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Doctoral Thesis

**Educational Psychologists' and Teachers' Perceptions of
Consultation: an analysis of initial consultations.**

By

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Submission for Doctoral Thesis

With

University College, London

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**Educational Psychologists' and Teachers' Perceptions of Consultation: an analysis
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Abstract

This research took a qualitative approach, focusing on the perceptions and experience of consultants and consultees.

The rationale is explored in the light of previous research, which concentrates on a quantitative approach and does not explore consultation from the participants' perspective. This research adds to the research base because it investigates the experience of participants in consultations from a number of perspectives.

46 questionnaires were sent to educational psychologists to gain their understanding of the pertinent elements of consultations and to aid reflection on the language of consultation. The return rate was 40%. The resultant data was used to formulate a semi-structured questionnaire, which was used to interview eight educational psychologists about their experiences of consultation in perceived successful and unsuccessful circumstances.

16 consultees were interviewed: one from each of the perceived successful and unsuccessful situations. Finally transcriptions were made from recordings of 'live' consultations of each of the original consultants.

An iterative qualitative analysis was undertaken using grounded theory and focused feedback with the participants. A critique of the methodology focused on the strengths and limitations of the design adopted.

The results showed significant variation in the conceptualisation and practice between consultants, with little shared understanding of the role and practice of consultation either across consultants or between consultants and consultees. The espoused practice of consultants differed from their actual practice and from the experience of consultees. Differences were found in the use of theoretical principles, power stances, the process of problem analysis and intervention strategy development. Although most participants acknowledged the importance of evaluation, in practice no time was allocated to this activity.

This research considered a small sample of consultants and consultees, all of whom worked in the same county. Any generalisations drawn must be tentative. Nonetheless, the variance found within the relative homogeneity of the group of psychologists does suggest the variance would only increase within a larger sample with less homogeneity.

The discussion and summary considers the implications for educational psychology practice of consultation and future research.

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I have to say also that, whilst my immediate family have not always approved of the time commitment and my 'absence' from them, they have all put up with it and worked round me, and at times giving me the space to complete, with only the slightest remonstrations. Thank you.

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I also wish to thank all the participants in this research. They gave of their time willingly, but more importantly were prepared to expose themselves to critical examination. I believe their practice as EPs is excellent, though some real questions are raised about our collective understanding of consultation.

Nobody told me it would be so up and down so now I'm glad it's over!!

Simon

Doctoral Thesis

**Educational Psychologists' and Teachers' Perceptions of Consultation: an Analysis
of initial consultations.**

Contents:

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	4
Contents	5 -13
1: CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	14
1.1 Educational Psychology Services Today: the importance of accountability	14
1.2 Identifying the Agent of Change	16
1.3 Outline Details of the Following Chapters	17
2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	20
2.1 Underlying Characteristics of Organisational Change: the importance of power and relationships	20
2.2 Tacit Knowledge	24
2.3 Level One and Level Two Change	25
2.4 Consultation and School Improvement	26
2.5 Fullan's Stages of Change: stage 1, initiation	29
2.6 Fullan's Stages of Change: stage 2, implementation	31
2.7 Fullan's Stages of Change: stage 3, institutionalisation	32
2.8 Understanding the Effects of Consultation on the Consultee	33

2.9	Definitions of Consultation	33
2.9.1	Problem-Solving Frameworks	35
2.9.2	Personal Construct Theory Framework	36
2.9.3	Solution Focused Brief Therapy Framework	37
2.9.4	Symbolic Interactive Theory framework	37
2.9.5	Systemic Framework	39
2.9.6	Psycho-Systemic Framework	40
2.9.7	Similarities and Differences Between Consultation About The Individual and About the Organisation	40
2.9.8	Summary and Ways Forward	41
2.10	Schein's Model of Consultation	41
2.10.1	Purchaser of Information or Expertise	42
2.10.2	Doctor-Patient Consultation	43
2.10.3	Process Consultation	43
2.10.4	Consistency in Approaches to Consultation	46
2.11	A Working Definition	49
3.	CHAPTER 3: THE CONSULTATION PROCESS	52
3.1	Consultant-Consultee Relationships	53
3.2	Practices to Help Gain Consultee Compliance to Agree Actions	55
3.3	Influences of Power in Consultation	57
3.4	Effects of Consultee Perception of the Consultant's Status	60
3.5	Using Expert and Referent Power	62
3.6	Summary of Successful Strategies to Engage the Consultee	63
3.7	Resistance Research	64

