Having not been able to recruit another researcher or take the analysed data back to all of the participants at this stage, much of the validity rests upon my own consistency of judgement (Boyatzis, 1998). Due to restrictions placed upon both the participants and researcher it was not possible to take the data back to the participants for validation.

Based on the findings of stage-one, several key implications for EP practice can be drawn from the data. If pro-teaching attitudes are associated with perceptions of 'expert' models of EP practise, then EPs need to challenge these perceptions by promoting models of service delivery that are more closely aligned to their own values. This will, of course, differ between

EPSs. The data of the current study indicates that the participants valued experience in more general terms. The profession could embrace the range of experiences that EPs from diverse backgrounds bring and draw on these experiences to inform and develop service delivery.

Summary

The first stage of this research has revealed varied perceptions of what constitutes an effective and credible EP and how professional background influences their development. It has also highlighted further areas of study that can be explored in greater detail. The second stage of this research explores beliefs and values relating to EP practise using methods derived from the theoretical framework of Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955).

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An interpretive exploration of beliefs and values related to professional practice in educational psychology. Paper two: Using Personal Construct Psychology to elicit core beliefs related to EPs' professional practice.

Abstract

The second stage of this study is set in the context of the recent changes to the initial training of Educational Psychologists (EPs). The broad aim of the study is to explore beliefs that are held in relation to the relationship between the role of the EP and professional background. In particular, stage two aims to explore the participants' belief systems in greater depth. It was therefore deemed that Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) would provide an appropriate psychological framework to inform the design of the study and interpretation of the data. Six of the twelve participants who were interviewed at stage one of this study participated in follow-up interviews using a self-characterisation technique. Their responses were laddered in order to elicit superordinate constructs, until an end point was agreed upon between participant and researcher, which are referred to as 'core constructs'. The data were clustered in relation to the themes arising from stage one, resulting in six clusters, collaboration, motivation and applying psychology being ranked as most important for EPs. The use of PCP as a theoretical framework has provided a psychological perspective from which to address beliefs regarding the professional background of EPs.

Introduction

This research is set in the context of the changes to EP training. Prior to the 2006/07 academic year, applicants were required to have a first degree in psychology that is recognised by the British Psychological Society (BPS) as conferring Graduate Basis for Registration, which became Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership in 2009 (BPS, 2010). In order to be eligible for the one year Masters training programme, applicants were required to hold Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and a minimum of two years' qualified teaching experience. Following successful completion of a Masters programme, EPs were required to complete a year of supervised practice. This training model therefore comprised three distinct elements, with QTS and teaching experience being an integral part of EP training. In 2006, applicants from professional backgrounds other than teaching were eligible to for entry to the new three year doctoral programme, providing they had relevant experience working with children (BPS, 2005). It is the controversy that surrounded the removal of teaching experience as a necessary aspect of professional training that drives this research. Although the move to a three year doctoral programme received widespread support (Farrell, Gersch & Morris, 1998; Frederickson & Collins, 1997; Gersch, 1997; Leadbetter, 2000; Maliphant, 1997), changes to the entry criteria divided opinion (Farrell, 1996; Frederickson, Malcolm & Osborne, 1999; Frederickson, Osborne and Reed (2001). As Farrell, Gersch and Morris (1998) point out, EPs in other countries do not have to be trained teachers, and there is no evidence for an adverse effect as a result.

In stage one, twelve participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. The findings from this stage indicate that views about professional background are linked to how the EP's role is perceived, e.g. those who believe that teaching experience is necessary referenced an 'expert model' of EP practice. The findings also present interesting discussion points around the attributes identified by the participants as being desirable for EPs.

The second stage of this research aims to explore these issues in greater depth by drawing on techniques derived from Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) (Kelly, 1955). This offers an exploration of the participants' belief systems around professional practice, and importantly, the values that are at the core of their beliefs, which will be referred to as 'core constructs' (Burnham, 2008).

Selected Literature

Prior to developing my research questions and design, a review of the related literature was undertaken. By critically reviewing the existing literature, I was able to identify gaps in the knowledge base and develop an original approach to this area of study. A selection of the literature is included in this section with a complete version of the literature review included in Appendix 5.1. This offers a detailed analysis of the selected literature in addition to wider reading. It also offers information on literature search strategies and development of the research design.

The development of the EP role

The change to the training of EPs is just one factor in a period of change in educational psychology, which some believe has exacerbated the lack of a coherent professional identity (Cameron, 2006; Gersch, 2009; Love, 2009). Love (2009, p.3) states that the profession is going through an "identity crisis". Views such as this are this are not a new phenomenon as the increasing diversity of practice has historically made the role of the EP difficult to define (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Stobie, Gemmell, Moran & Randall, 2002; Thomson, 1996). Some, however, argue that the profession does have a distinct identity, one that is defined by its diversity and is subject to local and cultural contexts (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010).

There have been many factors that have contributed to recent developments in educational psychology. A significant development has been the advent of multi-agency working, driven by the Victoria Climbie Inquiry (HMSO, 2003) and the introduction of the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda (DfES, 2004). Both of these documents highlight the need for agencies to work together, although this was not a new idea. Maliphant (1997) indicated that children's services were moving in this direction and predicted that this would broaden the role of the EP and importantly, question the role of professional background. It is also important to recognise developments in policy over the years, such as the 1981 Children Act, the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) and the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). In turn, developments in policy

reflect broader changes in society's understanding of disability, having moved away from viewing disability as being within the individual. As a result policy makers and professional organisations have increasingly adopted social models of disability, which locate disability within society (Hughes & Paterson, 1997). This has directly influenced developments in inclusive education and hence, educational psychology (Lunt & Norwich, 1999; Norwich, 2007).

Developments in the broader context of professional psychology

When considering developments in educational psychology, it is also important to recognise the changes that have occurred in applied psychology more generally. Sternberg and Henriques (2004) argue that psychology as a whole has become fragmented as a profession and that psychology must resolve its 'identity crisis' if it is to survive as a profession. They express their concern that practitioners are working from many different paradigms and propose a unified training route for psychologists in the U.S. aimed at resolving this philosophical issue. They draw attention to the 1970s as being the 'golden age' of therapy, in which psychologists formed a strong identity. This has now been said to be in disarray, with much scepticism surrounding the profession (Saemen, 1998). This draws a parallel with educational psychology, whose identity in that era was largely defined by IQ testing in spite of growing unrest (Burden, 1973; Burden, 1974; Sutton, 1976). This indicates that the current study is situated in the broader context of change within applied psychology as a whole.

Moore (2005) alludes to ontological and epistemological awareness as being central to educational psychology's difficulty in defining its identity, the problem being that many practitioners do not understand such issues. Others have also identified the need for a greater awareness in this area, calling for a more refined and subtle epistemology of practice (Lunt & Majors, 2000). Polkinghorne (1992) offers an account of the evolving role of the educational psychologist through a paradigm shift, from modernism, to postmodernism. In its early years, psychology attempted to establish credibility by aligning itself with the scientific paradigm (Polkinghorne, 1992), attempting to explain the world by testing for general laws and

assumptions. This was, according to Polkinghorne, found to be unsatisfactory when applying psychology to working with people as it does not embrace the idiosyncrasies of human beings. Hence, the shift to a postmodern paradigm was made. This has lead to a decreasing lack of standardisation of practice even if it promises to be "richer and broader" (Cameron, 2006 p.301). Some however, believe that postmodernism does not affect standardisation as there are many equally valid forms of 'knowing' (Porter & O'Halloran, 2008).

Educational psychology is not alone in its struggle to define its identity. Lewis and Bor (1998) undertook research into how Counselling Psychologists (CPs) are perceived by NHS Clinical Psychologists. They found that many respondents were unsure as to the role of the CP and subsequently found it difficult to comment on questions of efficacy and the like. It is suggested that a lack of clarity regarding the role of the CP can be overcome by disseminating material on the role of the CP and by "the passage of time" (Lewis & Bor 1998 p.12). Following a review of relevant literature, Mrdjenovich and Moore (2004) define the professional identity of CPs as "having a sense of connection to the values and emphases of counselling psychology" (Mrdjenovich & Moore, 2004 p.69). They suggest that regardless of the setting or nature of work undertaken a strong CP identity can be maintained if these values are adhered to strongly. This draws a parallel with developments in educational psychology as EPs are increasingly working in a range of settings, and with a range of agencies (Farrell et al., 2006).

The development of multi-agency working has generated a great deal of research, particularly around clarity of role and the challenges this presents (Barclay & Kerr, 2006; Dearden & Miller, 2006; Hymans, 2006; Watson 2006). EPs have been identified as having a valuable role to play in multi-agency work (Kelly & Gray, 2000; Gersch, 2004; Norwich, 2005; Cameron, 2006; Farrell et al., 2006), yet given current concerns over role ambiguity (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Boyle & McKay, 2007; Cameron, 2006; Gersch, 2009; Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009; Love, 2009) the issue of professional identity may act as a barrier to successful multi-agency working (Anning,

Cottrell, Frost, Green, & Robinson, 2006; Bathmaker & Avis, 2005; Brown & White, 2006; Egan, 2004; Geddes, 1997; Lewis & Crisp, 2004; Pearce & Hilman, 1988).

Gaskell and Leadbetter (2009) examined the professional identity of the educational psychologist in multi-agency contexts, using Activity Theory (Engeström, 1999). This provides a framework that allows daily work activities to be considered within a social and historical context. Ten EPs and other professionals were interviewed following their work in Multi-Agency Teams (MATs). A semi-structured interview format was used, and the data were analysed using a grounded approach. They found that initially, the EPs felt as if their professional identity was unclear although analysis of the data indicated five areas where the EPs feel they made a distinct contribution. Other agencies valued having a link to the education system the most.

Many of the EPs indicated that they had experienced changes to their professional identity, and had developed a separate identity within the multi-agency group. There was some disagreement among the EPs as to their distinctive contribution, which has been claimed to be more important than having a positive identity (Branscome, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999).

There are other factors that contribute to the identity of educational psychology as a profession, one of which is the gender imbalance of its workforce. In a recent discussion paper, Murphy and Monsen (2008) attempt to raise awareness of this rarely publicised issue. By way of literature review, the authors attempt to explain the minority of male EPs. Unable to form comprehensive explanations they suggest that gender stereotyping with regard to career choice, social communication skills and pay have inhibited the recruitment of male EPs. Some have stated that achieving gender balance in educational settings is essential on philosophical and equality grounds (Culham, 2004; Goss, 2003) so that children and other service users meet with professionals of both genders. It must, therefore, be recognised that perceptions of EPs may be subject to stereotyping that is linked to gender. In relation to the current study,

participant and interviewer gender will be discussed in greater detail later in this paper.

Synthesis of selected literature

The literature that has been included in this section illustrates that the changes in educational psychology are set within the context of change in applied psychology more generally. Many divisions of applied psychology appear to be experiencing an identity shift. It is suggested that this is linked to a shift in the epistemological underpinnings of applied psychology. This has been argued to lead to a lack of standardisation among EPs, as many do not hold a shared epistemology of practise. In addition to this, developments in the way children's services are delivered have led to an increase in multi-agency working. There is a substantial body of literature that indicates that working in this way can lead to further ambiguity with regard to professional role and identity.

There are some however who believe diverse and contextually bound practise offers a coherent identity for EPs (Fallon et al. 2010). Fallon et al. (2010) further suggest that given the current context in which EPs operate, emphasis should be placed on small scale, context bound research. Having reviewed a selection of the available literature, it is apparent that there is a need for small scale, interpretive research. There is little available that specifically relates to the field of study in which this study is situated. This highlights an opportunity to address this gap in the existing literature. A more detailed rationale for using the psychological framework that informs this study can be found in the theoretical perspectives section.

Theoretical Perspectives

Kelly's (1955) theory of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) is the theoretical framework underpinning this stage of the research. This section will firstly introduce PCP, which will then form the basis of my rationale for using it in this study. A summary of research literature that uses data collection tools derived from PCP will then be presented.

When Kelly first introduced his theory, he challenged behaviourist thinking by highlighting the significance of listening to people's own descriptions and explanations of their actions (Burnham, 2008). The underlying philosophy of PCP is known as 'constructive alternativism', which states that there are many ways of considering a given situation (Walker, 1996). In this sense it is a positive philosophy, as it embraces the capacity of the individual to change the way they view the world (Walker, 1996; Burnham, 2008). It also accounts for the complex and idiosyncratic nature of human beings, and the beliefs they hold about the world around them. The fundamental postulate of PCP is that: 'a person's processes are psychologically channelised by the way in which he/she anticipates events' (Kelly, 1955). Essentially, this relates to Kelly's idea that all human beings are scientists, testing hypotheses in order to understand and predict the world.

In addition to Kelly's fundamental postulate are eleven corollaries, which will guide this overview of PCP. For example, the *construction corollary* postulates that we anticipate events by construing their reproduction. Our constructions of these events are then reinforced if successfully construed (*experience corollary*) and open to revision if unsuccessful (*modulation corollary*). As a result of this experimentation process, people construe their world in a way that is unique to them (*individuality corollary*).

According to PCP, the views we hold about the world are known as 'constructs', which can be simply described as verbal tools that help us make sense of the world (Burnham, 2008). Kelly was of the belief that generally, people's perceptions and experiences of the world fall into

dichotomies, such as light/dark and happy/sad (*dichotomy corollary*). Through the lens of PCP, these dichotomies represent opposing ends of a construct. It is unlikely however, that when people describe their world they will use both ends of the construct and are more likely to inform you that they are 'happy' for example. This is the beginning of a construct, known as the emergent pole. In order to fully understand the construct, the term at the other end is needed, which is referred to as the contrast pole. This process offers an insight into the unique way individuals construe their world, for example happy/sad may be construed by another person as happy/bored. The *choice* corollary states that individuals will have a preferred pole and that their constructions will also be situated within a hierarchy (*organisation corollary*).

The organisation corollary is particularly relevant within the context of this study due to the data collection methods used, which will be described in greater detail at a later point. The basic assumption of the organisation corollary is that the individual's constructs are organised within a hierarchical system, based on their usefulness at predicting events. According to Kelly (1955) constructs which are further up the hierarchy, known as superordinate or 'core' constructs, govern the individual's existence.

An important aspect of the hierarchical system relates to tight and loose construing. Constructs that are *tightly construed* yield unvarying predictions of the world, whereas constructs that are *loosely construed* result in varying predictions. In loosely construed constructs, an element may be at one end of the pole on one day, and the other end the next day. It is therefore at the point of loose construing that the construct system is most permeable and new ideas can be assimilated with little resistance. Loosely construed constructs can however become tightly construed depending on their success at predicting events about the world. Having been through a process (or many processes) of hypothesis testing, tightly construed constructs tend to be more stable and subsequently less permeable. Kelly (1955) was of the belief that the superordinate constructs we hold about ourselves tend to be tighter than others as they are at the core of our identity. This will be

explored further when discussing the self-characterisation activity later in this section.

Kelly's *range* corollary states that the individual's constructions are however, only convenient for a finite range of events. The *commonality corollary* accounts for the possibility that two individuals may hold the same constructions, yet they may both have had very different experiences that have informed their constructions. It is also possible that an individual may hold a variety of apparently incompatible construct subsystems (*fragmentation corollary*). Finally, the *sociality corollary* relates to the way in which people construe each other's construing. This is of great relevance to the practitioner or researcher when exploring an individual's construct system and will be explored in greater detail in the data collection section.

Given that the current study has adopted a phenomenological approach, PCP is an appropriate theory upon which to draw. It is recognised that PCP and phenomenology share many of their philosophical assumptions (Butt, 2003). Phenomenology endeavours to understand people in terms of their interpretation of events and attempts to see the world as others see it. Furthermore, phenomenological inquiry aims to bring out meaning that is not always apparent (Butt, 2003). The theoretical underpinnings of PCP lend themselves to the phenomenological approach and this provides a strong rationale for alighting upon this particular theory. PCP is also a psychological theory. I believe that as a psychologist, psychology should be used in the design of the study and analysis of the data. In terms of appropriateness for the subject area, I believe that the use of PCP will make a distinct contribution to the existing literature within the context of the new professional training route for EPs.

There are many ways in which PCP could have been used to collect data though construct elicitation techniques. In order to inform this decision, a small-scale review of studies employing PCP as a theoretical framework was undertaken. Table 2. on page 64 summarises these studies.

Table. 2 PCP inspired studies

Author/Field/Aim	Method/design	Key Findings	Why might I replicate this study?	Why might I choose an alternative design?
Reid and Jones (1997) Teacher Education - To elicit teacher constructs of their role as mentor to	Repertory grid/triadic elicitation	Mentors focus on interpersonal traits as being central to being a good mentor	Successfully elicited seven superordinate constructs	Researcher supplied elements which is not suited to study in a phenomenological paradigm
Wheeler (2000) Counselling - To elicit counsellor constructs of good and bad counsellors	Repertory grid/ triadic elicitation and biographical data of participants through questionnaire	Personal characteristics of counsellor most important – particularly being open, secure, honest and interpersonally skilled	Successful generation of conflated constructs using a combination of software and inter-rater review	Element generation dependent on participants knowing of at least ten counsellor trainees. Unclear as to which paradigm due to scientific research questions
Christie and Memuir (1997) Teacher Education - To elicit constructs of early years practitioners in relation to children they work within order to reflect upon their professional role	Repertory grid/triadic elicitation	Some individual shifts in thinking about children but statistically significant at a group level	Participants commented positively on opportunity to examine constructs	Before and after design used. Focus on movement of children within the construct system as opposed to professional role
Ewens, Howkins and Badger (2000) Nursing - To explore the effectiveness of interprofessional education by exploring changes in students' thinking around professional role	Repertory grid/triadic elicitation	Group developed a shared understanding of role which was reflected in constructs	Building researcher capacity to use and understand PCP as a theoretical framework in research	Elements supplied by researchers, which does not lend itself to study in a phenomenological paradigm. Before and after design.
Burnard and Morrison (1989) Nursing - To elicit nurses constructs about what constitutes an interpersonally skilled person	Repertory grid/triadic elicitation	Personality characteristics more important than technical aspects of the role, although difficult to define	Successfully elicited group constructs relating to the professional orientation of the group	Focus on one aspect of professional role i.e interpersonal skills
Hymans (2008) Educational Psychology - To elicit constructs of a mixed professional group relating to their role in a multi-agency team	Repertory grid/diadic elicitation	Professional identity a key issue particularly with regard to clarity of role	Effectively generated group constructs from a mixed group of professionals	Elements supplied by researcher not suited to phenomenological study
Lovenfoss and Viney (1999) Clinical Psychology - To elicit constructs of mothers of children with SEN	Self-characterisation	Mothers construed that their strength comes from psychological and social resources	Meaningful and in-depth construction of self in defined role i.e mother	Constructs not laddered to elicit superordinate constructs. Could not use credulous listening
Cross and Hicks (1997) Physiotherapy - To elicit clinical educators constructs of professional competence in student physiotherapists	Repertory grid/triadic elicitation	Personality characteristics identified as being most important but difficult to objectively measure	Successfully identified eight common constructs on which the student physiotherapists were differentiated	Scientific research questions, methodology and assumptions made from findings. Complex statistical analysis

Synthesis of studies

It is apparent that PCP and its associated data collection techniques have assisted researchers in exploring the ways in individuals construe their role. Both mixed and homogenous professional groups have been used as well as other groups with a defined role, such as mothers of children with additional needs. Construct elicitation has also been successfully employed to explore stakeholder views of professional groups. The literature outlined in the table above indicates that PCP provides a suitable theoretical basis from which to study perceptions of professional role and perceptions of self.

