A study of Educational Psychologists’ use of consultation and users’ views on what a service should deliver

**PAPER 1: Educational psychologists’ perceptions of using consultation: An investigation of Educational Psychologists’ perceptions of using consultation with schools.**

**Abstract**

Consultation is a widely used model of practice amongst Educational Psychology Services (EPS) in the United Kingdom (UK) as evidenced in the amount of research carried out on this practice (Leadbetter, 2006, p. 246). This paper attempts to supplement the limited evidence on how and why consultation is used.

This paper provides an account of Educational Psychologists (EPs) perceptions of using consultation in a Welsh Educational Psychology Service (EPS). The study uses a thematic analysis of interviews with EPs and 3 accounts of the practice of consultation are provided as examples of how consultation is used. Data analysis revealed that EPs’ practice is dominated by the influence of Wagner's model of consultation, which is a result of both university, and service based training and not because they feel it is necessarily the best way of working and were vague about their reasons for using this approach.

Evidence emerged to suggest EPs were only aware of one model of consultation, which is the Wagner model. Evidence also emerged to suggest that EPs confused service delivery models with models of consultation and that EPs are unclear about their unique skills and role when using consultation and feel that schools do not understand the work they are trying to achieve when working in this way. EPs also considered that schools want more time with them, but burdensome bureaucracy hinders this.

These findings are discussed in more detail at the end of Paper 2 where the overall findings suggest there is a systemic problem in Pantysgawn EPS, where the dominance of the EP role to provide statutory assessments prevents EPs from working in a truly consultative way. The paper ends by discussing the key element of the EP’s role, whether a consistent and rigid adherence to one practice model is practicable or desirable, and the various
ways that EP services can monitor outcomes to alleviate some of the bureaucratic processes.

**PAPER 2: What do schools want from an Educational Psychology Service?**
A qualitative case study of service users' perceptions of an Educational Psychology Service in Wales?

**Abstract**

Paper 1 study looked at EPs' perceptions of using consultation. Very few studies have looked at service users experiences in consultation based EP services. Paper 2 therefore looks at schools' perceptions of the EP service and considers the benefits and barriers to effective service delivery using a thematic analysis of interviews with staff from 5 primary and 3 secondary schools. Findings suggest that schools continue to regard the expertise of the EP as being a provider of individual assessments, but they also revealed an awareness of the wider systemic role that EPs can provide. This traditional view of the role of the EP is discussed in terms of a wider systemic pressure for schools to seek this kind of EP intervention due to the Local Authority's (LA) focus on statutory assessments.

Schools appreciated a greater continuity of EPS staff as this helped them to develop more productive working relationships and they wanted more time with the EP. The findings suggest that the level of bureaucracy and the statutory assessment requirements to gain access to targeted resources were a barrier to working more effectively with schools. The paper ends by integrating these findings with the paper 1 findings and discussing the key element of the EP’s role, whether a consistent and rigid adherence to one practice model is practicable or desirable, and the various ways that EP services can monitor outcomes to alleviate some of the bureaucratic processes.

**Contents**

*Acknowledgements* ........................................................................................................................................... 6

*List of Tables* .................................................................................................................................................. 7

*Appendix List* ................................................................................................................................................ 8

*List of abbreviations and terms for Papers 1 & 2* .......................................................................................... 9

*Chapter 1* ....................................................................................................................................................... 11

*Abstract* ......................................................................................................................................................... 11

*1.1. Introduction* ........................................................................................................................................... 12
4.2.7. Measuring success through recording and monitoring processes and outcomes .......... 43

Chapter 5 - Issues Emerging ......................................................................................... 44

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... 46

Chapter 1 - Introduction .............................................................................................. 47

1.1.1. Purpose .................................................................................................................. 47
1.1.2. Context ................................................................................................................... 47
1.1.3. Rationale ............................................................................................................... 47

Chapter 2 - Selected Literature .................................................................................... 48

2.1.1. School requirements from an EPS ...................................................................... 48
2.1.2. Role of the EPS .................................................................................................... 49
2.1.3. The role of the EP ............................................................................................... 50

Chapter 3 - Methodology and Methods ...................................................................... 53

3.1. Research Aims and Questions .............................................................................. 53

3.1.1. Research Questions .............................................................................................. 53
3.2. Methodology and Design ....................................................................................... 53
3.3. Participants ............................................................................................................. 53
3.4. Interview Schedule ................................................................................................. 55
3.5. Data Collection Procedures .................................................................................. 55
3.6. Data Analysis ......................................................................................................... 55
3.7. Ethical Considerations ............................................................................................ 55

Chapter 4 - Analysis and Interpretation ...................................................................... 56

Chapter 5 - Discussion (Paper 1 and Paper 2) ............................................................... 62

5.1. The role and expertise of the EP ............................................................................ 62
5.2. Developing practice: Rigidity v flexibility ............................................................... 66
5.3. How can the work of EPs be properly monitored and recorded without incurring undue bureaucracy? ........................................................................................................ 68

5.3.1. Increasing time available for EP involvement ...................................................... 68
5.3.2. Monitoring Outcomes ......................................................................................... 69
5.4. Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 70

5.4.1. Personal/Professional Learning ........................................................................... 71

5.4.2. Recommendations ............................................................................................... 72

5.5. Contribution to knowledge ...................................................................................... 73

5.6. Strengths and Limitations ....................................................................................... 73

References ......................................................................................................................... 77

Appendices ......................................................................................................................... 80

Appendix 1 - Relevant Policies ....................................................................................... 80

Appendix 2 - Literature Review ....................................................................................... 81

Appendix 3a – Wagner’s model applied as a Service Delivery Framework .................. 110

Appendix 3b – Individual Meeting Level Consultation Frameworks ........................... 112

Appendix 4 – Paper 1 Interview Schedule ..................................................................... 114

Research Questions: ........................................................................................................ 114

Interview questions: .......................................................................................................... 114

Appendix 5 - Themes – Paper 1 .................................................................................... 116

Appendix 6 - Examples of how themes were generated from codes in the interview data and contents of the consultation examples ............................................. 125

Appendix 7 – Inter-rater reliability – Paper 1 ................................................................. 128

Appendix 8 – Example of original Paper 1 and 2 research plan summary presented to EPs and Schools .............................................................................................. 130

Appendix 9 – Consent Form .......................................................................................... 133

Appendix 10 – Sample of Psychologist 6 – Interview Transcript ................................. 134

Appendix 11a - Exemplar 1: Example of my use of consultation .................................. 135

Appendix 11b - Exemplar 2: Example of my use of consultation ................................... 138

Appendix 11c - Exemplar 3: Example of consultation by Psychologist 2 ..................... 141

Appendix 11d – Exemplar 4: Example of a consultation meeting by Psychologist 7 .......... 143

Appendix 11e – Exemplar 5: Example of a consultation with Psychologist 3 ................... 146

Appendix 12 – Original Paper 2 Interview Schedule ..................................................... 148