3.8	Consultation and Group Processes	67
4	CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH ISSUES	70
4.1	Limits to the Research Base	70
4.2	Unique Aspects of the Research	71
4.2.1	Limits to Research on Process Issues	71
4.2.2	Aspects of Service Evaluation	73
4.2.3	The Topographical Limitations of the Research	74
4.2.4	Limits of Quantitative Approaches	75
4.2.5	Ethical Issues	76
4.2.5.1	Consent	76
4.2.5.2	Deception	78
4.2.5.3	Withdrawal from the Research	78
4.2.5.4	Debriefing	78
5	CHAPTER 5: METHOD	79
5.1	Methodology	79
5.1.1	Focus of Research	79
5.1.2	The Need for a Qualitative Paradigm	80
5.1.3	Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Paradigms	81
5.1.4	The Researcher's Contribution to the Research Process	83
5.1.5	Deciding on the Qualitative Method	84
5.1.6	Limits to Hermeneutic Approaches	86
5.1.7	Advantages of Heuristic Approaches	88
5.1.8	Grounded Theory	89

5.1.9 Issues to Address When Using Grounded Theory	92
5.1.9.1 Category Saturation	92
5.1.9.2 Issues of Validation	92
5.1.9.3 Use of Literature	94
5.1.9.4 Carrying out the Interviews	95
5.1.10 Use of Coding	95
5.1.11 Relationship to Content Analysis	96
5.1.12 Methods Adopted in the Present Research	97
5.2 Research Questions	99
5.3 Research Pre-assumptions	100
5.4 Research Procedures	101
5.4.1 Phases of the Research	104
5.4.1.1 Phase I: the Postal Questionnaire	104
5.4.1.2 Analysis of the Questionnaires	105
5.4.1.3 Phase 2: Interviews with Educational Psychology Consultants	106
5.4.1.4 Phase 3: Interviews with School Based Consultees	112
5.4.1.5 Phase 4: Taped Recordings of First Consultations	113
5.4.1.6 Phase 5: Analysis and Review of Interview Information	116
5.5 Addressing the Potential Limitations of the Study	119
5.5.1 Research Design and Process	119
5.5.2 Researcher Bias	121
5.5.3 Categorisation Validity	121
5.5.4 Language Effects	122
5.5.5 Appropriateness of Questions	122
5.5.6 Time Commitments	122

5.5.7	Biases due to Participants' Wish to 'Please' the Researcher	123
5.6	Notes on the Use of a Pilot Project	124
6	CHAPTER 6: RESULTS	125
6.1	Framing the Results from a Philosophical Perspective	125
6.2	Information from the Postal Questionnaires (phase I)	126
6.2.1	Question 1: Considering a consultation with a successful outcome	127
6.2.2	Question 2: Considering a consultation with an unsuccessful outcome	130
6.2.3	Question 3: The most important elements to ensure successful consultations	132
6.3	Phase I: Themes Arising from the Questionnaire Survey	134
6.3.1	The Need for Clarification of the Role and Practice of Consultation	134
6.3.2	Issues of Influence	135
6.3.3	The Relevance of Ownership	136
6.3.4	Who to Involve?	136
6.3.5	Questioning and Listening	137
6.4	Interviews with Consultants and Consultees and analysis of Transcriptions of Recorded Consultations (phase II)	138
6.4.1	Phase II: The Consultants' Responses Within the Interview Situation	140
	a) Perspectives on what is consultation	140
	b) The process within a consultation dialogue	142
	c) Who is involved in consultations?	145