The dominant data collection method within the body of literature that has been reviewed here employs the repertory grid technique. This tends to be used in conjunction with triadic elicitation in order to develop constructs from the 'elements', which are either provided by the researcher or generated from the participants themselves. The studies in which elements have been provided as opposed to participant generated would not be appropriate within a phenomenological paradigm (Edwards et al, 2009).

One of the main criticisms of repertory grids is that they may not possess construction reliability as constructs are not stable over "test-re-test" (Edwards et al, 2009 p.796) conditions, given that constructs are subject to change and revision. As the current study does not employ a before and after design, this criticism is not entirely applicable. Repertory grids are also dependent on using elements to elicit constructs. In the case of the current study I might have asked the participants to think of five EPs for example. The difficulty with this approach is that some of the participants were new to their role and may have struggled to generate appropriate elements. I could have provided elements for them but this would not have been conducive the phenomenological approach of the current study.

The small scale review of literature suggests that the repertory grid technique is not well suited to the current research topic. Based on this I further explored self-characterisation as an alternative that might provide an opportunity to explore individual construct systems in greater depth. Although self-characterisation has not been used as data collection method to the same extent as repertory grids, it is widely used in the professional

practise of psychologists (Burnham, 2008; Fransella, 2003). Self-characterisation offers the psychologist an opportunity to explore the way in which the individual perceives themselves in relation to others or a particular role. Thinking in terms of Kelly's corollaries, it offers an account of the *individuality* of construing and a representation of the *dichotomies* used to construe the world. The data gathered from self-characterisation can also be subjected to further elaboration. One of the criticisms of the Lovenfoss and Viney (1999) study included in the study above, is that no attempt was made to elicit superordinate constructs. This could have lead to more meaningful data and a deeper understanding of the *commonality* of construing within the group. The technique of laddering affords these understandings (Burnham, 2008; Fransella, 2003).

As I am interested in the *organisation* of the construct system and in particular superordinate constructs, the technique of laddering is a suitable tool. Laddering is often used in conjunction with self-characterisation in order to elicit superordinate constructs about the self. This is often used because according to Kelly (1955) superordinate constructs held about the self tend to be more tightly construed. This therefore provides the practitioner with a strong sense of the beliefs and values that shape the individual's identity and view of the world. It was important to me to bring this element to the study in order to develop my understanding of how these 'core' beliefs may impact on attitudes toward EPs and professional background. The techniques of self-characterisation and laddering are described in more detail in the measures section.

Research Aims

The aim of this stage of the research is to explore the aspects of EPs' professional practice that the participants construe to be of greatest importance. I am also interested in the similarities and differences between the ways in which EPs and SENCos construe their role. Construct elicitation and elaboration techniques are used with the aim of eliciting superordinate constructs relating to the participants' professional role. These are then ranked in terms of importance to the EP role. Analysis of the data through the theoretical framework of PCP enables the findings to be viewed from a psychological perspective. Comparison to related literature should provide a platform for discussion and extension of the existing knowledge base.

The research questions for stage two are:

1. What core values do the participants hold about professional practice as an EP?
2. How do the participants' superordinate constructs relate to the themes arising in paper one?
3. How do constructions of professional role differ between the EP and SENCo group?

Design and Methods

Epistemological stance

Epistemology can be described as a set of assumptions about reality and what constitutes truth (McGhee, 2001). My epistemological stance is situated within with the interpretive paradigm, which aims to understand and account for the meaning of human experiences and actions (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). It accepts that there is not a single objective truth or reality, rather there are multiple realities that are constructed by individuals through their interactions with others (Guba & Lincoln 1994). This is also known as social constructionism (McGhee, 2001).

Methodological approach

Methodology refers to an individual's belief about how a research question or problem should be studied (McGhee, 2001), which is influenced by one's epistemological stance. There are several methodological options available to the interpretive researcher, which have been outlined by Creswell (2003). I have chosen a phenomenological methodology which seeks to understand the nature of lived experience, and the meaning that individuals give to this experience. Phenomenological study is grounded in the disciplines of philosophy, sociology, and psychology (Creswell, 2003), to which PCP is well suited. It will help me to understand the unique views and experiences of the participants, which is the underlying philosophy of phenomenology.

Participants

In the first stage of this research, twelve participants were recruited from two Local Authorities (LAs) full details of which are available in paper one. In this stage of the research, six of the original participants were interviewed, which was deemed appropriate on the grounds that it should yield rich data.

Participants were selected based on my perception of how comfortable they would feel in a construct elicitation activity, as the questioning can be

abstract and demanding (Fransella, 2003). One of the key ethical guidelines from the BPS (2005) relates to the 'protection of participants', whereby it is the role of the interviewer not to cause any distress to the participants. Based on their response to the semi-structured interviews in stage one, I selected participants who I believed would engage well with the construct elicitation activity. By way of the same process, participants were eliminated from stage two.

The role of intuition has been central to this process and has been supported by my reflections on the interviews. Further information on this process and reflections on the interviews can be found in my research diary, excerpts from which can be viewed in Appendix 3.1. As opposed to an intuitive approach, a rating scale could have been used to ascertain participant views on how comfortable they found the semi-structured interviews. This could have provided a more concrete evidence base for selecting the participants with respect to the ethical consideration outlined above.

I was also mindful to achieve a balance of EP/non-EP participants for the construct elicitation activity. The participants comprised three EPs, two secondary SENCos and a primary SENCo. I could have opted to interview one professional group at this stage e.g. EPs only. In order to answer research question two, I believe that a mixed group was needed as data were collected from a mixed group in stage one. This did create difficulties relating to data collection, which will be discussed in more detail in the measures section. The mixed group did however allow for comparison between professional groups.

Again, I had to rely on the good will of the participants to agree to be interviewed. Pseudonyms used in paper one have been used again in this paper to preserve anonymity and for purposes of continuity.

The participant group was entirely female, as in stage one of this study. In paper one issues relating to gender stereotyping of EPs were raised and it must be acknowledged that this may influence the participants' constructions of EP attributes. Also, there is evidence to suggest that gender-of-interviewer effects are apparent when questions are perceived to be gender sensitive, or subject to be gender biased (Flores-Macias &

Lawson, 2008). This is likely to be due to an extended social distance between interviewer and participant, affecting the openness with which responses are given to gender sensitive questions (Fuchs, 2009). As the participants were asked to construe themselves as professionals, this process was gender sensitive. It must be acknowledged therefore that had a female researcher interviewed them, individual participant responses may have differed.

Design

This overall design of this research incorporates two distinct stages that are linked both in terms of their overall aim and the sharing of data. In stage one a phenomenological approach was employed, using semi-structured interview as the data collection method. The second stage of this study is also situated within the phenomenological paradigm and employs a data collection technique associated with the theoretical framework of PCP. Findings from stage one of the study are used to inform the analysis of the results in stage two. I have chosen to use an alternative data collection method in stage two as it has allowed me to triangulate or 'check' the data with that of paper one (Elliot, Fischer & Rennie 1999).

Measures

For this stage of the research I collected data using a PCP technique referred to as self-characterisation. Kelly's (1955) original intention was that the subject is asked to write a character sketch of themselves as if they are the principal character in a play (Walker, 1996). Kelly also instructed that they must write as if they are a close friend of the character, who is sympathetic to their views. As a result of this the researcher is presented with the emergent pole of many constructs that are the starting point for further exploration. The next step in this process involves eliciting the contrast pole, and when this has been achieved the subject then selects their preferred pole – e.g. how they would most like to identify themselves. The researcher then has the option of laddering or pyramiding their responses, the latter of which will be discussed in this section.

I have slightly adapted the self-characterisation exercise for the purpose of this research, making it a conversational task as opposed to a writing task. I have also opted to remove the part about being in a play. They were given the following standardised instruction:

Think of a colleague with whom you have a good relationship. How would they describe you as a professional?

Whilst the participants were answering this question I recorded their emergent poles in writing. When they had finished, I asked the participants to choose the six emergent poles that were most true for them. This was the first step in developing a hierarchy of constructs. I then elicited the contrast pole for each emergent pole by asking them how they would describe someone that is not like their contrast pole, an example of which is given below:

Emergent pole = hard working
Q. How might you describe someone that isn't hard working?
A. Well, they're not a team player I think.
Contrast pole = not a team player

Once this had been completed for each construct, the participants were asked to choose their preferred pole. Following this the preferred poles were laddered, the aim of this exercise being to elicit the participant's construct hierarchy. This involves asking why a certain statement is important, a process that is repeated until an end point is reached. This end point can be referred to as a 'core construct' (Burnham, 2008) as it is supposedly at the top of the participant's construct hierarchy. The difficulty for the researcher is deciding at which point to stop the laddering process. Furthermore, when this point is reached, how does the researcher know that this is the top of the participant's ladder? There are alternative explanations as to why an end point might be reached, such as the participant experiencing difficulty with increasingly abstract construing (Fransella, 2003). It may also be that the responses begin to sound more like subordinate constructs than superordinate ones. It must therefore be acknowledged that whilst the term 'core construct' will be used in this study, it should be interpreted with the understanding that it may not actually represent the top of the participants' construct hierarchy.

Although the top of the elicited construct hierarchy cannot be said to represent a core construct with absolute certainty, there is research evidence to suggest that the laddering process elicits superior constructs (Neimeyer, Anderson & Stockton, 2001). In order to demonstrate the laddering process I have continued the previous example.

Preferred pole = hard working

Q. Why is it important to be hard working?

A. So that people think you deserve your job.

Q. Why is it important that people think you deserve your job?

A. So that they respect you.

Q. Why is it important that people respect you?

A. They'll trust you to do the job.

Q. Why is it important that they trust you to do the job?

A. You're more likely to create positive outcomes.

Core construct = create positive outcomes

This process was repeated for all participants until the six preferred poles were laddered and core constructs were reached. In order to decide on an appropriate point to stop laddering, the end point was agreed with the participants. The data collected represents EPs constructs relating to their professional role, and SENCo constructs relating to their professional role. Finally, the participants were asked to rank their core constructs in order of importance to the work of an EP. The final product therefore, was a hierarchy of core constructs relating to EP practice for each participant.

There were alternative ways of using data from the construct elicitation activity. The chosen method carries with it one significant issue (SENCos laddering constructs relating to their professional role to order their thinking about EPs) it was, on balance deemed most appropriate. Although primarily interested in EP attributes, I am also interested in the similarities and differences between the EP and SENCO group in terms of how they construed their role. Furthermore I am interested in the variation within the two groups. Self-characterisation offered a means of achieving this. I was also particularly keen to elicit the 'tightest' superordinate constructs, for which an elicitation exercise relating to constructs held about the self was highly appropriate.

Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that with revision, the design could have partly overcome this flaw. An interim step, such as a sorting exercise in which the participants grouped the constructs according to their usefulness for EP role, SENCo role or neither presents one option. Another would have been to use a triadic elicitation exercise in conjunction with self-characterisation. This would have allowed the SENCo group to construe the EP role and further comparison between the two data sets could have been made.

The caveat regarding the data collection method used in this study is that it is ambiguous as to how much the SENCo constructs relate to the practise of EPs. Thinking in terms of Kelly's (1955) *range* corollary however, it is possible that the SENCo constructs are useful for describing EP practice, whereas constructions of the pharmacist's role may not be.

Data Analysis

In order to explore the relationship between the stage one and stage two data, the participants' core constructs were coded according to the themes arising in stage one of the study, which is known as clustering (Boyatzis, 1998). In order to conceptualise the findings from this stage of the research and represent the findings visually, some quantitative transformation of the data was used (see Figs. 1-4). It must be reiterated that the purpose of this is to represent the participants' views, not to deduce general laws or generate theory. This manipulation of the data, therefore, conforms to interpretive methodology. As a deductive approach to coding has been used, it must be highlighted that it has been used as a means of organising the data in the absence of another researcher(s) to confer with. Although the approach is deductive, the codes have arisen from the first stage of this research, to which the participants have contributed.

Validity and reliability

Qualitative research is said to have validity if consistency of judgement can be demonstrated (Boyatzis, 1998), irrespective of the paradigm in which the research is situated. As the PCP activity involved the participant validation, achieving consistency of judgement was a process between the participant and researcher. In the laddering process, the end point at which the core construct was reached was agreed with the participant. As a result, they were able to validate that the data formed an accurate representation of their view, improving the validity of the data (Elliot et al. 1999).

The reliability of the findings relates to the degree to which the data collection method would yield similar findings were it to be repeated with the same participants. In the case of construct elicitation exercises it is possible that findings may differ, as the construct system is open to revision and change. This is likely to vary between the participants, depending on the position of constructs within the hierarchy and across the tight/loose dimension. It is also important to acknowledge that the consistency with which the researcher uses the data collection method is likely to impact upon the findings.

Procedures

Similarly to stage one, the participants were interviewed on a one-to-one basis, at a setting of their choosing. All interviews were conducted in private rooms, which helped to eliminate external distractions and lasted approximately 50-70 minutes inclusive of problem free talk and a debrief. The participants were read a standard introduction as detailed in the measures section. These interviews were not audio recorded, however I have transcribed my field notes to represent the laddering process and the progression to core constructs. These can be viewed in Appendix 2.3.

Ethical issues

Ethical issues relating stage two of the study were considered and addressed within the broad framework of the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines (2006) for conducting research with human participants. I have also drawn upon the ethical guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the Health Professions Council (HPC). Ethical consent was also obtained from the University of Exeter and the relevant documentation can be viewed in Appendix 4.2. A summary of the ethical considerations outlined by the BPS can be found in Appendix 4.1, along links to all documents referenced in this section. The ethical issues and steps taken to address them are present below in relation to an abbreviated version of the BPS framework:

Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in this study. Participants initially gave their consent to both stages of the study based on a brief description of the stage two interviews. Prior to the interviews in stage two, participants were offered a more detailed description should it be requested.

Deception: As described in paper one, a possible aspect of the research design that was addressed with regard to deception relates to the disclosure of my professional background. It was decided that my professional background would not be disclosed so that the participants could express

themselves freely without concern for offending the researcher. This also applies to stage two of the study. Regular supervision with my research supervisor was sought in order to discuss the impact of collecting data that contradicted my own ideological position. Another potential ethical pitfall relates to the selection of participants for stage two of the study. My reasons for selection are outlined with regard to ethics in the 'participants' section. Those that were not selected for interview were not offered this information, however they were invited to contact me for further information and thanked for their contribution. None of the participants chose to act on this. A guideline that is shared by all ethical frameworks referenced in this thesis concerns the welfare of participants and avoiding actions that might result in a negative effect on their self-esteem. This was central to my decision with regard to selection for stage two, and my decision to withhold my aforementioned reasons for selection.

Debriefing: Given the particularly self-reflective nature of the self-characterisation interview, an opportunity was provided to discuss the process at the end of the interview. Participants were also informed of procedures for contacting me within a reasonable time period following participation should stress, potential harm, or related questions or concern arise.

Withdrawal from the investigation: All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage.

Confidentiality: All participants were informed that the information they provide will be treated confidentially and will not be identifiable as theirs. Consent forms and indicators of the participants' true identity such as email correspondence have either been securely stored or deleted.

Protection of participants: As the interview process involved questions about the participants themselves, additional effort was made to ensure protection from stress. Assurance was given that answers to any question need not be provided. I have also made effort to ensure that the interview questions and interview process did not include any comments that may be

perceived to be discriminatory in any way e.g. sexist or racist. Participants were given the choice over the location at which the interviews took place in order to reduce stress.

<div align="center">**Results**</div>

The findings of this stage of the research are organised in relation to the research questions. As phenomenological study has a commitment to idiography (Smith & Eatough, 2007), I have included results for each participant in addition to group results. Further breakdowns of the results can be found in appendices 2.1-2.4.

1. What core values do the participants hold about professional practice as an EP?

The results presented below include the emergent and contrast pole for each participant. Preferred poles are highlighted in bold text, which have been laddered in order to elicit superordinate or 'core' constructs. It must be emphasised that the ranking represented in the tables below relates to the core constructs, not the preferred pole of the initial construct. I have illustrated the rankings of the core constructs for the entire sample in Appendix 2.1.

Mary, EP

Mary identified her top ranked core construct as 'meeting children's needs', a value that appears to be reflected in her other core constructs. For an illustration of how Mary reached her core constructs through the laddering process, please refer to Appendix 2.3, which details this information for all participants.

Table. 3 Mary's core constructs

Emergent pole	Contrast Pole	Core construct	Rank
Hard working	Lazy	Meeting children's needs	1
Good written communicator	Isn't able to communicate	Positive impact for child	2
Analytical	Takes things at face value	To see what's really happening for child	3
A learner	Closed	Able to offer evidence based practice	4
Hasty	**Mentally prepared**	Meeting child's needs quickly	5
Reflective	No idea of impact	Being aware	6

Nicola, EP

For Nicola, helping colleagues to enjoy their role was ranked as the most important core construct in relation to the work of the EP.

Table. 4 Nicola's core constructs

Emergent pole	Contrast pole	Core construct	Rank
Encouraging autonomy	Dictator	Helps colleagues enjoy role	1
Leader	Not bringing forward ideas	Move people forward	2
Reflective	Congested	Learning	3
Emotionally literate	Not reflective	Gives clients confidence	4
Organised	Not good at time or diary keeping	Install confidence in others	5
Interested in development of team	Gets on with own work	Improve own practice	6

Clare, EP

Clare identified the use of evidence based practiced as the most important core construct in relation to EP work. After the interview she informed me that the process had made her reflect about her own beliefs around professional background.

Table. 5 Clare's core constructs

Emergent pole	Contrast Pole	Core construct	Rank
Well organised	Disorganised	Evidence based practice	1
Leading by example	Distrusting	Building Trust	2
Liked	Not having respect	Others feel they can come to me	3
Well respected	Complained about	Loyalty	4
Steering through difficult situation	Enjoys conflict	Make compromises	5
Trusting	Control Freak	Positively resolve issues	6

Anne, secondary SENCo

Anne was very interested in the interview process and felt that the experience had been illuminating. She ranked 'doing more than required' as her most important core construct.

Table. 6 Anne's core constructs

Emergent pole	Contrast pole	Core construct	Rank
Committed	Not bothered	Doing more than required	1
Team player	Nightmare	Respect for other people	2
Good leader	Dictates	Give other people opportunities	3
Fun	Indifferent	Being human	4
Challenging	Passive	Having a different approach	5
Loyal	Out for self gain	Being part of a team	6

Lisa, Secondary SENCo

Lisa's core constructs share similar themes to Anne, the other secondary SENCo in the group. There appears to be a real emphasis on teamwork and wanting to help children.

Table. 7 Lisa's core constructs

Emergent pole	Contrast pole	Core construct	Rank
Conscientious	Not putting extra in	Wanting best for children	1
Good teaching skills	In need of support	Helping children feel valued	2
Supportive	Against you	Having respect of team	3
Lacking self confidence	**Less stressed**	Asserting self within team	4
Reliable	Unreliable	Values other members of team	5
Doesn't push self forward	**Self assured but not arrogant**	Being productive	6

Sarah, primary SENCo

Sarah prioritised 'working together to help children learn' above her other core constructs. She believed that giving children a positive attitude to learning was an outcome of EP involvement, but it requires follow up from teaching staff.

Table. 8 Sarah's core constructs

Emergent pole	Contrast pole	Core construct	Rank
Good communicator	Doesn't listen	Working together to help children learn	1
Having impact	Gets on with own job	Help others to understand children's learning	2
Efficient	Scatty not organised	Helping children achieve their best	3
Knowledgable	Don't know subject	Meeting children's needs	4
Problem solving	Doesn't see wider context	Help to solve problems outside of school	5
Quick action	Inefficient	Gives children positive attitude to learning	6

2. How do the participants' core constructs relate to the themes arising in paper one?

In order to answer this research question the core constructs were coded according to the themes arising in stage one, as outlined in the data analysis section above. The code clusters can be viewed in tabular form in Appendix 2.4. The clusters of core constructs are represented in Fig.1 and clusters of core constructs ranked # 1 are represented in Fig.2. For ease of viewing the theme names have been abbreviated.

Fig. 1 Breakdown of core construct clusters
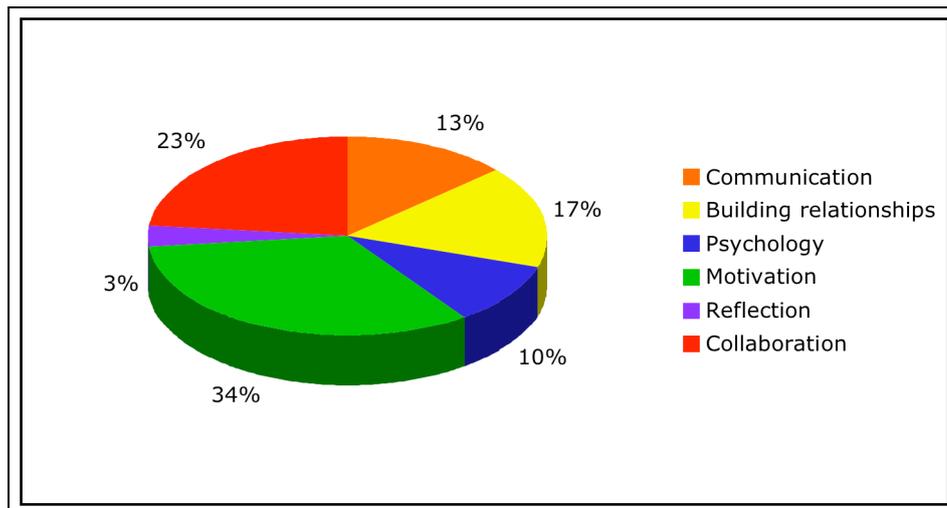
Fig. 2 Breakdown of core constructs ranked # 1.
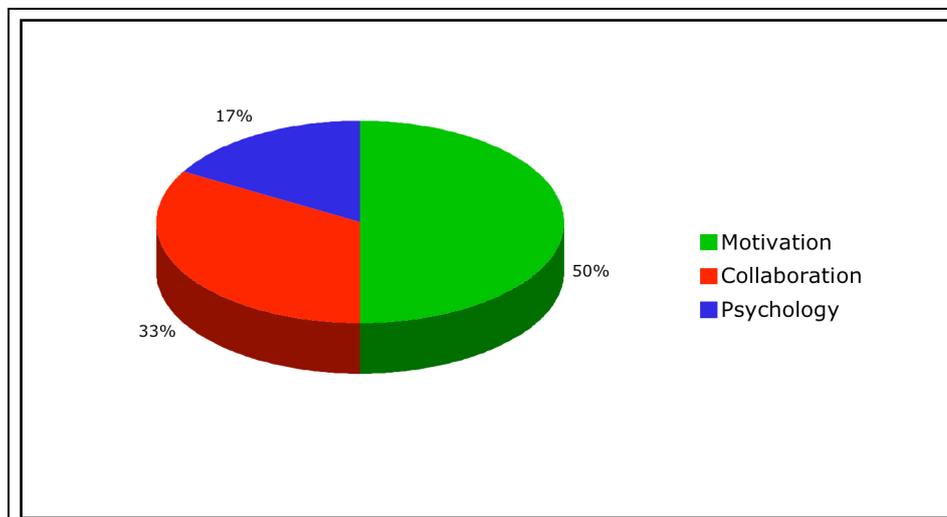
As can be seen in Fig. 1, six of themes from stage one are represented in the participants' core constructs. Three of the themes are represented in their top ranked core constructs, these being motivation, collaborative and psychology (Fig.2). Motivation is the biggest construct cluster in both Fig. 1 and Fig.2.

3. How do constructions of professional role differ between the EP and SENCo group?

The core construct clusters for the EP and SENCo group are represented in Fig. 3 below. Analysis of construct clusters within the EP and SENCo groups is represented in Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 respectively. These will be discussed in the discussion section on page 86.

Fig. 3 Analysis EP and SENCo group core construct clusters.
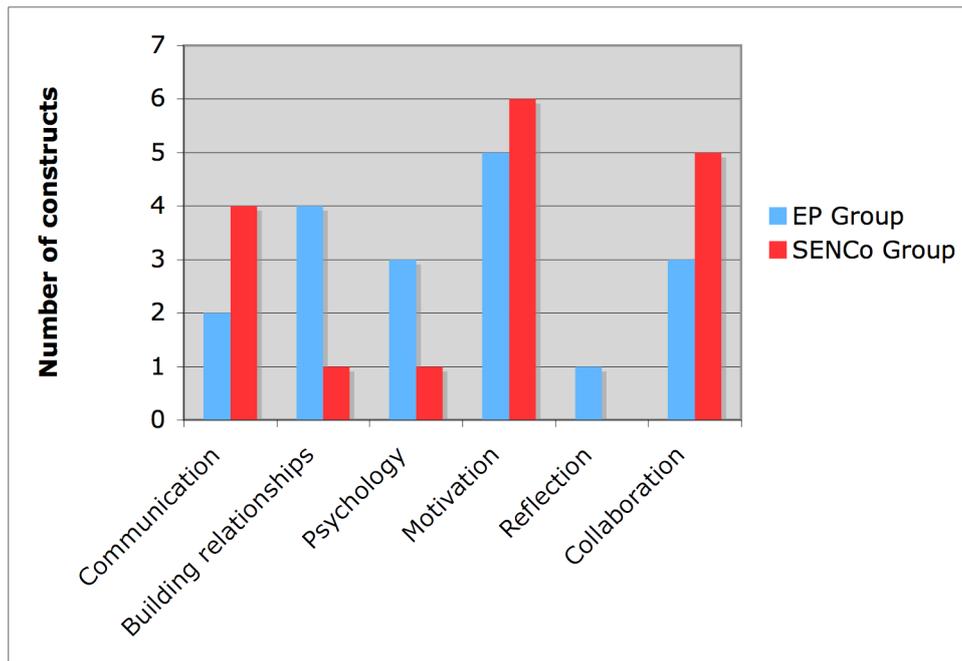
Fig. 4 EP group core construct clusters.
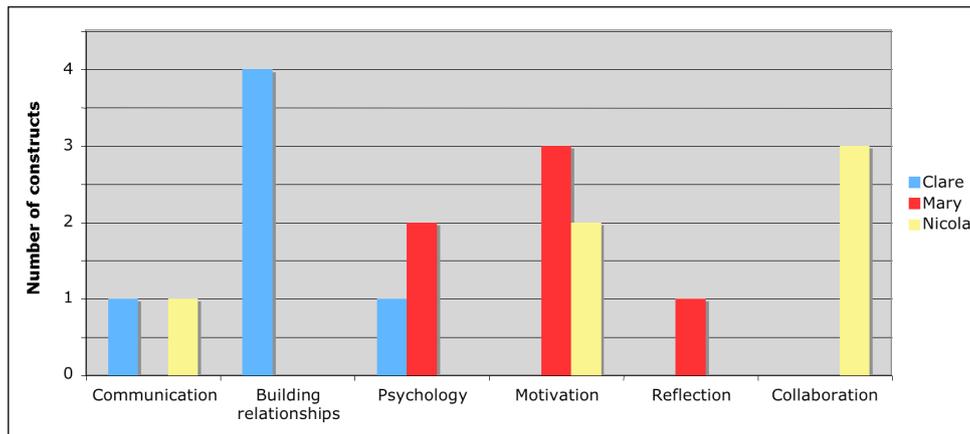
Fig. 5 SENCo group core construct clusters.
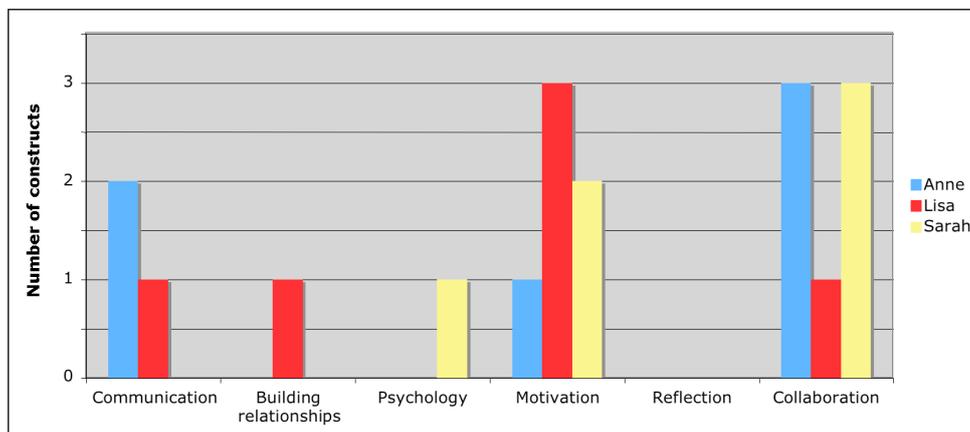
Discussion

The results indicate that the participants' core constructs have been categorised into six themes, three of which are represented in their top ranked core constructs. These are discussed in more detail below along with reflections on the design of the study and considerations for future study. As there is some degree of overlap between research questions one and two they have are discussed jointly.

1. What core values do the participants hold about professional practice as an EP?
2. How do the participants' core constructs relate to the themes arising in paper one?

The findings of this study appear to be similar to previous research that has aimed to understand professional and stakeholder constructions of role. Characteristics that could be described as 'personality factors' tend to comprise the majority of the core constructs elicited from the participants in this study, which has been observed elsewhere (Burnard & Morrison, 1989; Cross & Hicks, 1997; Wheeler, 2000). Although much of this research relates to associated professions, such as nursing and counselling, they are nonetheless helping professions. Studies in the field of educational psychology that have not used construct elicitation techniques have demonstrated that these attributes are often perceived to be among the most valuable (Farrell et al., 2006). Communication skills, which have been found to be significant in this study, feature in the DfES (2006) guidance on core skills for those working with children, which is currently under review by the CWDC (Fallon et al., 2010). It may not be surprising therefore that this is represented in the construct systems of both EPs and SENCos. The question is, however, does any particular professional background lend itself to the development of these qualities?

The ranking exercise was intended to provide a more accurate account of the core beliefs the participants hold about the EP role. By viewing the

constructs ranked at the top of the hierarchy, it can be seen that motivation, collaborative and psychology feature. As discussed above psychology is a distinguishing feature for the EP group, one of which (Clare) ranked their construct 'evidence based practice' as most important to the role of the EP. Two constructs clustered within collaborative are ranked at # 1, which are provided by Sarah, Primary SENCo and Nicola, EP. It is interesting to note Sarah's comments (from stage one) in relation to teaching experience no longer being a requirement "I think it will have great impact on it because I think that time in a school, working in a school, and working how the whole school kind of works and working with kids I think is invaluable…. when you're making suggestions for strategies and things like that, actually having done them yourself is very important". Does this therefore represent a disparity between espoused views and core beliefs? Through the lens of PCP, this appears to fit with the assumption of the *fragmentation corollary*, that is that people can be inconsistent with themselves. This may be dependent on particular contexts or roles people undertake, for which people hold seemingly incompatible construct subsystems. This, therefore may offer an explanation as to why such views may be held with regard to teaching experience, yet are not reflected in Sarah's superordinate constructs.

It is motivation however that holds 50% of the core constructs within its cluster and is a belief shared by Anne, Secondary SENCo, Lisa, Secondary SENCo and Mary, EP. In this research, motivation relates to the drive that individuals have to have to improve outcomes for children, and the lengths they will go to in order to achieve this aim. This includes working harder than required and being willing to improve one's practice, through continuing professional development (CPD) for example. This theme has been strongly represented in both papers. Thinking in terms of the study aims, the question could be posed that if motivation is such a desirable characteristic in EPs, would being a highly motivated EP be sufficient to challenge negative judgements about their professional background?

3. How do constructions of professional role differ between the EP and SENCo group?

Differences between the two groups in this study (EPs and SENCos) focus primarily on constructs relating to the application of psychology and being a reflective practitioner. One SENCo did, however, report a superordinate construct that reflected the theme of psychology, based on a coding approach that is consistent with stage one. If the SENCo were asked to construe the EP role, then a greater number of constructs relating to applying psychology may have been observed. This may not have been the case however as it has been suggested that using psychology is implicit in much of the work EPs undertake, and is largely unnoticed (Stringer, Brewin, Duggan, Gessler & Low Ying, 2006). This is also likely to depend on the way in which the participant views the EP role, e.g. expert or collaborative.

It is well documented in research literature that EPs and other professionals believe a distinct contribution to children's services is made through the application of psychology (Farrell et al., 2006; Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009; Gersch, 2004; Hymans, 2008; Norwich, 2005). The findings from the construct elicitation also support this.

It is also apparent that the EP group and SENCo group demonstrated similarities in the way that they construe their professional role, particularly with regard to collaboration and motivation. Both of these attributes were ranked as most important for EPs. As statistical analysis of the data was not undertaken, it is not possible to comment on the degree to which constructions of professional role differ between the groups. It can, however, be discussed in relation to PCP. The findings could be described in terms of the commonality corollary, which suggests that individuals can hold similar constructions about events in spite of different life events.

Analysis of construct clustering within the two groups clearly demonstrates different patterns of construing. In the EP group, it can be see that individual EP construct place different emphases on aspects of EP practise. This may offer some explanation as to why a lack of standardisation of practise among EPs is often reported (Gersch, 2009; Love, 2009). If these

are in fact tightly construed superordinate constructs, then it reasonable to predict that they would govern the way in which the individual EPs practise psychology. Within the SENCo group, it can again be seen that different emphases are given to the construct clusters. Not only does this highlight possible variation in practise as governed by the superordinate constructs, but it may also influence the way in which EPs are perceived, depending on a construct's range of applicability.

Thinking in terms of professional background, it may be that perceived similarities between EP and SENCo roles lead to negative attitudes towards those who have not been teachers. For example, if a SENCo construes themselves to have the attributes of an EP, and are in a teaching role, then working with an EP that does not share that experience may conflict with the SENCos superordinate constructs. Kelly (1995) theorised that the prospect of change within a tightly construed construct led to feelings of hostility. It must be emphasised that this argument is being postulated by expanding on the findings through PCP and cannot be reported as a finding of this study per se.

PCP as a theoretical framework

Using PCP as a theoretical framework offers a psychological perspective on the views that the participants hold about EP practise. The experience corollary of Kelly's (1955) fundamental postulate states that beliefs are maintained or revised depending on how successful a particular construct has been at predicting events. It could therefore be argued that differing experiences of service delivery models and EPs will influence beliefs about what attributes are important for EPs. It is also possible that these beliefs are subject to revision. The long-term impact of the interviews on the beliefs and values of the participants will remain unknown unless a follow-up study is undertaken.

The 'one off interview' is not a predictor of future attitudes or behaviour (Ravenette, 1999). Construct elicitation interviews provide a snapshot of the 'here and now', and must be interpreted in that way. It is documented in

PCP literature that construct elicitation encourages self-reflection, which is a possible catalyst for attitude change (Burnham, 2008; Fransella & Dalton, 2000; Walker, 1996). In fact, some have found that self-reflection following an interview of any description (not necessarily related to PCP) is a likely predictor of behaviour change in the participant (Fujita, Wagner, Perthou & Pion, 1971). It is possible therefore that the interviews have had an impact on the participants' attitudes towards EPs and also their own practice. A follow up study may establish whether this has been the case.

For those who did partake in the construct elicitation activities, many found them to be an illuminating and thought provoking experience. The data I have to support this claim are incidental outcomes of the interviews and are recorded in my research diary (Appendix 3.1). For the EP contingent, it appears that the experience had made them reflect on their own beliefs professional background. The SENCo group also appeared to have found the interviews a thought provoking experience, revealing aspects of their self that were otherwise unknown to them. The interviews could therefore be said to have widened the 'what is know about the self' quarter of their Johari window (Luft & Ingham, 1995). One participant did however inform me that disclosing information about her beliefs and values to someone who is not a close colleague or friend was an unnatural experience. This may also be due to interviewer gender effects (Fuchs, 2009).

By using the laddering technique, I have been able to elicit superordinate constructs, some of which are shared by both professional groups, based on the construct clusters. It has therefore, broadly allowed me to explore the commonality (Kelly, 1955) factor between the participants. Although each participant's construct system is idiosyncratic and unique, I was able to cluster superordinate constructs that appeared to share meaning. Having not used the repertory grid technique (which would have afforded a more rigorous analysis of group constructs) the clustering of constructs could have been improved by the use of another researcher to achieve inter-rater reliability. It may also have been improved by subjecting the constructs to a thematic analysis independent of stage one thematic analysis. Being mindful of the above, the findings of this study indicate that there is commonality in

the way EPs and SENCos construe their own professional role. An outcome of the ranking exercise also indicates that there is commonality in the way the EPs and SENCos construed characteristics that are important in relation to the EP role.

Another valuable outcome of the construct elicitation interview is that the participants validated the data as part of the process. This has helped me to remain true to phenomenology and PCP by subsuming the participants' construing and suspending my own beliefs and values. Given the biases I bring to this area of study I believe this to be highly important.

Conclusion

The design employed in this stage of the study has enabled me to answer the research questions. Being mindful of the limitations of the data collection and analysis process, I have been able to elicit 'core constructs', relate them to EP practise and triangulate with the data from stage one. I have been able to compare the findings with previous research. In terms of the broader aim of the study, the findings do not provide definitive explanations regarding the relationship between the role of the EP and professional background. Discussing the results in terms of PCP has offered an insight into how EPs and SENCos view their role, and how superordinate constructs relating to EP practise compare and contrast between the groups. It also offers an explanation as to why some phenomena, such as inconsistency between views expressed in stage one and the construct activities may be apparent. There may well have been alternative designs that would have better addressed the broader aim of this research. Some alternative design options and improvements to the design of the study have been discussed above. In addition to these possible future studies could involve exploring differences between the ways in which TEPs/EPs from a range of professional backgrounds construe their role.

There are a number of considerations to make when looking at the overall design of the study (stage one and two). Among these is the sample of participants, which may have been improved by recruiting a broader range of professionals. This would better reflect the multi-agency context in which EPs work. Hymans (2008) suggests that PCP is a powerful tool for exploring issues around role and identity within this context. The sample could have also included parents or even children, although this may be better suited to a follow up study in its own right. Future study may also wish to extend the participant group by inviting representatives from training institutions, for example. The participant group has, however, been fit for purpose in that it has allowed me to build on existing literature by further exploring the relationship between the role of the EP and professional background.

As this research is situated in the interpretive paradigm, the results cannot be generalised in order to reflect beliefs and values about educational psychology on a national level. In reality, the findings can only said to be reflective of the two LAs from which the participants were recruited. In turn, this relates to the service delivery model that has been adopted by the EPSs in these authorities. Fallon et al. (2010) point out that the profession of educational psychology would benefit from an increase in small-scale research, which reflects the diversity of service delivery models in the UK. If the study were replicated, it would be interesting to see whether the findings differ or are similar within other localities.