d)	The involvement of parents in consultation	146
e)	Issues relating to the use of power	159
f)	Consultant as expert	150
g)	Consultants' perspectives on their authority	151
h)	The importance of understanding the structure, culture and relationships in a school	154
i)	The balance of time spent on developing solutions in relation to problem exploration	155
j)	Establishing a suitable venue, time and atmosphere for consultation	155
k)	Approaches used during consultation	156
l)	The use of questioning	157
6.4.2	Summary	158
6.5	Phase III: The Consultees' Perspective	159
6.5.1	Helpful Characteristics Found in Consultants	159
a)	Being able to transmit an empathic understanding of the context	160
b)	The need to be seen as being on the side of the consultee	162
c)	Building a positive confidential relationship with the consultee	164
d)	The ability to use reframing, summarising and listening skills effectively	166
e)	The requirement of expert knowledge and advice	168
f)	The consultants' ability to support consultees with parents	171
g)	The usefulness of a wider range of experience	172

h)	Having the ability to challenge	174
i)	Flexibility with regards to time	176
j)	Sharing of power and knowledge	177
k)	Ability to clarify roles and role responsibility	178
l)	Ability of consultant to engage the consultee	179
6.6	Phase IV: Analysis of Transcripts of ‘Live’ Consultations	179
6.6.1	Stage I: Problem Analysis	180
6.6.2	Stage II: Solution Identification	185
6.6.3	Stage III: Evaluation Criteria	189
7	CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION	190
7.1	The Key Questions Revisited	190
	• What are the aspects of consultation, which are considered key in consolidating change in school?	190
	• Are the key aspects of success the same for consultant and consultee?	191
	• Do the essential aspects of consultation differ when the working relationship is considered positive as opposed to when the relationship does not help facilitate progress, as perceived by the educational psychologist?	192
	• What is the relationship of experience between consultant and consultee?	193
	• What are the similarities and differences among the consultant’s description of what happens in a consultation, the consultee’s description and the actual recording of a consultation?	194

•	What is the relationship between espoused theory and theory-in-use as described by the consultant, consultee and recorded description of a consultation?	195
•	How are the issues of power used in consultations and which aspects of power are helpful in forming a positive working relationship and in enabling change?	196
•	What importance is there in having an understanding of the dimensions for change; namely structure, power and cultural aspects of the organisation?	197
•	Are there particular dimensions of analysis, which could be used to group schools into those, which can work well with a particular consultation model and those, which have different, needs?	198
7.2	Summary of Themes Emerging from the Research	199
7.2.1	Understanding Consultation	199
7.2.2	Intuitive Working Practices	200
7.2.3	The Overt and Covert Use of Power and the Power Balance	201
7.2.4	Espoused Theory Versus Theory in Use	203
7.2.5	Working in an LEA and Practising Consultation	203
7.2.6	Expert Versus Process Support	204
7.2.7	Indirect Versus Direct Work	205
7.2.8	The Agent of Change	206
7.2.9	Evaluation	207
8.	CHAPTER 8: WAYS FORWARD	208
8.1	A Practical Model of Consultation for Educational Psychologists	208

8.1.1	Consultants' Emotional Engagement and Supervision Needs	208
8.1.2	Consultancy Skill Set	209
8.2	The Model	211
8.2.1	Stage One: Problem Exploration	213
8.2.2	Stage Two: Hypothesis Setting	215
8.2.3	Stage Three: Hypothesis Testing	217
8.2.4	Stage Four: the Plan of Action	218
8.2.5	Evaluation	219
8.3	Research Areas for Future Study	221
8.3.1	Strengths and Weaknesses of the Present Research	221
8.3.2	Some Possible Future Research	223
9.	REFERENCES	225
10.	APPENDICES	254
10.1	Appendix I: The Questionnaire	254
10.2	Appendix II: Semi-structured interview questions	257
TABLES:		
Table I:	Frameworks for Qualitative Research	85
Table II:	Outline Details of the Phases of the Research Undertaken	102

Educational Psychologists' and Teachers' Perceptions of Consultation: an analysis of consultations.

A Review of the Literature

1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Educational Psychology Services Today: the importance of accountability

Until relatively recently Educational Psychologists and indeed other LEA support services tended to work independently, with little systematic evaluation of their work. The basic tenet was that staff could work from their own understanding of what was effective. This meant that there were often major differences in support style, which tended to be dependent on the particular perspective of the Educational Psychologist (EP). This lack of specified direction for service delivery, coupled with limited accountability meant that on frequent occasions it was difficult to recognise the link between EP action and the presenting needs. In the same LEA, dependent on the particular Educational Psychologist, a given school might receive a service based on individual child assessment at one extreme, all the way through to a counselling service or staff training service at the other end. In short, there was no real joining of minds or determinable focus of professional action, either within EP services themselves or within the perspectives on EP practice held by recipients of EP services such as school staff, senior managers and parents.