In terms of implications for educational psychology as a profession the findings serve several purposes. Although espoused views differ regarding professional background, the findings suggest that the personal characteristics of the EP and a collaborative approach are of greatest value. Viewing these findings through the lens of PCP also suggests that constructs held about EP practise are subject to revision. Given the changes that are ongoing, this offers hope for the future. The commonality identified between the participants also offers hope that in this time of change, educational psychology might find a coherent identity. Much like Mrdjenovich and Moore's (2004) comment on the core values and emphases of counselling psychology, might educational psychology find a coherent identity in the core values of the profession? This would allow for flexibility in working practice and would complement a more fluid, contextually bound concept of educational psychology (Fallon et al., 2010).

This study has shown that the attributes EPs and SENCos ranked as most important for EPs broadly relate to using psychology, being highly motivated and adopting a collaborative approach. The study also shows that the EP and SENCo groups displayed similarities and differences in how they construed their professional roles. The way in which EPs construed their role placed greater emphasis on building relationships and using psychology. The constructs that showed the greatest degree of similarity relate to collaboration and motivation. By exploring the self-characterisation of each participant in relation to the construct clusters, it has been possible

to see how superordinate constructs differ within and between EP and SENCo roles.

The findings of this study must be treated with caution. Possible alterations to the design of the study could have addressed the research aims more directly. In addition to this, the degree to which the superordinate constructs elicited can be said to be 'core constructs' is subject to scrutiny. They do however, build upon the existing literature base by offering a psychological perspective on perceptions of the EP role. Discussion of the findings through the framework of PCP offers a theoretical perspective as to why certain views regarding professional background may be held. Primarily, this relates to the commonality of construing between EP and SENCo groups, and the fragmentation exhibited between views relating to professional background, and constructs ranked as most important for EPs. As this study is framed within the context of the changes to professional training, the study provides a timely extension of the existing literature within this field of inquiry.

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Appendix 1.1

Pilot Interview Schedule

Problem free talk (5 min)

Introduction

Thank you for meeting with me today. The purpose of this interview is to gain your views on Educational Psychologists, which I will refer to as 'EPs', and on issues relating to the development of educational psychology as a profession. My interest is around the changes to initial training of EPs and the impact that this is likely to have on the profession.

I will make an audio recording of this interview so that it can be transcribed and stored as a Word document. Following transcription the audio will be deleted. Your details will remain anonymous other than your profession and amount of time in your current employment. You are free to withdraw from the interview at any point and you are free to pass on any questions. Is there anything else you would like to address before we start?

(start recording)

1. How come you agreed to be interviewed by me?

2. Tell me what you know about educational psychologists (not applicable to EPs).

3. What skills do you feel are most important for an EP to have?

- Working with children?
- Working with parents?
- Working with other professionals?

4. What personal qualities do you feel are most important for an EP to have?

5. What do you feel EPs can offer that is different from other support services?

- Do you feel EPs have a distinct knowledge base?
- Do you feel EP have different skills?
- Tell me what you feel is unique about the EPs position within children's services?

6. What role do you feel there is for EPs outside of schools?

- The training route for EPs has been changed partly to reflect the development of the profession in terms of working in a range of settings and with other agencies.
- Supporting other settings?

7. How do you feel EPs can contribute to work in other settings?

- What do you feel EPs can actually do in other settings?
- What about multi agency meetings?

8. The application criteria for professional training in educational psychology has now changed from a minimum of two years teaching experience to a minimum of two years relevant experience working with children. How do you feel this will impact on the profession?

- What impact could this have?
- How do you feel it will affect the credibility of the profession?
- How do you see the profession developing in the future?
- What developments would you like to see?

9(a). Thinking of your colleagues, which ones do you think would be good EPs?
- Why is that?
- Skills?
- Experience / background?
- Other qualities?

9(b). EPs only. If you were interviewing applicants for an EP training course, what would you look for?

(stop recording)

Debrief

Name:

Date:

That concludes our interview. Thank you very much for your contribution. Have any issues been raised today that you would like to discuss further?

Following an initial analysis of interview data, I will be conducting some follow up interviews. These will be approximately 45-60 minutes in length. Would you be happy to participate if asked to do so?

YES / NO

Appendix 1.2

Interview schedule amendments

The format remained the same as pilot schedule questions 1-9 with the addition of the following:

10. Do you have any further thoughts on the issues we have discussed today?

Debrief

Name:

Date:

That concludes our interview. Has anything been raised today that you feel has personally affected you?

Following an initial analysis of interview data, I will be conducting some follow up interviews. These will be approximately 45-60 minutes in length. Would you be happy to participate if asked to do so?

YES / NO

Appendix 1.3

Examples of interview transcripts

I have included two complete transcripts in this section to illustrate the interview process, as they cannot all be included due to the restrictions of this document. All transcripts will be securely stored until such point as the examiners are satisfied with the authenticity of the data and are available upon request.

Example 1: Clare, EP

What skills do you feel are most important for an Educational Psychologist to have?

Obviously the psychologist bit is vital and it is really important that people can call on their knowledge of psychology and actually call on various different aspects of it. That is partly dependent on their first degree in psychology. I think people's first degrees vary in the content of them and then they bring to educational psychology what was in their first degree in psychology. Mine was heavily based on the behavioural side, therefore, I'm quite heavy on that side. I've got a colleague who was Tavvy trained, and beginnings and endings are very important and the touchy feely side of psychology, but that in many respects was well balanced.

Ok so what is it that's important about the psychology bit?

Yep back to your question, I think what's important is overall knowledge of psychology, but actually being able to pull out specific strands, whether you're looking at any particular type of psychology, whether you are looking at child development, cognitive, research, development etc. I also believe it is really important to have a good knowledge of education and that matches in with your knowledge of psychology. It's so useful to be sitting in a Year 3 class, observing a child, thinking to yourself "hmmm Year 3, they should be doing the dinosaurs and creepy crawlies project this year, what would this child be capable of doing in the creepy crawlies project if he is just capable of drawing a ladybird or is he actually going to understand that the different spots mean different things according to the different type of ladybird. It actually looking at the more detailed things that more able children are used to and less able children wouldn't be. Its understanding how that type of teacher can differentiate on each of those others that I think helps having been a teacher.

So what about skills that are important whilst working with children?

Actually liking children helps, getting on well with children. Being a parent, I think that helps you tremendously because you then know what you expect, what is normal and what is not normal and you have got a good baseline to go on really. Also, if you don't have children you don't understand how

much love there is for a child, and until you've experienced that and know that actually you would do anything for that child, that you would put your life on the line, no hesitation.

Right, Ok.

The parents that we meet would do that and therefore they are so hurt, and so upset when there is something wrong with that child and actually having that understanding of being a parent also helps.

What about EPs that aren't parents?

I'm not saying that EPs that are not parents can't be good EPs but I still think that it's actually understanding being a parent and the process.

That links in with one of my sub questions about skills when working with parents, I don't want to put words in your mouth but you can elaborate.

I think it's actually, you yourself are a parent working with a parent. I've just been in a child protection conference and a mother burst out crying because she said "one of our children has said he wants to kill another of our children" and she said that is "so hurtful when you have one child that wants to hurt another of your children". They all do it, and that's actually quite normal, but its not normal to keep saying it. That's what she was saying that the child was doing and it could help him and you to move on. She straight away said to me "How do you know that that hurts" and I said "I've been there".

Right.

I've got 5 children, and after 5 you are bound to have had a fair mixture of different difficulties, so we've had the dyslexia, we've had the learning difficulties. Its being able to understand being parents. Perhaps you don't have the same difficulty, but actually just having something.

Thank you. So, moving on, what personal qualities are most important for an EP to have?

To be able to interact with other people from all walks of life, so you can be rolling on the floor with an SLD child having lots of fun and laughing and giggling to being in a tribunal and having a jolly good ding dong with the leader of the tribunal, and to be able to traverse between one and the other. As an Educational Psychologist, in an average day, say a school visit in the morning and a school visit in the afternoon, possibly a home visit, possibly an annual review or something else, you could really do 2 or 3 different things in a day. In that day you may be dealing with little children, even babies sometimes, up to 19 year olds.

What might you be doing with the 19 year old?

In the same day you can be having an adult conversation with a 19 year old who has perhaps got some learning difficulty, maybe having some difficulty

accessing university, and you could then have a conversation with somebody who has just been told there 3 month old baby is blind, which you would probably have a good idea (cannot transcribe) ……… it's being able to traverse between those which is very important.

What about other personal qualities?

I think it is also important to be able to have a personal relationship with somebody, and actually get to know them until they trust you, building up that trust is so important. So being seen all climbs, whether it be children, parents or professionals as being someone who is willing to listen is very important. Also, other skills, I think it is important that you can cope with the 1 to 1 interaction or standing in front of a conference of 100 people. I don't think I'd have done that as a new EP, I'd have struggled with 100 people, its actually having the skill to be able to do that.

Yeah that's a lot of people!

Yes it is, I think we still need the skill to be able to teach, because we do a lot of training and that's very important. I also think its important that we are abreast of the latest test or development or school sheets or "lets try this or that" and always willing to try new things.

What do you feel EPs can offer that is different from other support services?

Well obviously the knowledge of psychology and the application of the knowledge of psychology is very important. It's also that knowledge in relation to education specifically. If it was 1 to 1 the EPs are being pushed more to being community psychologists and therefore the social services side of the links are important. We also became a joint social services department 5 years ago.

So what do we contribute that is distinctive?

The application of psychology, of all levels of psychology, all perspectives of psychology and being able to use that in a meeting.

Ok so do you think there is for EPs outside of school?

I think there is a role, and I think the community educational psychology is one possibility, we've certainly explored it, and the social care teams are very keen to utilise our skills but I almost feel as though they actually want clinical psychologists, which we are not, and I'm very keen for us not to be because that is totally different. They want the therapeutic bit, actually we're not into the therapeutic bit as much. Having said that as a psychologist obviously we have lots of skills, um, training courses on brief therapy and things like that, there's no reason we can't use those skills, which also a clinical psychologist would be using.

Right.

Also, my initial training was quite heavy, we did a lot of shared courses with the clinical psychologists, actually I'm sort of like semi-trained as a clinical, but I've always said that is their job and this ours but I think with community psychology is pulling it a bit more together, but I feel that whilst that was my training and actually I don't feel …… a lot of my colleagues say absolutely no way, its not…..friendly…..it wasn't, it never will be and I wouldn't want to do it. We've 31 EPs now and I would say well over half of them would say "that's not my area", or "interest".

Just picking up on that point, do you see then clinical psychology and educational psychology coming together at some point?

I think it's entirely feasible, I don't know what they would call it but I think there is probably going to be a child focused practising psychologist, which may well be clinical and educational. I was talking to Pam Morris, who is the president of the BPS, and that's how she was thinking things were going, which is an interesting point, I can see why, they are already looking at doing in several of the London courses, they are looking at putting together a 3 year EP and 3 year clinical, and having a child psychologist. The funding of EPs now is such a total cock-up. It's an absolute disaster. The clinical psychologists at least have got that under control, by the Health Service pays work, it's expected that you will. I thought that local authorities had been expected to pick up 2 or 3 posts, every authority agreed to but that….that hasn't been enforced.

Yeah it's been a bit stressful for us TEPs along the way that's for sure. Anyway, back to the bit about other settings, what do you feel the EPs could actually do?

We could do things like play therapy, working with children in family settings. Again that goes back to my training, in that when I first started as EP, 22 years ago now, in Leicester, educational psychologists and psychiatrists shared the same building, and psychiatrists and EPs used to work together and see families together, and that was fascinating, it really was. We would take a different role, and we'd take different guidance out of it, and work with families in different parts, but nevertheless they complemented each other and there was no reason we couldn't work together, I'd certainly go back to that family therapy type arrangement.

Yeah that sounds interesting.

Also not necessarily doing it, but supervising others to do it. We've got a couple of our special schools who have got some incredibly challenging SLD children. SLD and very severe ASD types, the EPs are working with the schools to come up with a programme, which is going to be run by trainee clinical psychologists, and they're actually implementing it, because of course they have a time in their training where they can be in a setting for 6 months. They're implementing what we're suggesting. As a result of which so far the 2 lads that were extremely "off the wall" to say the least will

be thinking about having a special school place at about 250,000 a year, and thinking no actually mainstream school, 250,000 a year each.

There's definitely a role there by the sound of it. OK, so as you know, the application criteria for professional training has changed from a minimum of 2 years teaching experience to now 2 years relevant experience of working with children, so how do you feel that this will impact on the profession?

I think it's very hard for newly qualified EPs that don't have teaching experience to get the street cred' they need from head teachers and in fact, we've just taken on 5 EPs at the beginning of this academic year, all of which are trainees from the previous year. 2 of which don't have teaching experience. They don't actually say that to the schools, they get round it. They don't lie, but they don't actually say I've never taught. They've had experience of working with children but actually don't have teaching qualifications. I think if the schools knew, if the headteachers knew, it would devalue their role in the school, which I think would be a shame because I think they are good psychologists, but also when they were placed with us the first thing we did was got them to talk to the Learning Support Team to actually update their knowledge of the national curriculum because they didn't have a clue. It's like "sorry! You've got to know what the national curriculum is about". Now I thought that should have been in the training course, it either needs to be in the training course or we need to be told to train them. Either way they have got to know their way around the national curriculum, and they've got to know the key levels and what they mean, otherwise if you're reading a report that the school have written, you won't understand it, which is pointless. You could be reading a report written by the school which says the child is at P3-2, and you've just written a report to say the child's reading age is 8. Well actually, sorry, but you can't have both. Its actually really important, otherwise somebody has done a wrong assessment here. It's in those situations, that's why I think it is so important that they've got to have teaching experience or they've got to have a very good input on national curriculum teaching or structure of the schools. Things like registers and what they actually mean because if you are looking at a child who has got an overall pattern of learning difficulties and they've missed a lot of school, how do you interpret the register. Okay it used to be noughts and crosses when I was young but now with these electronic registers it's totally different. It's actually being able to look at a sheet, yes actually I understand, the child has been…oh look they've had lots of medical appointments here and its those sorts of things and skills that a teacher would pick up because you're in the teaching system but if you hadn't taught, you wouldn't know about those things.

Are there any advantages then to having experience other than teaching?

It depends on people's other experiences. We've got a couple of people on placement, one of which……(really too quiet during this part to transcribe)……has been a teaching assistant in a special school. We've all got a lot of knowledge of education as a result of that. If you're doing PE,

then you do so little when you do PE that is actually relevant, so forget that. As long as you've actually taught.

……………again too quiet, Dan says something about asking the background of the people working with the interviewee………..

One of them worked, first degree in psychology, then worked in a special school on the care side, then worked teaching hockey, PE, games etc. out of school time activities, coaching etc, very successfully so in a way it was sort of teaching, but it wasn't actually qualified teaching if you know what I mean, but a lot of experience of working with very difficult youngsters as a result, in sport, so in a way actually she was quite experienced and therefore if you're in an MLD school she doesn't appear in the least bit uncomfortable, whereas somebody that works with reception children would feel uncomfortable. The other EP who we have now appointed, his background was working in voluntary organisations, with MLD kids again and people in adult psychiatric wards.

If you were interviewing applicants for an EP training course, what would you be looking for?

(Text deleted by DN to preserve anonymity) We have a checklist that we go through definitely. A personable type person. We wouldn't want somebody who was on the ASD spectrum put it that way. We wouldn't be looking at a mouse, a person who has got to have a personality and be able to engage in conversation and interact with others. We'd be looking for relevant background experience, now that doesn't always have to be teaching, although I've probably given you the impression that I think most of it has to be. Providing its relevant experience in the education system and that they've shown that they can obviously get on with young people they I would accept that.

Can you tell me a bit more about background?

A mixed and varied background. I would also be looking for people who have made sure that they have contacted an EP service and gone and spoken to a practising EP. It's often quite difficult to get a placement with an EP service. If somebody is keen to be an EP we say come and speak to us and we talk to them, sit with them and give them about an hour and a half's chat about a typical day, this is what we do, and I would be expecting people to have done that. Possibly more than one service, because you do get a very different perspective from different services. Previous first degree in psychology is expected and (deleted by DN), when we're interviewing, we don't go to anything below a 2:1. Some of them have actually done doctorates in other areas. One of them had a doctorate in Educational Psychology but actually it wasn't an Ed Psych qualification, she'd done research, 2 doctorates in a row, she couldn't come down to work, despite the fact she had done all of her work with teenagers, you could see she was on a different planet. I can see her talking to a teacher and the teacher thinking "what?". So it's actually about being able to converse and communicate with people. Somebody who would go in and

be happy to sit and talk theoretical educational psychology to a head teacher, or an advisor, or a parent with ASD who has perhaps had a PHD in physics or something, but actually being able to communicate with a mum who, this is her 9th child and she has got 7 husbands, not all together, but that kind of parent. To actually be able to get on with that sort of parent as well as the theoretical side. It actually being able to talk to that sort of parent and talk to the Dad who has a PHD in physics and his son is probably ASD!

That's interesting, that idea about being a versatile communicator again.

When we're interviewing in (deleted by DN), that's one of the things that we look for, we look for somebody who would cope with being put in that situation. Somebody who we interviewed about 2 years ago, and I said "I not convinced she's not a mouse, I'm really really concerned", because a mouse will just lie down and say "yes, you can do whatever you want, I agree with you", but actually we agreed in the end she did have a place. She's actually a swan, she's very serene and always quiet but underneath she's actually paddling away frantically. The others thought she would be quite good so just as well that I wasn't the overall decider. It's important that you've got a good mixture of people. That's the other thing, I think it's obvious, is that people get on. That you're not going to have people who ostracise each other. Its really important that they do get on and work together and help each other………..if you are in trouble you can always go to any of the others and they always will help you out. But I think that's really what makes a group gel, if you've got people that want to gel in that group, then that's something else we'd look at.

End

Example 2: Helen, Primary SENCo

Ok, so to start, tell me what you know about EPs

I know about the work they do um, assessing children on an educational level and also some of the work they do is other psychology type work they do.

Anything else?

Um, not sure really.

….. this bit inaudible so can't transcribe..

You mentioned assessing children?

Depends on why asked them in obviously, sometimes it's to confirm what I've assessed and obviously I'm very experienced whereas other SENCos may want them to do the test I do. I usually call them in when it's more complex, more complex needs and usually because the parents are

concerned and want to know how they can help their child and how we can help them at school.

Right, OK, so what skills do you feel are important for an EP to have?

Good interpersonal skills, because I often call them in when parents are concerned and it's often better coming from them than it is from me, so they need good skills in that area. I think they need to be very tactful, they can't be seen to be criticizing parenting skills.

And what about work with children?

I mean they've got to come over as being friendly and as having a friendly persona otherwise the child isn't going to interact with you. Um, they've got to be very positive as often children have difficulties so they've got to keep the assessment positive.

What about working with other professionals?

I think they've got to be very tactful as sometimes they're dealing with very experienced teachers and they can't be seen to be criticizing what they're doing.

Ok so not criticising is an important point. Well, not being seen to criticise.

Yes because if you're seen to criticise they won't listen to what you're saying.

Why is that?

Well if they like you they're more likely to listen to your advice and suggestions and do them.