During the past decade LEA psychology services and individual educational psychologists have become much closer in the way they work. For example, similar

responses to planning the allocation of schools to an educational psychologist now exist across much of the whole country (Imich, 1999). Educational psychologists tend to have a patch of schools allocated to them with an attached visiting schedule, which will dictate a number of visits or an amount of time to be given to the school dependent on certain criteria developed by the local authority. This has been encouraged by central government and indeed by the need to respond rationally to the ever-increasing delegation of funds to schools. The various stakeholders involved have called for greater transparency of allocation methods for time and work expectations. Politicians require evidence of fairness so that they can reassure their constituents, and schools want to be sure that any centrally held funds are being used to best advantage.

As a result, whilst funding for Educational Psychology Services (EPS) has, in the main, remained supported centrally by the LEA, there has been a significant shift in the perception of EP services, particularly in relation to serving the client and accountability. Whilst it is still argued that Educational Psychology services should remain attached to Local Education Authorities (Kelly and Gray, 2000) in order to support government agendas of social inclusion and school improvement, the role is validated by school interest in the main. In these days of widespread delegation, LEA services are seen as operating primarily for the benefit of the school, moderated by external assessors such as OFSTED and The Audit Commission. The school therefore has the primary economic power and can choose to call in whom they see as the most appropriate sources of help whether these are attached to the LEA or not. Nowadays, the rationalisation for style of service is driven by assurance of fairness and transparency, along with the understanding that evidence is based on research (evidence-based practice) – (see for example Fox, 2003; Imich, 1999.)

This, along with the accountability agenda of central government and locally elected members, has precipitated a working environment in which it is most important to ensure that service delivery enables change and progress at the school level and is able to show what has made a difference.

1.2 Identifying the Agent of Change

Whilst it may be relatively easy to identify and even evaluate change, it is particularly difficult to specify what has caused or enabled that change. Typically when change is undertaken there are a number of stakeholders involved and it is unclear which particular aspects of support have created or helped catalyse occurrent change. For example, Fuller (2000) concludes that educational psychologists have a major role in promoting school effectiveness, but this cannot be divorced from the role of advisory service colleagues. Change agents can include a variety of peripatetic professionals who frequently overlap in their work.

Huffington (1996) offers a partial solution to this difficulty by suggesting that evaluation is 'the formal use of feedback' (p. 114). This enables the consultee to offer an evaluation of the changes and the responsibilities for having achieved them.

Accordingly the task of 'evolving outcome measures ... involves creating formal mechanisms for measuring change within the feedback process.' (p. 114)

Huffington (1996) suggests that consultation is central to finding future changed ways of working. Therefore the consultative process identifies the evaluation criteria, which

lie with, at least in part, the consultee. Notwithstanding, this position suggests that evaluation is unlikely to identify the change agent per se; rather the success or otherwise of the changes as agreed by the consultee is all that can be fully achieved.

It can be concluded that, whilst there may be some useful ways forward, from the perspective of what external factors have helped enable change, the picture is often confused. However, equally important to the process of change, are factors within the school. To understand and successfully promote change, it is necessary to understand how key staff accept and make sense of the working of their establishment, when it is undergoing change. It will be shown that their agreement to promote change, along with the need to consider:

- the significance of the structure of the establishment;
- the skills and systems present to aid the embedding of change; and
- the culture and relationships characteristic of the organisation

are of the utmost relevance when promoting change. The issues bullet pointed above will be discussed in greater detail in a later section.

1.3 Outline Details of the Following Chapters

In the following sections research on organisational characteristics central to consultation and change will be considered. The review will draw from both educational and organisational sources including work from commercial consultation companies. It is important to 'cast the net wide' so as to be able to understand fully the change process

and thus what a consultant needs to accomplish to promote successful change. Despite Gillham's (1978) plea, the majority of consultative work of educational psychologists is focused on individual pupils, although it can be used to promote systemic change (Gillham, 1999). The literature review has drawn on the relationship in and effects of consultation when working at the individual and systemic level since there are significant similarities with respect to enabling change.

The present section will serve, in the main, as a reference point, from which to consider the presenting issues for the work of the educational psychologist as a consultant. It will add to the richness of the literature review by setting the context for consultation work beyond that of just education.

Chapter two focuses on the main body of the literature review. It concentrates on the work of the consultant at the level of *interpersonal contact* between consultant and consultee. Whilst the context of change is of the utmost importance to the consultant, most actual support for change from a consultant's perspective must result from the interactions between consultant and consultee. The focus will therefore be on this relationship.

Chapter three concentrates on a critique of the recent research relating to successful characteristics of consultants culminating in a number of specific research questions. This chapter builds a link from the literature review to the unique aspects of the research in this thesis.

In chapter four a rationalisation for the particular methodology adopted will be found.

This section debates the relative benefits and uses of quantitative and qualitative methods and relates them to the present research. This section is considered of particular importance to this study because a doctoral study should be able to articulate and critique the relative merits of the chosen methods of enquiry.

Chapter five gives a full description of the author's research with details of the processes undertaken and the results. Although many studies fall neatly into a pilot and main study, in this case the work became iterative in nature. It is described in four distinct parts all of which build on the previous phase of research carried out.

Chapter six offers a full description of the results. It is organised in a manner that takes the reader through the four phases of the research in order to help the reader follow the logical iterative progression of the research undertaken.

Chapter seven contains a discussion of the results. It returns to the key research questions, using them as a basis for organising the discussion. In this chapter there is an exploration of the main themes arising from the research findings, which are discussed in the light of their relevance and significance to the present knowledge base.

Finally, in chapter eight a possible model for future practice is offered. This is followed by a concluding summary, suggested future research questions and an outline of some relevant issues of interest.

2 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Underlying Characteristics of Organisational Change: the importance of power and relationships

To date most research on school effectiveness and improvement has concentrated on looking at the structural dimensions of school life (Fuller, 2000) or the presenting organisational culture (Ralph, 1995). Reynolds (1995) reviewed the literature on both dimensions and noted that each piece of research had tended to concentrate on one dimension to the exclusion of the other. Little consideration has been given to aspects of power within the organisation and how they may affect change. Bennett and Harris (1997) suggest that this third dimension must be added to the equation to understand how to influence effective school development. Power, it is suggested, has two dimensions; those of knowledge and that of the ability to exercise power, referred to as 'power resources'. Power can be distributed in a number of ways. Knowledge power does not rely solely on position, but will be influenced by personality, character and longevity in post as well as understanding, effort and interest. Equally, assessing the ability to exercise power (power resources) will depend on aspects of influence not only from an analysis of the individual's position within the structure and culture of the organisation, but also through consideration of the wider effects of interpersonal relationships now and in the past. (Bennett and Harris, 1997).

Some consultation groups working in the private sector are suggesting a need for significant changes in the approaches to consultation aimed at improving business performance. For example, in their promotional literature, The Growth Connection (1999) borrows from the work of Dr. Phillips-Jones (2001) when calling for an

approach to consultation that promotes 'an integrated approach aimed at whole system change'. It is suggested that in order to achieve this there is a need for a completely integrated approach involving 'the systems and structure, people and processes, and the technology.' This notion is reinforced by Peppers and Rogers (1999), who point to the central relevance of relationships both within an organisation and how the customer is serviced. Additionally Massey (2000) asserts that, whilst management consultants often do not approach their work from a particular theoretical perspective, there is a need to integrate perspectives on organisational structure with other aspects of analysis of the processes operating within an organisation for effective consultation to occur.

This emphasis on relationships has been explored in the literature on management of change in the educational field. As early as 1987, Aubrey (1987) reviewed the literature on consultative practice and concluded that all teachers work within specific cultures, which have their own norms, role expectations and relationships. If a consultant does not take full account of these aspects, then a consultation may well fail to make a difference. Recent case studies of educational psychologists' consultative work with schools have supported this point (e.g. Dennis, 2004, p.22).