OK that leads us into my next question which is bout what personal qualities are important for an EP to have?

Really it's about having those good interpersonal skills, to be tactful really.

Yeah, like you said before, those interpersonal skills are most important, especially being tactful. Thank you, right next question, what can EPs offer that is different from other support services?

Well, educational advice which you don't get from other services. They can offer parental advice, um, they might point or signpost you to other agencies. EPs are a way to behaviour support services so you can get behaviour advice.

Right so referring to other agencies?

Yes.

So do you think EPs have a distinct knowledge base?

Yes, but it depends on experience, obviously if you're experienced there will be lots of cases you will have seen before. I don't think you can replace experience. Obviously there are standard tests that you use as well.

Is there anything about the position of EPs in the LA, attached to schools but independent?

Yeah, um, it's a different role. They're important to schools but in different roles as well, like social services meetings or in team around the child meetings. We've just had a meeting like that where our Ed Psych was very useful, it was about an exclusion and their input was very important.

What did they do?

Well they offered advice on what to do. We were all a bit stuck with what to do, they really helped.

Moving on a bit, do you see a role for EPs outside of schools?

What outside? What do you mean?

In other settings, such as children's centres, things like that

Well, social service meetings, team around the child meetings. I mean I don't know what else they do really. I mean they do teacher coaching but again that's school based. Um, no I don't really know. I guess you've got different people that do parenting courses. I suppose they could be involved in that. They don't have time to do anything else!

(Information deleted by DN to preserve anonymity – discussion around service delivery)

Next question, the application criteria for professional training in educational psychology has now changed from a minimum of two years teaching experience to a minimum of two years relevant experience working with children. How do you feel this will impact on the profession?

I think it's a backward step because unless you've been a teacher and know what the pressures are of the classroom, you can't possibly know the pressures teachers are under. I think that some of the time the recommendations of the EP are unrealistic. In an ideal world yes we would like to be able to carry out all of the recommendations, but in the real world we just haven't got the, well not time but TA resources to carry out the 1-1 work. They come in and recommend that this child has daily phonics 1-1 but there are another dozen children that need the same.

How do you think it will affect credibility?

I think it will damage the credibility because teachers are much more likely to accept advice from professionals that they know, know what the job's about rather than someone coming in and telling them what they should be doing and not knowing what the pressures are in the classroom and the support that you might have to help you.

How do you see the profession developing?

Um, professional development. Um, I think it's a shame they're not going to have teaching experience.

A lot of EPs will still have had teaching experience

Yes but it's not a requirement anymore is it so your going to have EPs that have never taught and don't know what it's like being in a classroom. It's quite different seeing a child 1-1 knowing what to recommend but actually not knowing the reality of school. I think they should have some experience of school and being in classroom so some sort of placement might be really useful.

This is part of the training now, there is a week long school placement for each key stage

Right.

How do you think this can be overcome?

I don't that it can be overcome if they're going to do it now. I mean some experience of working in schools but it's not the same as actually having done the job, you know doing the planning and everything else that goes with it.

What would you like to see?

I'd like them to have time and money to do more staff training. We're lucky if that we want a staff training they are happy to come and do it. I'm happy with what we've got except for more visits but on the other hand I'm an experience SENCo so I find what we've got is adequate.

Thinking of your colleagues, which ones do you think would be good EPs?

Um, what in the school? Well I can think of a couple of teachers that'd make good EPs because they're very good at interacting with adults. It's a difficult question, um, I mean I can imagine all of our teachers would be good EPs.

Why is that then?

Because they've got the experience, they haven't got the assessment knowledge because they don't do those types of assessments. I'd say the majority of teachers have to have good interpersonal skills, well they do at our school, they're good at talking to other adults, they're good at talking to parents. I'd quite like to be an EP.

Why is that?

I think it's less stressful.

If interviewing EP training course, what would you be looking for?

I think personality, it's the way you come across. I think you've got to be a friendly person. It's the way you come across. I've worked with several EPs some better than others, some better at talking to parents, it's the way you come across.

So what about knowledge or skills that you would be looking for?

Well I think if you've been a teacher you'd make a good EP. Maybe if you maybe in a different field with children, some experience of working with children definitely. Yeah maybe youth work or being able to relate to children. A big part of EPs job is speaking to parents so maybe if you had a job that involved speaking to parents, like a social worker or something.

OK well thank you for your time today, are there any other issues that have been raised that you would like to talk about a bit more?

Just thinking about a lad who was complex, he had dyspraxic difficulties, and lately he has been getting in trouble in the playground. He's quite a bright little boy and we wondered whether he had other difficulties apart from dyspraxia. It was quite interesting because she thought about doing things that I hadn't thought about doing like getting the child to copy pictures and the first attempt she made was lines and squiggles and then she spoke to him about how to copy and when he did it again it was much better which showed he can learn quite well. But chatting to him she felt that he had quite a literal understanding of language, and that he might have speech and language difficulties. On the back of this we referred him to the speech and language therapist who has been coming in to do a language assessment. We have found he finds reading comprehension difficult, so that was really useful. She said to him, we look back to what we did before and he looked over his shoulder.

End

Appendix 1.4

Coding guidelines

This is a summary of the coding guidelines provided by Miles and Huberman (1994) that informed the coding of raw data in addition to that documented in paper one.

Generating meaning

In terms of generating meaning, I followed these steps:

Helping to organise data and to see which data is related:

- Noting patterns and themes

- Seeking plausibility

- Clustering

Achieving more integration among diverse pieces of data:

- Making metaphors

To "see what's there":

- Counting

Sharpening understanding and differentiating between data:

- Making contrasts and comparisons

- Partitioning variables

Making relationships between abstract data:

- Subsuming particulars to the general

- Factoring

- Noting relations between variables

- Finding intervening variables

Systematically building a coherent understanding of data:

- Building a logical chain of evidence

- Making conceptual/theoretical coherence

Confirming findings

The following are incorporated into research design:

- Triangulating – use of number of focus groups and individuals in second part

- Follow up surprises – use of semi-structured interview

- Using extreme cases – in second part of study

- Replicate a finding – second part may reflect views expressed in part one

To consider during analysis:

- Check representatives

- Check researcher effects

- Weighting evidence

- Check meaning of outliers

- Look for negative evidence

- Make 'if-then' tests

- Rule out spurious relations

- Check out rival explanations

- Get feedback from informants

Appendix 1.5

Table of codes and code descriptors

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme	Code descriptor
Interpersonal Skills	Ability to communicate with a wide range of audiences	Being a universally good communicator using skills such as differentiating language. Being able to understand where someone is coming from and interacting in a way that is meaningful to them. Code specifically references broad range of individuals who EPs meet.
	Ability to build relationships	Making and sustaining trusting relationships. This incorporates listening skills, showing empathy, openness, and being friendly.
Psychological Skills	Applying psychology	Using psychology when working with people. References to assessment, interactions, meetings and problem solving frameworks.
	Theoretical knowledge	EPs holding theoretical knowledge of psychology as a result of academic background. No reference to using it.
Other qualities	Motivation	A personal ethos to improve outcomes for children. Can take many forms such as CPD, working harder than required, being conscientious. Reflects underlying reasons for wanting to do EP/teaching job. A desirable quality in those doing EP job.
	Reflective	Reflecting on experiences and learning from them, seeing the bigger picture. Also incorporates meta-cognitive skills i.e. reflecting in action.
	Resilience	Being able to deal with adversity, being able to deal with emotional content of work. Also incorporates being confident to express views if potentially contentious.
Perception of role	Expert model	EPs are a source of advice and expertise. Have knowledge that is exclusive to them. EPs have a high status within children's services.
	Collaborative model	EPs as problem solvers, empowering others to take

		ownership of their concerns and act upon them. Emphasis on working with other professionals/people to meet child's needs.
	Ambiguous role	Not sure what EP does or what job title means.
Outcomes of experience	Credibility	Must be seen to have had experience of related area if doing EP job. Personal and professional experience included.
	Knowledge and skills	The tangible products of experience, such as skills that have been learned or knowledge that has been acquired i.e. national curriculum levels.
	Experience suited to role	Particular types of experience discussed in terms of a participant's perception of role. Shares data with perceptions of role codes.

Appendix 1.6

Examples of field notes

These notes have been cropped and edited to preserve anonymity. These include interview notes, post-interview reflections and an example of a code that was printed from NVivo and annotated by hand.

→ draw upon laddering/pyramiding   reflection unit.
   to explore →

→ seemed changes in her tone of voice when
   discussing teaching experience →
→

                                    ↓ "a bit of venom"
                                      in her voice.
                                    ↓ my initial - anecdotal
        ┌─────────┐   view.
        │This person│   (orally
        │actually made│ on tape.   ↓ my belief (construct
        │me feel   │   system?
        │angry.   │
        └─────────┘   ↓ do i want to believe
                                      the "venom" in her voice?

▲ I feel there are contradictions < core values?
                                    < attitudes / beliefs..

        ↓
        ↓ Positives (wants → interpersonal⁺

                        ↓
   Her view of < only when T. exp. raised was it
   could?   < deemed essential.
   Resistance to change?
✳ Her own identity? → frequent mention of her
                      "own" experience"
                      "I am very experienced".
        ↓
        ↓ How would an "non Teacher" EP threaten
          her identity?

          → interestingly → all colleagues good EP's as
                            teachers !!

1. — Admission.

2. ——>
        Come into school —> "Assessment"
                —> Ability level —> Strategies
                —> Some social/Emo
                —> Transpy

3. —> Rapport with children / get on with 'g.
    —> Contained.
    —> Above + beyond what we can deliver as a
school
        — School are skilled.

    —> support + share into Add, weight
       —> supporting school view "Status"

4. —> knowledge — In depth about particular
                 subjects — child dev.

     — interact with
      all = children
     — = parents

5. Specific skills or learning styles
   → Like real practical strategies that can
   'actually do'.

   → Can suggest that not tried in c. room setting
   - have   relevant

   - real + relevant - practical applicability
   - specific knowledge on specific
     specific skills

   - learning based   Others are v. specific
   - more about 'dimension'
                 'whole child'
        across learning context

6. → is a rule - needs developing
       ? usefulness

7. → not sure
   → not sure how can do.

8. Great impact → time in school invaluable
                    → v. important
                    → suggestions for strat.
   makes difficult

   - cred. yes → people respect theory that have
       done stuff
          → done it + tried it out
          → someone → knows what to do w/small
       children

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developments → more support w/ social + emo.
. attachment theory.
real issues for c room T's.

more towards SEBD. - More theory

more background
+ more practical
of SEBD.

9. Experience with children - direct
" parents" - backgrounds + histories
" able to prevent + communicate"
" self-reflection" aware of presence.
" suggestions that are real + relevant"
" knowledge/expertise" → real skill.

- Section 10 ?EP role = specialist cog ability
level
- relevance.
+ good to wk staff

makes it long term.
✓ making really clear
✓ from start.
as to role.

- Was anxious/nervous about giving answers + answers being 'good enough'

- Became quite vociferous + had an opinion about how t/f should be delivered.
- felt there were negatives at the end of each line of thought → re: tps.
- ~~Thought~~ I feel she found experience difficult as it revealed how much she knew about Ed t/f and prof

"she wants to be one"
"I want your job" - off record.

↓ Personal interests/feelings coming to surface/affecting responses/engagement

→ Challenging her ID? → this theme seems to be recurring

↓ found it slightly personally affecting → but mixed it praise/compliments

Name: Experience and credibility

< _____ > - § 1 reference coded [4.24% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.24% Coverage

I do worry about people's 'face validity?' I guess………Its not yet I don't think widely understood by schools that educational psychologists may not have any background in education when they come in. Some of credibility in schools relates to that. I don't think its much and I don't think it will last long but it may be an initial barrier that *T. exp. related* people coming into the profession have to face. If they are any good, they will get over it quickly as school's will accept them for who they are

<Internals\\F _____ > - § 4 references coded [11.64% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.31% Coverage

quote

I think there is a massive difference between advising somebody on how to do something, and doing it yourself. It is very important for an EP to be seen as having a background and having done that sort of thing, because otherwise the advice they give is not respected or valued in the same way

Reference 2 - 2.96% Coverage

quote also?

Well I think experience is the most important prerequisite for a job like yours, whether its teaching or otherwise. I don't think its something that you can do without that background, because you are not credible unless you can be seen to have done it yourself.

Reference 3 - 3.13% Coverage

If you are going to go into a school or pre-school and say to a practitioner "you shouldn't use time-out because he can't understand the consequences yet" you need to be able to say to yourself " when I was working with children and doing that, I found this was most effective"

It's like someone must have selected them based on how good they are at giving advice.

Reference 4 - 2.25% Coverage

No "when I was doing" "I have done it myself". Again it helps you give more personal advice if you have done it yourself. You can read as many books as you like, but you still need to do it yourself.

<Internals' _____ > - § 5 references coded [16.70% Coverage]

here's a judgement about being a Ψ :-)

Reference 1 - 4.23% Coverage

worth quote

Being a parent, I think that helps you tremendously because you then know what you expect, what is normal and what is not normal and you have got a good baseline to go on really. Also, if you don't have children you don't understand how much love there is for a child, and until you've experienced that and know that actually you

would do anything for that child, that you would put your life on the line, no hesitation. The parents that we meet would do that and therefore they are so hurt, and so upset when there is something wrong with that child and actually having that understanding of being a parent also helps. I'm not saying that EPs that are not parents can't be good EPs but I still think that it's actually understanding being a parent and the process

Reference 2 - 5.03% Coverage

I think its actually, you yourself are a parent working with a parent. I've just been in a child protection conference and a mother burst out crying because she said "one of our children has said he wants to kill another of our children" and she said that is "so hurtful when you have one child that wants to hurt another of your children"……………...They all do it, and that's actually quite normal, but its not normal to keep saying it. That's what she was saying that the child was doing and it could help him and you to move on. She straight away said to me "How do you know that that hurts" and I said "I've been there"……I've got 5 children, and after 5 you are bound to have had a fair mixture of different difficulties, so we've had the dyslexia, we've had the learning difficulties. Its being able to understand being parents. Perhaps you don't have the same difficulty, but actually just having something…

Reference 3 - 0.74% Coverage

I think its very hard for newly qualified EPs that don't have teaching experience to get the street cred they need from head teachers

Reference 4 - 3.09% Coverage

we've just taken on 5 EPs at the beginning of this academic year, all of which are trainees from the previous year. 2 of which don't have teaching experience. They don't actually say that to the schools, they get round it. They don't lie, but they don't actually say I've never taught. They've had experience of working with children but actually don't have teaching qualifications. I think if the schools knew, if the headteachers knew, they would devalue their role in the school, which I think would be a shame because I think they are good psychologists

Reference 5 - 3.61% Coverage

Things like registers and what they actually mean because if you are looking at a child who has got an overall pattern of learning difficulties and they've missed a lot of school, how do you interpret the register. Okay it used to be noughts and crosses when I was young but now with these electronic registers it's totally different. It's actually being able to look at a sheet, yes actually I understand, the child has been…oh look they've had lots of medical appointments here and its those sorts of things and skills that a teacher would pick up because you're in the teaching system but if you hadn't taught, you wouldn't know about those things.

<u>\<Internals\Primary senco></u> - § 4 references coded [16.62% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.54% Coverage

I want somebody that's got a lot of experience with working with children and is going to get on with it and get exactly what is necessary

Reference 2 - 3.32% Coverage

I think although EPs don't have to do the teacher bit now, do they?. I kind of think having spent time in a classroom and things like that can be really valuable because maybe EPs can suggest things that they may have not actually tried out in the classroom setting, and it may not be so realistic

Reference 3 - 5.91% Coverage

I think it will have great impact on it because I think that time in a school, working in a school, and working how the whole school kind of works and working with kids I think is invaluable, and makes you really, not that you would have had to have done it.........teachers but I could just see its very important to know exactly where you're coming from and when you're making suggestions for strategies and things like that, actually having done them yourself is very important.......if you don't actually do it, it can be difficult.

Reference 4 - 5.84% Coverage

Do you think it will affect the credibility of the profession?

Yes

Okay, in what way?

Because people respect other people that have done stuff and I think it would just make some people a little..............its just because if somebody's done it and tried it out, its easier to take on board, and you know working with kids, working with small kids. That's one of the first things they'll say about you, working with little children. People that have worked with little children, know how little children work don't they?

<u><Internals</u>   - § 4 references coded [16.24% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.73% Coverage

Yes, but it depends on experience, obviously if you're experienced there will be lots of cases you will have seen before. I don't think you can replace experience. Obviously there are standard tests that you use aswell.

Reference 2 - 2.15% Coverage

I think it's a backward step because unless you've been a teacher and know what the pressures are of the classroom, you can't possibly know the pressures teachers are under.

Reference 3 - 4.09% Coverage

I think it will damage the credibility because teachers are much more likely to accept advice from professionals that they know, know what the job's about rather than someone coming in and telling them what they should be doing and not knowing what the pressures are in the classroom and the support that you might have to help you.

Reference 4 - 7.27% Coverage

Um, what in the school? Well I can think of a couple of teachers that'd make good EPs because they're very good at interacting with adults. It's a difficult question, um, I mean I can imagine all of our teachers would be good EPs.

Why is that then?

Because they've got the experience, they haven't got the assessment knowledge because they don't do those types of assessments. I'd say the majority of teachers have to have good interpersonal skills, well they do at our school, they're good at talking to other adults, they're good at talking to parents. I'd quite like to be an EP.

<u><Internals\Secondary SENCo2></u> - § 1 reference coded [14.32% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 14.32% Coverage

QUOTE!

I don't think it will affect credibility. To be honest, I don't think staff here are convinced about EPs anyway. Like I said earlier we had that INSET and people didn't think it was that useful. But I think new EPs will definitely have credibility with the new generation of teachers coming through. I just think everything's changing, there are new ways of doing things and it just reflects the changes going on at the moment. Some of the 'old school' find these changes difficult and are more cynical about things. Going back to INSET, it needs to be well delivered and I guess having been a teacher might help. It needs to be practical too so that will be important. We want to see the psychology too, make it obvious!

<u><Internals\</u>　　　　　 - § 1 reference coded [6.66% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 6.66% Coverage

So he's dealing with parents in difficult situations, and he's also sort of a specialist area of knowledge. Do you think that's an important quality? Having that kind of area of knowledge?

Yes. I think it's his experience that's given him that. He's been a teacher for a lot of years and has been deputy head here now for…………………………..

So what is it about that experience?

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Being successful at it. He does have these difficult meetings and that sort of thing which staff might be handling in a different way but he does seem to be have success with issues and things that people bring into school, whilst handling the kids as well. He's not ambitious, well he's ambitious but he's not pushing for headship and that sort of thing so I think he is very school/child orientated rather than personal career orientated and that shows through.

<u>**<Internals\Tape 8>**</u> - § 2 references coded [6.07% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.81% Coverage

 Because sometimes people might necessarily have a problem but whenever a person asks a question they go "oh, I've got a child like that in my class and I thought that's just the way they were, so I suppose its sharing experiences and you providing support that doesn't necessarily need a timed period to get to work with the children and parents, and there doesn't actually need to be a solution, just a little strategy

Reference 2 - 3.27% Coverage

Cross ref.

They don't necessarily have had to have been teaching a long time, I think sometimes, there have been people that have been teaching for 25 years who still have that drive and still want to know everything about children and there are other who its gone by the "you're sort of treading the water to get out isn't it". But in the same instance, there are other people who have come into teaching, I suppose I've known some that only did it to go down social work roads and different things.