In a series of conference papers, Van der Westhuizen and Theron (1996) and Churchill and Williamson (1995), writing respectively about the experience of school change in South Africa and Australia, considered why resistance occurs when change is attempted, especially from outside the organisation. The South African research suggested that people's individual anxieties about, for instance, job tenure led to a 'Luddite-type' approach to change. The Australian findings imply that when externally driven change is pushed forward, it is often perceived as serving only the interests of

systems management rather than those of the teachers or pupils. It is argued that sustained change is more likely if the probable effects on individuals of proposed changes and change per se are taken into account when planning and promoting change. It is not enough for the internal relationships to be of a suitable quality and order to be able to sustain change. Additionally the relationships, which the school and school staff hold towards the outside world must be appropriately set if change is to be successfully accomplished.

When considering ineffective or failing schools, Reynolds (1995) suggests that these schools present with many characteristics that are antithetical to effectiveness. Schools causing concern tend to have poor internal relationships, low levels of job interest, no clear direction, an inability to embed new ideas, structures, strategies or systems and to have unclear lines of accountability with limited opportunities for professional development. Reynolds (1995) argues that intervention is needed at a number of levels, which should include those of skills and organisational, cultural and relational issues. Reynolds (1995) suggests that ineffective schools may need all of 'directive skilling, means-oriented activities, and potentially quasi-therapeutic programs..'. Reynolds (1995) states that work at the level of relationships needs to be a central and integral theme if the consultant is to support schools effectively in managing the change process positively, ultimately leading to successful outcomes.

The above research shifts the emphasis from a debate between promoting structural or organisational change. Rather Reynolds (1995) suggests that the central issue revolves around how the three dimensions of structure, culture and power relationships interact

and interrelate. The internal workings of a school at all three levels must be in balance for sustainable change to occur:

- there will need to be structures in place that will sustain changes to present operational methods;
- there needs to be a culture of positive acceptance of change with suitable review systems;
- knowledge power and resource power must be present in appropriate hierarchical and social positions in the organisation.

All three of these aspects need to be functional if an organisation is to be able to take on change in a positive manner and then consolidate or embed such change over time. All three dimensions need to be kept in balance. If one dimension is not in balance with the other two successful embedded change is an unlikely outcome.

Further experience of a number of consultants and researchers working in the field suggests that change needs to be managed in a manner, which ensures that the interrelation remains a central theme (The Growth Connection, 1999; Churchill and Williamson, 1995). It is a central tenet of this thesis that successful schools have the structures, culture, power influences and relationships in place to be able to take on change without major upheaval. Other establishments have an imbalance in these dimensions or characteristics and therefore find change and development much more difficult to achieve. Ofsted (2000) concluded that inner city schools that were able to make good use of external support and consultancy had developed structure, methods of accountability and strong commitment to ensure positive exploitation of that available.

If one is to achieve successful consultation, a clear perspective on how these dimensions interrelate at a pragmatic level is most important. In order to influence such subtleties, it is implicit that significant degrees of tacit understanding, skills, knowledge and effective use of interpersonal and intra-personal skills will be required.

2.2 Tacit Knowledge

Despite appropriate planning and action from a practitioner or group of support services, the intended change may not take place. Hodgson et. al. (2001) state that evaluation of the effectiveness of the change agent can be simplistic especially when 'founded on specific sets of values or models of effectiveness' (p. 265), which have been previously determined. Eraut (1999) considers the development of professional knowledge and competence, pointing to the importance of tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge can be defined as that knowledge that comes from the experience of professional practice. It is difficult to define or to quantify but is born of a holistic understanding of the meaning behind practice that comes out of experience over time.

Although formal training is undoubtedly important, the effectiveness of the use of professional knowledge may relate more to the tacit knowledge achieved through placements during training and thereafter through experience and responsibility. Tindal et. al. (1992) support this position, through showing that, although Bergen et. al. (1979) had successfully identified the stages of a behavioural consultation, these were not followed consistently. Their research showed that although mostly experienced consultants used the various stages identified, the order and emphasis of each stage varied dependent on the requirements of the particular interaction being undertaken by

the consultant, despite the consultants not being able to articulate the detail of the departure from the prescribed order. This suggests that tacit knowledge is learnt through putting training into practice and developing one's individual repertoire of skills and style, leading over time to increasing competence.

Others have argued that practitioners do not gain tacit knowledge through experience alone. Rather professional reflection is required which is often best achieved through structured supervision, which serves to bring to conscious reflection aspects of practice previously not understood (Leyden and Kuk, 1993).

Eraut (1999) argues that without this tacit knowledge, subtleties of professional practice do not occur. Without such professional experience, it is not easy to achieve the correct balance between support for structural change, cultural change and relational considerations.

2.3 Level One and Level Two Change

It may be useful to develop the concept of level one and level two change as an exemplar (Schein, 1988). Psychological theory of change has suggested that there are two levels of change. Firstly there is level one change, at which a symptom can be overcome. For example, an individual may go to a therapist because of a particular symptom. Certain treatment will occur which, if successful, will overcome the presenting symptom. The problem is that whilst symptom management is achieved, in many cases there will be a different but similar presenting symptom in the near future. For example, some simple forms of behavioural intervention may remove a specific

phobia of, for instance, spiders, but soon after, another phobia will become present (see Bateson, 1973).

In some circumstances, when only level one change is achieved, other symptoms will occur to replace the original symptom. It is only when change at a deeper inter / intra personal level is achieved that one can avoid such symptom substitution (Bateson, 2002). At level two, there is a shift in the person or organisation such that there is no longer a vulnerability to whatever the previous difficulty was. A new homeostasis is reached (Bateson, 1973).

Many attempts to create change in schools are carried out at level one and thus do not embed fully over time. Rather, similar difficulties may arise in the future. However, Reynolds (1995) argues that if the management of change takes into account all the dimensions or characteristics considered above from a dynamic, organic, and integrated perspective, then long lasting dynamic change can be achieved.

2.4 Consultation and School Improvement

Much has been written about school improvement, yet rigorous studies of the role and effectiveness of the consultant have rarely been carried out. Reynolds and Creemers (1990) and Gray and Wilcox (1995) asserted that there had been almost no research into how a school might become effective or indeed how consultants might help to turn round or develop 'failing' schools. Fielding (1997) suggested that the style of research in this area has led to a reductionist view of schools and education as a whole and argued that schools are best viewed as communities.

Fielding (2001) asserted that in recent history students have been thought of as consumers of a product: that of learning outcomes. He suggests that for education to be effective in promoting high achievement, healthy citizenship and positive approaches to humanity, students may be better thought of as members of the community that is the school. If this position is adopted, then school improvement workers need to engage with students far beyond that of thinking of them as merely consumers. Fielding et. al. (1999) point to the use of pupils as enquirers in their own right within the school community. This perspective can then lead to a very different view being held of each other by staff and pupils. They can start to perceive each other as learners in the community and learning becomes viewed as a shared and reciprocal activity. It follows that school improvement needs to be perceived of as an organic process, involving the whole school community. This perception of schools and indeed school improvement seems very much in line with that of the promotional literature of organisational change and development outlined earlier (The Growth Connection, 1999; Peppers and Rogers, 1999).

Louis and Miles (1990), using observation and interview techniques, identified a number of dimensions, which they found necessary, if schools were to improve. These were:

- vision building (developing and sharing the vision of the future direction)
- press / initiative (push for change in line with the vision)
- empowerment (empower the people involved in the changes to feel able to carry out the required work)

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- transfer of resources (ensure the necessary resourcing is available to the correct people to complete the required tasks)
- assistance (help the direct agents of change to clarify the necessary tasks and undertake them by setting targets, timelines, action programmes etc.)
- problem solving (work alongside the direct change agents as a support for resolving difficulties as they arise and to help the task group remain focused towards the required outcome)

These six dimensions can be mapped on to the previously described three dimensions of *structure, culture and power relationships* (Reynolds, 1995). Louis and Miles' (1990) model concentrates on the process of change to a greater degree than the model proposed by Reynolds (1995). Notwithstanding this, the ability to develop a vision, which can be made practicable, depends on the structure being suitable to enable that vision to be transmitted. Then one must be able to ensure a suitable transfer of resources to the appropriate places. The ability to develop initiatives depends on relationships and the culture of an organisation. Finally, empowerment and assistance will depend on the relationships within an organisation. The analysis here shows that the dimensions identified by Louis and Miles (1990) can be mapped on to the three dimensions previously considered.