<u>**<Internals**</u> - § 1 reference coded [4.29% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.29% Coverage

quote ?.

I think it depends. EPs aren't specialist teachers, you know I think when you are working with teachers a lot, the principles behind what you are doing is applying theory to practice and I don't think you need to be a teacher to be able to do that. You need an understanding of psychology and a good, positive ways of working with people. I think having been a teacher helps give you an understanding of the realities of what it is like to work as a teacher, how …. things are. I'll have to see, so far I don't feel it has made me seem less credible.

But is that our job anyway?

→ Do clinical P's need to have had schizophrenia??

Appendix 2.1

Table of constructs for group

Participant	Emergent pole	Contrast pole	Core construct
Sarah, primary SENCo	Knowledgeable	Don't know subject	Meeting children's needs
	Efficient	Scatty not organised	Helping children achieve their best
	Problem solving	Don't see wider context	Helping to solve problems outside of school
	Having impact	Gets on with own job	Help others to understand children's learning
	Good communicator	Doesn't listen	Working together to help children learn
	Quick action	Inefficient	Give children a positive attitude to learning
Lisa, secondary SENCo	Conscientious	Not putting extra in	Wanting best for children
	Reliable	Unreliable	Values other members of team
	Supportive	Against you	Having respect of team
	Lacking self confidence	Less stressed	Asserts self in team
	Good teaching skills	In need of support	Helping children feel valued
	Doesn't push self forward	Self assured but not arrogant	Being productive
Anne, secondary SENCo	Challenging	Passive	Having a different approach
	Good leader	Dictates	Gives opportunities to others
	Loyal	Out for self gain	Being part of a team
	Committed	Not bothered	Doing more than required
	Fun	Indifferent	Being human
	Team player	Nightmare	Having respect for others
Nicola, EP	Reflective	Congested	Learning
	Leader	Not bringing forward ideas	Move people forward

	Encouraging autonomy	Dictator	Helps people enjoy role
	Emotionally literate	Not reflective	Gives clients confidence
	Interested in development of team	Gets on with own work	Improve own practice
	Organised	Not good time/diary keeping	Install confidence in others
Mary, EP	Hasty	Mentally prepared	Meeting child's needs quickly
	Hard working	Lazy	Meeting children's needs
	Reflective	No idea of impact	Being aware
	Analytical	Takes things at face value	To see what is really happening for the child
	Good written communicator	Isn't able to communicate	Positive impact for child
	Learner	Closed	Able to offer evidence based practice
Clare, EP	Steering through difficult situations	Enjoys conflict	Make compromises
	Liked	Not having respect	Others feel they can come to me
	Trusting	Control freak	Positively resolves issues
	Well organised	Disorganised	Evidence based practice
	Well respected	Complained about	Loyalty
	Lead by example	Distrusting	Building trust

Appendix 2.2

Table of core constructs for group

The constructs are presented for each participant in rank order.

Rank	Clare	Nicola	Mary	Anne	Lisa	Sarah
1	Meeting children's needs	Help colleagues enjoy role	Evidence based practice	Doing more than required	Wanting best for children	Working together to help children learn
2	Positive impact for child	Move people forward	Building trust	Respect for other people	Helping children feel valued	Help others to understand children's learning
3	To see what is really happening for child	Learning	Others feel they can come to me	Give other people opportunities	Having respect of team	Helping children achieve their best
4	Able to offer evidence based practice	Give clients confidence	Loyalty	Being human	Asserting self within team	Meeting children's needs
5	Meeting child's needs quickly	Install confidence in others	Make compromises	Having a different approach	Values other members of team	Help to solve problems outside of school
6	Being aware	Improve own practice	Positively resolve issues	Being part of a team	Being productive	Gives children positive attitude to learning

Appendix 2.3

Representation of laddering process

Each table represents the steps involved in reaching core constructs for individual participants. Core constructs are highlighted in bold font.

Clare, EP

Preferred pole	Steering through difficult situations	Liked	Trusting	Well organised	Well respected	Lead by example
Step 1	Doesn't enjoy conflict	Make mistakes	Trust other people to make the right choices	Team will be organized	People happy and work hard	EPs know I use same processes
Step 2	Difficult to work in conflict	See that I'm human	Prevent negative effect on parents	If not then chaos	People should enjoy work	Aware of what EPs are doing on the ground
Step 3	**Make compromises**	Helps build relationship	Won't have complaints	Not behind with work	Get most out of people	**Building trust**
Step 4		**People feel they can come to me**	**Positively resolves issues**	Might write something wrong in report	Having a flexible approach	
Step 5				Every report individual	Looking after people	
Step 6				Legally and morally important	**Loyalty**	
				Evidence based practice		

Mary, EP

Preferred pole	Mentally prepared	Hard working	Reflective	Analytical	Good written communicator	Learner
Step 1	If not can lead to confusion	Wouldn't get work done	See bigger picture	Getting "true" information	Core of telling others what you have found	Evolve as a professional
Step 2	Get most out of time	Meeting targets	Less likely to miss something	**To see what is really happening for the child**	Information more easily taken on board	Responds to current thinking
Step 3	Positive impact more focused	**Meeting child's needs**	**Being aware**		**More likely to be acted on**	Acting on best information available
Step 4	Happens sooner				**Positive impact for child**	Child gets evidence based interventions
Step 5	**Meeting child's needs quickly**					**Able to offer evidence based practice**

Nicola, EP

Preferred pole	Reflective	Leader	Encouraging autonomy	Emotionally literate	Interested in development of team	Organised
Step 1	Always something you can learn or change	Confident in sharing ideas with others	Trusting others to do job properly	Responsive to others	So others can be best they can be	Not bogged down
Step 2	**Learning**	Need to do in job	Higher morale	Helps manage content of work	Team morale	Stay calm
Step 3		**Move people forward**	**Helps people enjoy role**	Being professional	Sharing good practice	People who we work with not calm themselves
Step 4				**Gives clients confidence**	Keep EPs informed	**Install confidence in others**
Step 5					**Improve own practice**	

Anne, secondary SENCo

Preferred pole	Challenging	Good leader	Loyal	Committed	Fun	Team Player
Step 1	About the children	Listening	Supportive of colleagues and children	Major part of life	Build relationship with kids	Sharing with others
Step 2	Why I became a teacher	Draw on others' strengths	**Being part of a team**	People come to me for help	Kids will share things with you	**Having respect for others**
Step 3	Seeing the whole child	**Give opportunities to others**		Helps productivity	**Being human**	
Step 4	**Having a different approach**			**Doing more than required**		

Lisa, secondary SENCo

Preferred pole	Conscientious	Reliable	Supportive	Less stressed	Good teaching skills	Self-assured but not arrogant
Step 1	Task needs to be done to best ability	Being able to be trusted to do the job	To help others clarify issues	Stress inhibiting	Able to communicate	How you are with others in and out of work differs
Step 2	If not becomes worthless	Otherwise affects others	Gives reassurance	Don't always act on thoughts	Children may flounder	Having self respect
Step 3	Job's worth doing well	**Values other members of team**	So people who are arrogant don't go off on wrong lines	Gives others an unrealistic image of you	**Helping children feel valued**	**Being productive**
Step 4	Someone else may have to do it		**Having respect of team**	Puts team on even keel		
Step 5	Part of a team that functions well			**Asserts self in team**		
Step 6	**Wanting best for children**					

Sarah, primary SENCo

Preferred pole	Knowledgeable	Efficient	Problem solving	Having impact	Good communicator	Quick action
Step 1	People ask me things they don't know about	To get things done	Looking at wider context	Need to see progress	Work with lots of people	Get things done
Step 2	So I can give advice	Too late by the time teacher gets to you	Because it's important to look at development outside of school	Because that's how job is measured	Talk on the same level as people	See results for children
Step 3	**Meet children's needs**	**Helping children achieve their best**	**Helping to solve problems outside of school**	Want to change the way children are supported by adults	Sharing information effectively	Help give children a good start
Step 4				**Help others to understand children's learning**	**Working together to help children learn**	**Give children a positive attitude to learning**

Appendix 2.4

Table of core construct clusters

This table represents the way in which core constructs were coded into the themes arising in paper one. Themes that did not have constructs coded into them have been omitted from the table.

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme	Core construct(s)
Interpersonal Skills	Ability to communicate with a wide range of audiences	Positively resolve issues
		Respect for other people
		Being human
		Assert self within team
		Help others to understand children's learning
		Gives clients confidence
	Ability to build relationships	Building Trust
		Others feel they can come to me
		Loyalty
		Having respect of team
		Make compromises
Psychological Skills	Applying psychology	Evidence based practice
		Able to offer evidence based practice
		To see what is really happening for child
		Give child a positive attitude to learning
Other qualities	Motivation	Meeting children's needs
		Meeting children's needs quickly
		Positive impact for child
		Doing more than required
		Improve own practice
		Learning
		Productive
		Wants best for children
		Helping children to feel valued
		Helping children to achieve their best

		Meeting children's needs
	Thinking processes	Being aware
Perception of role		
	Collaborative model	Helping colleagues to enjoy role
		Move people forward
		Being part of a team
		Install confidence in others
		Give other people opportunities
		Values other members of team
		Having a different approach
		Working together to improve outcomes for children
		Help to solve problems outside of school

Appendix 2.5

Examples of field notes

• ORGANISED   • REFLECTIVE.

                                 (+INTERPERSONAL .

• INTERESTED IN DEV. OF TEAM .

   EFFICIENT   * RANKING — CONSTRUCTS
                                   INTERWOVEN + DIFFICULT TO
                                   RANK AS ALL V. IMPORTANT

• EMOTIONALLY LITERATE   * 6 CORE CONSTRUCTS .
                                          (COLLEAGUES:
                                 1. HELPS PEOPLE ENJOY ROLE
                                 2. MOVE PEOPLE FORWARD
                                 3. LEARNING
• LEADER   4. GIVE CLIENTS CONFIDENCE .
                                 5. INSTALL CONFIDENCE IN OTHERS
                                 6. IMPROVE OWN PRACTICE/PROFESSIONALISM.

   SUPPORTIVE

   FLEXIBILITY

   ENCOURAGING AUTONOMY.

REFLECTIVE ——————— CONGESTED

EP NEVER FINISHED ARTICLE,   OVERWHELMED.
ALWAYS SOMETHING CAN
    LEARN + CHANGE.

(LEARNING.)

• LEADER ——————— NOT BRINGING
                                     FORWARD IDEAS.

(CONFIDENT IN
SHARING IDEAS
WITH OTHERS)   GETS ON WITH
                                 OWN
                                 WORK

NEED TO DO IN (MOVE PEOPLE   NOT PUTS SELF.
   WORK.   FORWARD)

                                 MISSED OPS.
                                    FOR
                                    DEV.

ENCOURAGING AUTONOMY. ——— DICTATOR

TRUSTING OTHERS TO DO   NOT A GOOD LISTENER.
                   JOBS
                   PROPERLY.

HIGHER MORALE

(HELPS PEOPLE ENJOY ROLE)

EMOTIONALLY LITERATE ⎯⎯⎯ NOT REFLECTIVE
↓   ↓
ASK TO OTHERS   IMPULSIVE
↓   ↓
BE. ABLE TO MANAGE   OVERREACT
   EMOT. CONTENT OF WORK.   ↓
↓
BEING PROFESSIONAL
↓
(GIVE CLIENTS CONFIDENCE.)
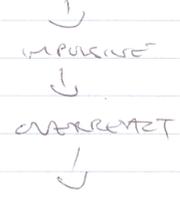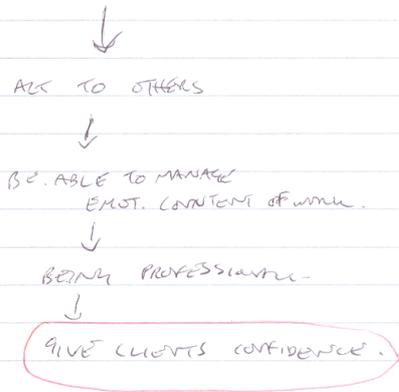
INTERESTED IN DEV. OF TEAM ⎯⎯⎯ GETS ON WITH
↓   OWN
                                                          WORK.
SO OTHERS CAN BE BEST THEY
CAN BE.   ↓
↓   DON'T CREATE
                                                    SHARING
TEAM MORALE   SHARING GOOD   OPS.
↓   PRACTICE.
HELPS IMPROVE   ↓
FEELING OF   EP ROLE
   PROFESSIONAL.   MULTI
                                 FACETED
                                 ↓
                                 TO KEEP INFORMED
                                 ↓
                                 (IMPROVE OWN
                                  PRACTICE / PROF.)
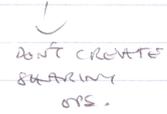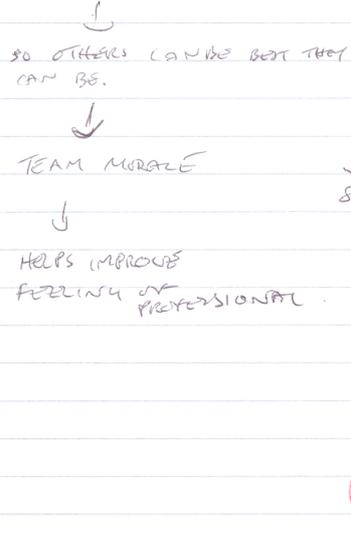
ORGANISED ——————————— NOT GOOD TIME
KEEPING /DIARY/

↓

BOGGED
DOWN.

↓

NOT CALM.

↓

IMPORTANT
TO BE.

↓

INDS. NOT
CALM
SELVES.

↓

INSTALL CONFIDENCE IN
OTHER

self-characterisation.

Conscienciou

Reliable

Supportive

Lacking self confidence

good Teaching skills

~~Don't push~~

Don't push self (much).

RANKS *core & more*
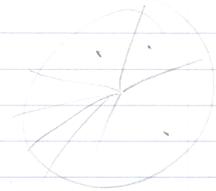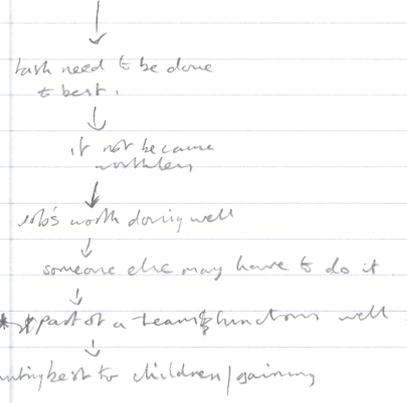
1. WANTING BEST FOR CHILDREN
2. HELPING CHILDREN FEEL VALUED.
3. RESPECT OF TEAM
4. ASSERT SELF WITHIN TEAM.
5. ~~~~ VALUES OTHER MEMBERS *OF TEAM*.
6. PRODUCTIVE

Conscienciou ——————————→ not putting extra in

↓

task need to be done to best.

↓

if not became worthless

↓

job's worth doing well

↓

someone else may have to do it

↓

* part of a team/functions well

↓

* wanting best for children/gaining

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Reliable ————————————————→ unreliable.
↓
being able to trust to do job.
↓
otherwise knock on to others.
↓
* ~~effective~~ don't affect dynamics of group ✶ / VALUES OTHER MEMBERS of TEAM.

Supportive, ————————————————→ against you.
↓
to help others clarity issue,
↓
reassurance.
↓
so people ~~don't~~ that are arrogant don't go off on wrong lines
↓
* respect of team *

Lacking self-confidence ————————→ less stressed *
↓
then inhibiting
↓
don't always act on thoughts.
↓
gives others a different/realistic image of you.
↓
* puts team on even keel. }
↓
ASSERTS SELF IN TEAM.

Good teaching skills ⟷ need of support.
↓
able to communicate
↓
~~It can't~~ children may flounder
Helping↓
★ children feel valued ✱

Don't push self forward ⟶ self - assured but ~~arrogant~~ not arrogant
↓
desirability in a way
↓
~~politic~~
How you are in the others in + out of work different
↓
self - respect
↓
★ productive ★

Notes on PCP /reflections

- could use PCP to interview
- can't teach skills
- personality vs training issues
- Makes you search - deeper + more to others

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Appendix 3.1

Research diary excerpts

The following passages are a selection taken from my research diary. The style of writing is informal and should be read with this in mind. I have not corrected grammatical errors so that the authenticity of the entries is not undermined. Entries typically include reflections, thoughts and feelings and are presented in chronological order. In many ways these entries include thoughts that I do not feel are suitable to include in the research papers, but act to compliment them.

24.10.09

I have just piloted my interview questions with a portage worker in my LA. I'm pleased that the questions seemed to get interesting data. I was concerned they were a bit obvious, but actually they seem to have generated broader discussion points. This was really good to see and I think I'm going to have a lot of interesting data to analyse if this interview is a predictor of things to come. I'm quite surprised by the association with being an expert – this was mentioned several times. EPs really seemed to be put on a pedestal.

I see myself as an equal partner to any professional in children's services and fully believe in collaborative work. Perhaps I just don't like the expectation that goes with being viewed as the 'expert', something that was pointed out by the participant. What is apparent is that interviewing people can raise feelings that can be difficult to deal with. This subject has a very personal relevance to me, so I think it's likely I'm going to experience this a lot.

19.11.09

Today was very challenging.. To sit there and listen to someone basically saying that I shouldn't be in the profession was really difficult. I think part of the job involves hearing things that you aren't always comfortable with but the personal nature of her comments were hard to hear. In fairness, she is unaware of my professional background and I'm sure had she known I wouldn't have been subjected to it – but then I wouldn't have this excellent data! I actually believe a lot of her negativity towards the changes to EP training is enmeshed with her own identity. As a SENCo who by her own

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admission is very experienced, and perceives EPs to be 'super teachers', how would she react to working with someone like me? And how would someone like me go about working with her? Great data though, I definitely want to recruit her for stage two.

27.11.09

After some of the difficult experiences in my interviews so far today was altogether very different. Being frank about it, I liked what this person had to say. She is a secondary SENCo who I feel is quite forward thinking. I get the impression she really believes in collaborative approaches to working with children too. Also, it feels that she does not have any 'hang ups' or issues with her identity. What I think I mean is that she is happy with her job and in her job and I did not feel any of the 'job envy' that I have sensed in the other interviews.

This person also seemed to base her views on a sort of nurturing ethos, in which values of kindness and wanting to improve the lives of children and their families is at the centre. I think that what is really interesting though is that the nature of the EP role means that we will be working with a number of different professionals, some of which we will share similar views with, and others with which we will contrast. This has made me consider my role, and how it may affect my professional practice if I am working with a SENCo, for example, who has views opposed to mine. I could see myself working very well with this participant. This asks questions as to whether conflicting views may actually make a difference to the service schools receive – I aspire to be 'professional' but I have found it difficult to separate my beliefs from my practice, even in this role as a researcher.

16.01.10

Today was the first day of the data analysis process. I've started to code the data, but it is a time consuming process and a little overwhelming. There is such a vast quantity of data that it has created many codes at present. I think I am currently on about 40 codes and I still have three more transcripts to code. I think that many of these will be refined over the coming weeks and merged together into more analytic and less literal codes.

What I'm finding interesting is that whilst I'm aware that every single comment the participants make does not have to be coded individually to

represent the specific content, every comment seems incredibly important. At the moment I feel I could write a small essay on each of the comments the participants are making! The data seems very precious, and it's been enjoyable familiarizing myself with it. I feel that I have actually moved on quite considerably since the interviews in terms of my feelings towards the data. Although I still recognise that I disagree quite strongly with some of the comments, it is not eliciting such emotional responses in me. Perhaps this because of the passage of time but I am more inclined to believe that I'm more a more confident practitioner and that the comments do not present such a threat to my own identity. I'm really glad that I've had time to reflect on the interviews and have lost a lot of the negative feelings that were raised. I believe that this will help me to code the data in a way that best represents the participants' views, i.e. trying to 'understand where they're coming from'. I think that had I coded the data immediately then my feelings may have obstructed the coding process.

17.01.10

I'm a little concerned that there will be far too much to talk about in the write up of this stage of the study. I'm also concerned that in distilling the information, developing analytic codes, some of the finer points won't be represented, such as the particular skills that are mentioned. For example some of the EPs mention meta-cognitive skills, such as reflecting on a meeting whilst being part of it and looking at the group dynamic in addition to focusing on the contribution you wish to make. I believe this is a really important skill and will make a good discussion point. However, as it only has very few references I have assigned it to the bigger code, which is called 'being reflective' at present. My concern is that there are so many chunks of data like this, as I stated yesterday that I could write a mini essay about. I think though that what this really represents are the researchers views and hierarchies being projected onto the data. Just because I believe it is worthy of a mini essay doesn't mean that this is true for the participants and I need to remind myself of this. I'm happy that I have come to this realisation. The process of analysing this data is definitely a journey, of which a big part involves 'letting go' your own judgement of how significant certain pieces of data are.

23.01.10

I have just completed another coding session. They have become more analytical and reduced in number. I still don't feel I'm quite there with it so I have printed the codes and will continue to analyse by hand. I think I will go through each code and annotate the data, just to see what ideas it generates and whether these points will end up in the discussion. I have noticed the break of continuity from last week, it's hard to get back into the swing of coding data after a break. On the positive side, time pressure does slightly reduce indecisiveness around which codes to merge, which data to recode elsewhere etc. There comes a point where you accept any minor limitations or doubts about a decision and just do it. I suppose this is the nature of qualitative data analysis in that the process is subjective and the researcher cannot be objective.

15.03.10

My first three PCP interviews were undertaken today with the EPs. I have to acknowledge that I felt apprehensive before doing this, I thought that they might just be sitting there thinking "he's doing it wrong". As it turns out, I don't think that this was the case at all. All of the EPs were very interested in the process, which I talked through with them at the end of the interview. When they looked at their core constructs written on paper I believe that they found this to be an illuminating experience. One commented that she believed her core values didn't really reflect some of the views she held about professional practice and that it would encourage her to reflect on these issues. One participant wanted to write down her core constructs and take them away from the interview so that she could think about how her practice matches her core values. I really feel good about today and I feel like both a psychologist and a researcher. It is an opportune moment to pause and reflect upon my development in those areas and to enjoy this feeling as until this point I have felt overwhelmed with data slightly unsure about how this research is progressing. I think that gauging progress is difficult for the novice researcher as, certainly in my case, there is little to go by. By progress I am not referring to the schedule or milestones such as completing analysis, but to what extent the research questions are being answered by the research process.

22.03.10

My first PCP interview with a secondary SENCo today which went well although she took the discussion off on various tangents throughout which made the interview a long process compared to the EP interviews. This is the SENCo who I found to be forward thinking last time and it is really interesting that the subjected judgements that I had made about her beliefs and values seem to be reflected in her core constructs. I really don't think that the role of intuition can be downplayed, neither in research or in professional practice. I realise that in times that demand 'measurable outcomes' intuition may not offer schools and parents suitable explanations for decision making but I have found intuition has played an important role in this research. I also believe that it is the research experience which has helped, which in turn maybe offers an explanation as to why the participants placed such value on experience (of any description). Sometimes you just 'know'.

15.05.10 (final entry to date)

Finally finished data collection today. I didn't want to leave it this late but I have had real difficulty finding a replacement for the participant that declined to be interviewed again. I do not think that this has helped my stress level as the thesis is submitted in thirteen days! I am definitely feeling very comfortable with using PCP and plan to develop this aspect of my practice. I feel that this research has really helped me as a developing practitioner, in terms of skill and confidence.

Appendix 4.1

British Psychological Society ethical guidelines

I have adhered to the main ethical considerations that must be made when undertaking psychological research with human participants as outlined by the BPS. The full document can be retrieved from:

http://www.bps.org.uk/downloadfile.cfm?file_uuid=5084A882-1143-DFD0-7E6C-F1938A65C242&ext=pdf

British Education Research Association ethical guidelines

These can be accessed via the following web address:

http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php

Health Professions Council Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics

This can be retrieved from:

http://www.hpc-uk.org/publications/standards/index.asp?id=38

Appendix 4.2

University of Exeter ethical consent form

E ETER

Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS
You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site:
and view the School's statement on the 'Student Documents' web site.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR **COMPUTER** (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). DO **NOT** **COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name: Daniel Nicholls

Your student no: 570026323

Return address for this certificate: 8 Kings Mews, Honiton, Devon, EX14 1DE

Degree/Programme of Study: DEdPsych

Project Supervisor(s): Tim Maxwell, Andrew Richards

Your email address: djn206@ex.ac.uk

Tel: 07835046237

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:..date:...............

*NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must **not be included** in your work. It can be kept for your records.*

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: August 2009

Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no: 570026323

Title of your project: Professional identity and credibility in light of the changes to the initial training of Educational Psychologists.

Brief description of your research project: My interest in this topic is based on my own experiences as a Trainee EP. Until 2006, applicants for EP training were required to have at least two years teaching experience in addition to a psychology degree. The prerequisite is now that an applicant has at least two years relevant experience. As I am one of the new generation of trainees from an unconventional professional background, I am interested in what impact this change has had on the profession. The aim of this research is to explore belief systems around credibility and identity of EPs, drawing on a range of professionals in order to elicit these views.

adults

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved): I will be interviewing participants from a range of agencies, including: Educational Psychology, School Staff, Health Visitors, Behaviour Support, Social Services. Interviews will be conducted in Dorset, the Local Authority in which I work. I will also conduct interviews in neighbouring counties.

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs). Participants will be briefed and asked to complete a consent form prior to interview. They will be made aware that their comments may be included in the final draft of the thesis or in a public document although their identity will remain protected.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress: Interviews will be conducted using a semi-structured approach. This allows both the researcher and participant flexibility. I will also use a data collection technique based on Personal Construct Psychology, which enables the researcher to explore the participant's belief systems. Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the interview process if it becomes an uncomfortable experience. They will also be debriefed following the interview to ensure there are no issues that have arisen that may cause psychological harm.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.): Audio from the interviews will be recorded. This will be deleted following transcription of the audio to word files. Notes from the interviews will be securely stored until the final submission has been accepted, at this point notes will be securely destroyed.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants): N/A

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*This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.*

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

---

This project has been approved for the period: Sept 2009   until: April 2010

By: Tim Maxwell   date: 26th May 2009 .

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.

SELL unique approval reference: D/09/10/84

Signed: Salah Troshi   date: 25/May/2010
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: August 2009

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Appendix 4.3

Participant consent form

Participant consent form

Thank you for provisionally agreeing to participate in this research project. The purpose of this interview is to gain your views on Educational Psychologists (EPs) and the changes to initial training of EPs. My particular area of interest relates to the professional background of EPs prior to training.

There are two stages to this research, which includes two separate interviews. The first interview will last approximately 30-40 minutes and consists of a series of questions about educational psychology. I will make an audio recording of this interview so that it can be transcribed and stored as a Word document. Following transcription the audio will be deleted. Your details will remain anonymous other than your profession and amount of time in your current employment. You are free to withdraw from the interview at any point and you are free to pass on any questions.

A smaller number of the participants will be invited to participate in the second round of interviews. This uses an interview technique often used by psychologists to explore beliefs and values and will last a little longer, although no more than 90 minutes. This interview will not be recorded as I will use my notes to record your responses. By consenting to take part in this research you agree to participate in both stages unless you choose to withdraw at any point.

Please sign below:

I am happy with the information I have been given and agree to participate in this research.

…………………………………………………………

Print name:

…………………………………………………………

Thank you for your support. You be informed of the findings of this study should unless you opt out a later date.

Daniel Nicholls, University of Exeter

Appendix 5.1

Literature review

<u>**This literature review has already been marked by the University of Exeter and is included here for completeness. It should not contribute to the assessment of this thesis.**</u>

NB. The research questions, proposed design and literature base have been developed following this review.

Introduction

My area of interest is around the changes to the entry criteria for professional training in educational psychology. Prior to 2006, applicants were required to have a first degree in psychology that is recognised by the British Psychological Society (BPS) and minimum of two year's teaching experience. From 2006, the work experience pre-requisite changed to a minimum of two year's relevant experience working with children (BPS, 2005). Although the move to a three year doctoral model gained wide support (Gersch, 1997; Farrell, Gersch & Morris, 1998; Frederickson & Collins, 1997, Leadbetter, 2000; Maliphant, 1997) the debate over previous experience proved to be a sticking point (Frederickson, Malcolm & Osborne, 1999). My professional background has greatly influenced my interest in this area. I worked as an Assistant Psychologist in private educational and forensic psychology, and have since developed an interest in what skills and previous experience people need to become effective and credible Educational Psychologists (EPs).

Literature search

I have conducted this search using the University of Exeter library catalogue, using EBSCO and Psych Info as the primary databases. I have also used Google Scholar as an article search tool. In some cases I have been able to access material directly from the publisher's website, which includes journals, newsletters and government publications. In some

instances I have referenced textbooks, all of which can be located at the School of Education and Lifelong Learning library, University of Exeter.

My article search terms consist of the following (searching for keywords in title and abstract): educational psychology and identity, role of the educational psychologist, educational psychology and professional identity, training of educational psychologists, educational psychology training courses, educational psychology applicants, professional identity in psychology, educational psychology and multi-agency working, perceptions of educational psychologists, future of educational psychology, educational psychologist credibility, training of psychologists, Personal Construct Psychology and belief systems.

The following terms were rejected due to the high volume of returns, many of which were not relevant to this review: educational psychology, professional identity, multi agency working, belief systems, Personal Construct Psychology.

In the first instance I would like to explore the term 'professional identity' as this arises in many articles that discuss the role of the EP. I will include some relevant literature on the philosophical movements and changes in psychology in general to provide a broader context. I will go on to discuss how this relates to the role of the EP and in the next section how this role has developed. I will then look at the literature surrounding the training of EPs, much of which contributed to debate leading to the changes in EP training.

Professional identity

There is a range of literature available that addresses the issue of professional identity and the role of the EP, most of which examines the distinct role, contribution and function of the EP. Before I examine this body of literature, I would like to explore the meaning of professional identity.

Professional Identity has been defined as: "people develop their work-related (professional) self identities through their interactions with other people in a variety of milieu through time" (Busher, 2005 p.137). Nyström (2009) investigated the development of professional identity by conducting a longitudinal study of masters-level students, and subsequently following them into their professional lives. They were randomly selected, although many were psychology masters students, which in Sweden is a training route for some branches of applied psychology. This draws a parallel with my area of interest as Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs) will be going through a similar process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted before graduation, between 15-18 months into work, and between 30-34 months into work. The data was analysed using thematic analysis, in which participants' responses were coded by particular themes and topics of discussion. This is an interpretive study of professional identity.

Nyström found that the development of professional identity is a dynamic process between different 'life spheres', these being personal, professional and private. The interaction between these spheres changes at different stages. As students, the participants had a 'non-differentiated' identity, in which all spheres of life share the same identity, that of being a student. After 15-18 month of work participants had a 'compartmentalised' identity, separating the spheres and having a different identity in each one. Their focus, however, tended to be on the professional sphere as they are establishing themselves in their profession. Finally, after 30-34 months of work, the participants had started to develop an 'integrated' identity, with a more fluid interaction between the spheres. This tended to be because participants felt secure in their job, one quoting "I have become myself in my job". Nyström claims that it is this process that creates a sustainable and liveable professional identity. Importantly, Nyström emphasises the role of social context in this process, such as the gender and age of the group that one is part of. With regard to educational psychology, gender imbalance has been identified as concern (Monsen & Murphy 2008) as it is being viewed as a 'female dominated' profession. Achieving gender balance is said to be essential on philosophical and equality grounds (Culham, 2004) and advantageous to children (Goss, 2003).

Whereas the above addresses professional identity in terms on an internal process, it is also tightly linked to role, particularly in how others view the professional. Lewis and Bor (1998) undertook research into how Counselling Psychologists (CPs) are perceived by NHS Clinical Psychologists (Clin. Ps). Using a 19 item questionnaire they obtained 161 responses from Clin. Ps, and generated results using percentages and frequency distributions. They found that many respondents were unsure as to what the role of the CP actually is. This, therefore, affected the professional identity of the CPs, in that Clin. Ps found it difficult to comment on questions of efficacy for example. The authors conclude that the lack of clarity around CP identity can be overcome by disseminating material on the role of the CP and by the passage of time. This study suggests that other professionals base another's identity on what they do (their role). On the individual level, how professionals view themselves is the result of many processes.

Mrdjenovic and Moore (2004) also studied the professional identity of CPs by conducting a literature review. They define professional identity as having a sense of connection to the values and emphases of counselling psychology. They pay particular attention to the impact of counselling psychologists working in different settings. This is relevant to my research interest as the EPs are increasing working in a range of settings (Farrell et al., 2006). The paper concludes by suggesting that regardless of setting or nature of work undertaken a strong CP identity can be maintained if the values of counselling psychology are adhered to strongly.

The development of multi agency working has generated literature exploring professional identity. It also demonstrates how role and identity are linked, in that a professional's identity partly depends on what they actually do (their role). EPs have been identified as having a valuable role to play in multi agency work (Kelly & Gray, 2000; Gersch, 2004; Norwich, 2005; Cameron, 2006; Farrell et al., 2006), yet given current concerns over role ambiguity (Boyle & Laughlan, 2009; Boyle & McKay, 2007; Cameron, 2006; Gersch, 2009; Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009; Love, 2009) the issue of

professional identity may act as a barrier to successful multi agency working (Anning, Cottrell, Frost, Green, & Robinson, 2006; Bathmaker & Avis, 2005; Brown & White, 2006; Egan, 2004; Geddes, 1997; Lewis & Crisp, 2004; Pearce & Hilman, 1988).

Recent studies have explored the relationship between professional identity and threat to the professional group (Lewis & Crisp, 2004), the impact of multi-agency working on professional identity (Robinson, Anning & Frost, 2005) and the creation of professional identity in a multi-agency context (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005; Egan 2004). The above research supports the hypothesis that professional identity is a key element of multi agency working and that a lack of clarity about one's own identity or the identity of others presents a barrier.

Gaskell & Leadbetter (2009) examined the professional identity of the educational psychologist in multi agency contexts. Using Activity Theory (Engeström, 1999), which provides a framework that allows daily work activities to be considered within a social and historical context, ten EPs were interviewed following their work in Multi Agency Teams (MATs) as well as other members of the MATs. A semi-structured interview format was used and data analysed using a grounded approach. They found that initially, the EPs felt as if their professional identity was unclear although analysis of the data indicated five areas where the EPs feel they made a distinct contribution, with other agencies valuing the link to the education system most. Many of the EPs indicated that they had experienced changes to their professional identity, and had developed a separate identity within the multi agency group than with their EP group. The responses of the EPs were varied regarding the distinct nature of their contribution. Branscome, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (1999) have argued that distinctiveness is more important than the need for a positive professional identity. For those who did feel their contribution was distinct, this enhanced positive professional identity.

Hymans (2008) explored the relationship between personal constructs about professional identity and how they may act as a barrier to multi agency working. Hymans uses Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) (Kelly, 1955)

as an interpretive method of data collection, although uses statistical analyses to examine the data. A Family Support Team (FST) were asked to give their views about multi agency working through the use of sorting tasks in order to elicit implicit and emerging poles of their constructs. The constructs were analysed using the repertory grids, which yielded both individual and group constructs.

By categorising the constructs, six superordinate constructs emerged. In summary, three relate to clarity of role within the team, developing professional identity in a multi agency team as opposed to a homogenous team and developing professional identity in an evolving team as opposed to an established one. The next three relate to developing multi skilled practice with families as opposed to constraining skills, reflecting on practice as opposed to accepting assumptions, and finally developing complementary skills as a team as opposed to furthering individual skills and training. ANOVA was used to identify constructs that the FST disagreed on the most. This appears to be within the scientific paradigm although PCP is by its very nature from a social constructivist epistemological stance.

One could also question the validity of using the repertory grid, and whether the constructs elicited are likely to be a stable and representative sample of the particular team or whether the constructs are likely to change on a given day.

It appears that role and identity are linked. The formation of one's sense of personal identity is dependent on a number of factors, of which role is one factor. How others view a professional's identity appears to be largely dependent on their role and this will be explored later in the review.

Developments in psychology
Although the focus of this review is on educational psychology, it appears that it is not alone in terms of suffering an identity crisis (Love, 2009). Sternberg and Henriques (2004) argue that psychology as a whole has become fragmented as a profession and that practitioners are working from many different paradigms. They propose a unified training route for psychologists in the U.S., basing their argument largely on the philosophical grounds alluded to above. They draw attention to the 1970's as being the

'golden age' of therapy, in which psychologists formed a strong identity. They feel that this is now in disarray and there is much scepticism about the profession (Saemen, 1998). This appears to reflect the changes in educational psychology, and therefore, suggests that this research is situated in the broader context of change within applied psychology as a whole. The authors conclude by stating that psychology must resolve its 'identity crisis' if it is survive as a profession**.**

In a literature review Moore (2005) alludes to the difficulty the educational psychology profession is experiencing in terms of defining its identity, citing the lack of awareness of the ontological and epistemological basis of psychological practice as the underlying problem. Others have identified the need for a greater awareness of such issues, such as Lunt and Majors (2000) call for a more refined and subtle epistemology of practice.

Polkinghorne (1992) offers an account of the evolving role of the educational psychologist through a paradigm shift, from modernism, to postmodernism. This very much relates to the professional identity of EPs. In the early years of the profession, psychology as a broad discipline attempted to gain credibility by following scientific methodology to generate theory. In other words, psychology attempted to explain the world testing for general laws and assumptions. This was found unsatisfactory when working with people as it did not embrace the idiosyncrasies and ambiguity of human beings, hence the shift to a post-modern paradigm. The changes in educational psychology are, therefore, part of the process of change in applied psychology.

This has lead to a decreasing lack of standardisation among EP practice even if it promises to be "richer and broader" (Cameron, 2006 p.301). Porter and O'Halloran (2008), however, believe that postmodernism does not impose any restrictions on educational psychology's knowledge base, i.e. there are many forms of 'knowing'.

The role of EPs

There is much literature on the role of the EP. It can be broadly divided into two categories, the first contains reflections and writings from members of the profession, generally complemented by a review of the literature. This is a dominant style of writing regarding the role of the EP, so much so that some have commented on the obsession of EPs to analyse and reflect upon their role (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Gibb, 1998). The second category involves research that has been undertaken in order to clarify the role of the EP. This has, in layman's terms taken the following forms, such as asking other EPs what they do, asking children, asking schools what EPs do and professional organisations reviewing the work of EPs (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). I will firstly examine the literature that falls in the latter category.

Much has been written about the role of the EP in retrospect, and it is important to recognise the historical development of the role of the EP when studying the topic as it goes some way to explaining the perennial need for EPs to reflect upon their role. Hearnshaw's (1979) biography of Cyril Burt, widely regarded as the first educational or 'school' psychologist, describes how the profession was founded on the need to identify "educationally subnormal children" for special school selection. It was Burt who carved a role for psychometric testing in education, and Burt himself was heavily influenced by the work of Francis Galton. The roots of the profession therefore lie in the early work of Burt (Dessent, 1978).

This period was a hotbed for debate on the topic of professional identity, many dissatisfied with the use of psychometrics and the expectations placed upon EPs to use them (Burden, 1973; Burden, 1974; Sutton, 1976), and has continued to be hotly debated (Burden, 1996; Sternberg, 1996). Gillham (1978) has been said to have challenged conventional practice and championed the case to move towards collaborative, systemic work and away from individual casework, particularly with regard to IQ testing (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009).

Gillham (1978) paved the way for psychologists to challenge conventional practice. Perhaps most well known is that of Dessent (1992) fighting the

'case against casework' and Wagner (1995) with the introduction of the consultation model of EP practice. There are other notable contributions from the likes of Conn (1992) and Sigston (1992) who similarly argue for a wider use of the skills and knowledge EPs have, and the benefit of using those skills by working collaboratively with other agencies. Conn (1992) argued that EPs had 'core skills' that could used effectively in a range of contexts such as problem solving skills, for example. Sigston (1992) wrote in favour of the 'case against casework' urging EPs to develop systemic practice.

Love (2009) reviewed a range of articles that have been published from the 1960's to 1980's. He draws parallels between this period of time and the current climate, in which he feels educational psychology is having an "identity crisis" (Love, 2009 p.3). If I were to ask myself "why is it important to revisit professional identity?" I would find part of the answer in Love's paper – EPs appear to be perennially unsure of their identity and it appears that Love is not alone in this view. Cameron (2006) alludes to the lack of a coherent professional identity concluding that "EPs of the future will be required to develop a secure identity" (p.301). They believe that this will ensure psychology is at the forefront of local and national decision making. Gersch (2009) believes that it is the responsibility of EPs to change their identity as the world in which they work changes in order to maintain their relevance as part of Children's Services. Perhaps of most relevance to identity, Gersch proposes that a change of name, such as 'Child Psychologist' will help the profession to stay relevant. In this sense, the role of the EP may not dramatically change (at any more of a rate than it is) but would professional identity, both within and outside of the profession?

Returning to the influence of Gillham (1978), Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) question whether the profession has ever recovered from this contribution. They suggest that since then there has not been a common understanding of the role of the EP. Thomson (1996) agrees with this view, stating that as the profession has evolved, it has become increasingly difficult to define the identity of EPs. Additional support is given by Stobie, Gemmell, Moran & Randall, (2002), who suggest that defining the role of the EP is becoming

increasingly difficult due to the ever-increasing diversity in practice. Interestingly, Lyons (1999) found EPs continuing to work in a 'pre Gillham' fashion, which could be construed as a means of holding on to a distinct identity. As Thomson (1996) suggests, the pre Gillham days made role definition a more simple exercise.

Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) reflect upon the role of the EP reviewing much of the literature that has sought to address these very issues. The authors cite the importance of the Every Child Matters Agenda (DfES, 2004) and the move to three year doctoral training as highly significant in shaping the future role and hence identity of the EP. Guidance and legislation from the UK and internationally has had an impact on the role of the EP. I shall not list these exhaustively here but it important to recognise the impact of the 1981 Children's Act, the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994), the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act and the Every Child Matters agenda.

Speculation about the defining characteristics of EPs has generated various comments on what these constitute. Gersch (2004) describes the skills necessary to be an EP and places an emphasis on helping others, being a creative problem solver and having good interpersonal skills, the latter supported by Beaver (1996). Some have argued that many of the skills of the EP are 'invisible', difficult to measure and often these clients are unaware of their impact (reflect Stringer, Brewin, Duggan, Gessler & Low Ying, 2006). This is important in that if we have to ensure credibility, surely our skills need to be transparent, which may be more pertinent for those who feel they must 'prove themselves'.

Much time and consideration has been given to the future directions of the profession, relating to many pertinent issues in educational psychology, including service delivery and recruitment. Maliphant (1997) has considered these issues and although some twelve years ago it appears that he was correct in predicting a movement towards collaborative, multidisciplinary working. Norwich (2005) considers these issues, and alludes to the difficulties faced by EPs regarding their distinct contribution. With

reference to the DfEE (Kelly & Gray, 2000) definition, Norwich asks the question "do we need to be professional psychologists to use psychological theory?" (p.393) This asks bigger questions about professional training, and how useful it actually is in carrying out daily professional activities. Similarly, Wood (1998) argues that EPs do not require extensive training to carry out most of their role. Lucas (1989) succinctly asks the question "do we really need EPs if we can't identify a distinct role for them?" which is a question that has fuelled (perhaps not directly) much of the research into the role of the EP, particularly when linked to Government review.

Personal reflections and discussions seem to be suitable for authors that have established their credibility. Love (2009) was editor of EPIP for five years, between 1985 and 1990 and a practicing psychologist from the early 1950s to the late 1980s. Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) have many publications behind them and are established in their profession. The same can be said for McKay (2002).

In spite of the above, personal assertions are very much open to criticism as Gersch (2009) acknowledges in a recent paper. There is greater opportunity for critique when the author has not substantiated claims with relevant literature and even when literature is drawn upon it may not provide an orderly account of what the author is stating (Gersch, 2009). It is clear that the literature suggests there is a need to explore professional identity, although there is a great deal of literature dedicated to it. Most authors share the view that it is becoming increasingly difficult to define identity due to the increasing diversity of the profession.

Research into the role of EPs

EPs have long sought to discover what others think of them and what they think of themselves. Research into teacher perceptions of educational psychologists, commonly finds that school staff have a very different expectation of the role of the EP compared to the EPs expectations Boyle & McKay, 2007; Lovejoy, 1985; Muckley, 1981).

Ashton and Roberts (2006) attempt to go beyond eliciting role definition by looking at what is unique and valuable about EPs in their LEA. They employ a questionnaire design that includes three open-ended questions that is later subject to content analysis. Two versions of the questionnaire were devised, one sent to primary SENCos, the other to EPs in the Local Authority. The response rate from SENCos was 38% which, given the other restrictions (within authority, primary sector only, SENCos only) makes this a restricted sample. Although yielding some interesting results, the sample restrictions must be taken into account when interpreting the results. Various aspects of what EPs do are identified and ranked in terms of their perceived value and uniqueness. SENCos valued 'traditional' aspects of the EP role which conflicted with EPs views that they offered a great deal to schools which was valuable. I feel that this research is limited by its design as questionnaire does not provide an in depth account of participant views.

Thomson (1998) used questionnaire to ascertain the views of practicing EPs in Scotland. The aim of this study was to gain insight into practice and how EPS perceived their role. Open-ended questions were used, in addition to multiple-choice questions. Multiple-choice questions were deliberately chosen so to keep the questionnaire brief in an attempt to increase the response rate. The overall response rate was 53% N=189. Thomson obtained data on how EPs perceive their role, with 87% of respondents feeling that schools valued their contribution. The design of this study limits is the opportunity to explore why they are valued.

Scottish studies (Boyle & McKay, 2007; McKay & Boyle, 1994) have provided an insight into the expectations of schools of EP work. The research suggests that schools report the highest level of satisfaction with Educational psychology services when systemic work is practiced alongside individual casework (Boyle & McKay, 2007). Many of these studies are collecting views, in some (in fact most) cases quantifying them, and suggest ways forward. Yet as this cycle seems to perpetuate, may we need more of an intervention, research that challenges views and creates new understandings for the researcher and participant?

The largest studies are those that have been undertaken by the Government, namely the DfEE (Kelly & Gray, 2000) and the DfES (Farrell et al., 2006) with the purpose of clarifying the role, function and contribution of EPs. These studies have tended to come from a scientific paradigm, although mixed methods approaches have been used to ascertain exactly what it is EPs do. The scientific methodology employed is suitable for obtaining a general picture of role, function and contribution. The former was the first report of it's kind since the Summerfield report (1968) and was devised with the explicit aim of assessing the current range of work undertaken by EP service, ascertaining views on the future directions of the profession and identifying the barriers that would prevent a shift in EPs work.

The DfEE paper uses a mixed methods approach, using questionnaires to ascertain general trends and using group interviews and case study for more detailed data. Two separate questionnaires were sent to LEA EPSs and schools, with a response rate of 96% for EPSs (N=144) and 70% for schools (N=348). I am unsure as to whether the use of case in this piece of research provides enough evidence to inform on educational psychology nationally. Only 12 Local Education Authorities (LEAs) participated in the case study, with 138 LEAs declining to take part. Of the group interviews a total of 234 professionals from a range of professions were interviewed in groups. Of the multi-professional sector, only health and social services were represented in the final report.

14 key findings were identified, which I will not list in their entirety. There are some findings relevant to this research, such as service users generally being satisfied with the service they receive from EPs. Some EPs, however, do not feel they have the training or background to be able to adopt a wider role. Is this something the changes to training may address? There also appears to be a difference between how EPs and service users view the role of the EP. There are concerns over the clarity of role of the different support services and their willingness to work collaboratively. EPs want to develop preventative work, and be valued for problem solving and systemic practice. There are recruitment difficulties in some parts of the country. Some of these issues have subsequently been addressed but given the content of

recent discussion papers on role and identity these are likely to still be relevant.

Farrell et al. (2006) review the function and contribution of EPs in light of the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2004), which they claim to be the most significant national strategic document since the 2000 DfEE report. The 2006 report, commissioned by the DfES used a similar structure to the previous report by the DfEE. Questionnaire survey was the dominant data collection technique, along with face to face and telephone interviews also conducted. This evaluation also includes interviews with a sample of young people, a reflection perhaps of a move toward representing the voice of the child in identifying what the EP does. One of the key findings relevant to this research is that EPs have been too involved in statutory work to develop other practices and widen their role. Another is that stakeholders feel that it is EPs academic background and training in psychology that enables them to make a distinct contribution. Furthermore, many participants felt that another service provider could undertake some of the work that EPs engage in.

Both the Farrell et al. (2006) and DfEE (Kelly & Gray, 2000) are substantial pieces of research. It would be extremely difficult for any group other than a government working party to undertake a study on this scale. Yet, for what they have achieved in terms of scale, there are limitations. Although interviews were used, their primary means of data collection relied upon questionnaire responses. This method can have its limitations and risks having low validity (Robson, 2002). The internal validity of the questionnaire may be low as the respondents may interpret the questions in different ways. (They may also be subject to a poor response rate, although this has not affected the two Government studies). In summary, however, the surveys provide us with a general picture of how EPs are viewed and what they do. The fact that they highlight variation and lack of consistency between psychologists and LEAs suggests more contextualised research may be useful.

Multi agency working has received much attention in recent years, particularly following the Laming report on the Victoria Climbie Inquiry (HMSO, 2003) and the introduction of the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2004). It was this report that highlighted the need to improve multi agency working to ensure effective child protection. Watson (2006) investigated which factors were deemed important in facilitating multi agency working by administering a questionnaire to members of co-located multi agency teams. The questionnaire was based on a literature review, resulting in 20 key factors being identified, which were rated by participants in terms of importance, hierarchy and which ones required external support. Watson found that having a clear understanding of roles of other members of the team was rated the third most important factor. Hymans (2006) used a Q-sort activity with members of multi agency teams to sort statements about multi agency working. The findings of this study identified clarity of role is seen as very important by those working in multi agency teams. Similar findings have been demonstrated that clarity of role presents a barrier to multi agency working (Barclay & Kerr 2006, Dearden & Miller 2006).

Training of Educational psychologists

The move to a three year doctoral training programme has been hotly debated by educational psychologists for some time, with most agreeing that it is necessary for the longevity of the profession (Gersch, 1997; Leadbetter, 2000; Maliphant 1997). Very few have challenged this, such as Williams (1993) who suggests that more emphasis should be given to life experience as opposed to academic training. Although the changes to initial EP training have been in place for some three years now, it is important to review the literature leading to these changes as I am looking at professional identity in light of the new training route.

Frederickson, Malcolm and Osborne (1999) report the results of a questionnaire survey conducted by the AEP/BPS Joint Consultative Group on Extended Training. The purpose of this survey was to ascertain the views of those within the educational psychology profession regarding the changes to training EPs. The majority of respondents (81%) were in favour of extending the training. Importantly, 60% of respondents were in favour of

retaining teaching experience as a necessary prerequisite to training, 23% did not feel it should be retained and 17% were unsure.

An interesting example a of perceived benefit of retaining teaching experience is that it enables EPs to 'mix with teachers' and be more attuned to their attitudes and needs than those who do not have teaching experience. What the research design does not allow is an exploration of why these views are held.

The issue of 'credibility' with the teaching profession is a frequently cited reason for maintaining teaching experience as a prerequisite to EP training Frederickson, Osborne and Reed (2001). We are now in the wake of these changes and I would like to establish whether the credibility of the profession has been adversely affected. This thinking is different from other European countries. As Farrell, Gersch & Morris (1998) point out, EPs in other countries do not have to be trained teachers, and there is no evidence for an adverse effect as a result. There is, of course, the view that EPs are in fact 'failed teachers' and that becoming an EP is a 'way out' of the teaching profession (Farrell & Lunt, 1995).

Frederickson et al. (2001) explored the relationship between teaching experience and EPs credibility with teachers. They express the view that the role of teaching experience relates to an 'expert' role for EPs, where they are seen as advisers, that "have to offer strategies In order to explore credibility with teachers the authors used short questionnaires to elicit the views of members of the teaching profession. They sent questionnaires to two groups, those who have had direct contact with an EP and those who have not had direct contact.

For group one, (those who have had direct contact with an EP), teaching experience was associated with positive ratings. In the second group, there was no difference in ratings between those who believed EPs had teaching experience and those who did not. Although the results from the first group support the hypothesis that teaching experience increases EPs credibility

with teachers the authors make it clear that a causal relationship cannot be determined.

In study two, statistical analysis does not yield significant results in support of teaching experience for the whole sample of responses. Interestingly, analysis of the primary school sub-sample within this group does yield results that indicate teaching experience is linked to EP credibility. Frederickson et al. (2001) propose that this may explain why recruitment at the time is heavily weighted towards primary school teachers. They go on to suggest that subject specificity at secondary level indicates that the nature of teaching experience is likely to differ greatly. As for special schools, they do not demonstrate any strong associations in either sample. It is important to note that a number of respondents were unaware that EPs needed a background in teaching, yet still offered positive ratings. It was those that were aware of the requirements that were more discerning with their evaluations.

The teaching experience debate features in research leading up to the changes in training and addressing this change as a whole. An almost painfully obvious point is made by Frederickson and Collins (1997) who point out that the one year training system has been in operation since 1946 and that a change in the way EPs are trained is appropriate given the changes in society, such as ethnic diversity. There have also been changes in the profession, such as a move towards consultation. The authors explored the views of aspiring entrants into the educational psychology profession. The participants highlighted advantages of moving toward three year training, namely gains in practical competence, theoretical knowledge, status and the opportunity to engage in doctoral level research. It is interesting that status is mentioned, yet is not expanded upon. This begs the question, status with whom? Clinical Psychologists? Teachers? This is something I wish to address in my research as there appears to be little input from a broad range of agencies.

Farrell et al (1998) explore the rationale for moving toward a three-year doctoral training course. The old training system was criticised on the

grounds that it is not possible to incorporate the depth and breadth of training in a one-year course. The debate around the length of training has been ongoing for some time is highly relevant because as Farrell et al. state, a three-year training programme would provide plenty of opportunity to address gaps in knowledge and experience.

If we look again at the key findings of the Review of the Function and Contribution of Educational Psychologists in light of the Every Child Matters agenda (Farrell et al., 2006) one stands out as being particularly relevant to this research. This finding is that it is the EPs academic background and training that makes them unique, not their previous experiences. Webster and Beveridge (1997) are of the opinion that EPs are a valuable resource in helping teachers develop evidence-based practice based on their research. When describing the factors that will enable EPs to engage in this activity, it is *research experience* that they feel is valuable. Teaching experience is not mentioned. They support the development of more research-orientated training for EPs as their study supposedly identifies a lack of preparedness and competence. Leadbetter's research (2000) also indicates that EPs should use their research knowledge to greater effect. These studies employed questionnaire design.

Monsen, Brown, Akthar and Khan (2009) evaluated the effectiveness of a pre-training assistant EP programme. Two cohorts of assistant EPs were employed by Kent Educational Psychology Service (EPS) the first from September 2005 to August 2006, the other from September 2006 to August 2007. The first cohort consisted of 10 assistant EPs, all of whom had first degrees in psychology and a minimum of two years teaching experience. The second cohort consisted of 10 assistant EPs (although two withdrew) all of whom had a first degree in psychology and were from a range of professional backgrounds including social work, youth work and applied psychology. The programme was evaluated in terms of input, impact, stakeholder perceptions and case study. A likert scale was used to measure impact in several areas, input data was gathered by means of audit and quantified, perceptions were gathered using focus group interview and case study was provided by the assistant EPs. Data from both cohorts was

combined. They found that the impact of casework exceeded the expectations of the assistant EPs. They also found that schools and other settings greatly valued the additional time they received through the assistants. This suggests that previous experience does not present a barrier to being effective in the role of an EP. An incidental outcome reported is that only 3 of the second cohort (mixed professional background) obtained funded places on training courses compared to 8 in the first cohort (teaching background).

This model of practice is a potential route into the profession of educational psychology. It is curtailed by the commitment of Local Authorities to fund during-training places as opposed to pre-training assistant posts. Monsen et al (2009) cite many reasons why this could not be a substitute for training, namely, obtaining experience in a range of EPSs, more time and opportunity to develop skills, reflect on practice and the further development of research skills.

Synthesis of literature

Educational Psychology is in a period of change, which many believe is posing an 'identity crisis' for the profession. Part of this change has been the initial training for EPs which generated much debate, particularly around pre-requisite professional experience. Literature around the role of the EP suggests a lack of cohesion between EP and stakeholder perceptions of role, and differences of perception within the profession itself. The development of multi agency working has generated literature that highlights the importance of clarity of role, which is part of what defines professional identity. It seems, therefore, that given the multitude of factors that can impact on the identity of EPs at present, a study in this area appears to be of relevance.

A great deal of the literature on the role and identity of EPs is in the form of personal account, or research studies that typically employ a scientific epistemological stance, although mixed methods may be used. The literature concerning the changes to EP training follows the same pattern. There is much opinion and collation of views, in the scientific paradigm, but this

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does not explain why these views are held. Recent studies into professional identity and multi agency working have shown that an inductive approach is useful in exploring how people view their role and the role of others. The literature around the role of EPs is lacking in this area, as is the debate around what experience is needed to become an effective and credible EP.

Research proposal

I propose that an interpretive piece of research is undertaken, which gains the views of a range of professionals and answers the following research questions:

How might training EPs from a range of professional backgrounds affect the identity of the profession as a whole?

Will EPs that are from alternative backgrounds to teaching be compromised in terms of their credibility?

What views are held about EPs from alternative backgrounds and why?

What attributes do EPs need to be perceived to be credible and effective?

Can the changes in training lead to developments of the role of the EP?

I would like to achieve a deep understanding of these views. PCP offers a tool by which to do this and will enable me to look at the core values held by professionals regarding the above issues. I feel that this offers an opportunity for those who participate in the study to explore their own views.

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