Fullan (1991) has taken Louis and Miles' (1990) model and developed it. It is suggested that change has three distinct stages:

- initiation,
- implementation,

- institutionalisation.

Although Fullan (1991) was considering school organisational change, the model has relevance to understanding the consultation process. It is clear that the same processes can be identified when promoting change at the individual pupil level as well as when trying to support organisational change. For example, there may be similar resistance at both levels. Additionally, it may be the case that any change at the level of the individual concerned is still part of organisational change because the individual exists within the context of the organisation. Therefore, as Huffington (1996) asserts, issues appertaining to organisational change will be encountered when working at all levels of consultation.

2.5 Fullan's Stages of Change: stage 1, initiation

Covey (2005) asserts that organisational change starts with a clear understanding of the required position. Fullan (1991) argues that during the initiation stage of a consultation the reasons for change must be articulated and agreed upon. Within this phase there is an attempt to influence the culture so that the consultee is in a position to take on change positively. The implications from Petty et. al. (1997) are that it is important to reach an agreement with the consultee, which does not result from submission or imposition, since the process of significant cognitive engagement might be undermined. If there are feelings in the consultee of having been manipulated, the initiation stage is less likely to stand the test of time and the subsequent stages may therefore be completed less successfully. During this first phase then the foundations are laid for the stage of implementation when structural efficiency will come to the fore. Safran (1991)

argues that this is the most important stage of any consultation. If the problem or issue is not identified correctly and in sufficient detail, then the remaining aspects of the consultation are highly likely to be unsuccessful. Further, Bergen and Tombari (1976), using a predictor variable approach to analyse individual consultations, found that the predictor variables exerted maximum impact on the initial problem identification phase of the consultation. If the first stage of problem identification led to an agreed behavioural definition of the problem, almost invariably consultants could help the consultee to solve the problems. Conversely, when the problem identification stage did not reach an appropriate and agreed problem definition, effective problem solving was unlikely to occur. Miller (1996) suggests that there is evidence that many consultations nowadays do not go beyond the problem identification stage. This may suggest that a view is developing that with clear identification of the problem and reasons for a given problem, the solution will follow mostly automatically and therefore requires less attention.

Unfortunately consultations do not always follow the rubric outlined by Fullan (1991). It should be noted that Fullan (1991) reviewed a large amount of research and opinion from which conclusions were drawn as to the most appropriate way to adopt consultation. Although empirical research is reported, the majority of the work is based on case studies reporting experience and opinion. It follows that whilst the model is very useful, it cannot be asserted to have been developed from empirical research: rather it results from significant experience and a logical analysis of reported effective work. It may therefore be of limited value when reviewing the research literature on what actually happens in consultations. Further empirical research will be reviewed below.

Although all the stages may be present, experimental research has shown that they do not always follow a linear progression. For example, Tindal et. al. (1991) found that problem identification did not always occur and that when it did, it was evident sporadically throughout a consultation, not as a discrete stage at the beginning.

2.6 Fullan's Stages of Change: stage 2, implementation

Fullan (1991) points to the frequently held assumption that if there has been sufficient investment in the first stage, the second stage will follow naturally and without any significant directed intervention. Fullan (1991) found that it was important that this stage was overt and intentional: rather it was necessary for there to be pertinent and effortful focus on this stage if real and sustained change was to occur. This may seem to be in contradiction with previous findings (e.g. Bergen et. al., 1979). It needs to be recognised that Fullan (1991) was researching the requirements for successful organisational change, whereas others have concentrated on change for the individual. It is clear that, without a good analysis of the difficulty, a suggested solution has a higher likelihood of being misdirected. Equally clarity about the actions and how and by whom they will be carried out is needed to help ensure sustained change.

The consultant will need to discuss this phase with the consultee(s) and ensure that pertinent action is both understood and taken. This phase needs to include work on the action plan: what needs to be done by whom, by when and how will it be known that the pertinent actions have taken place and achieved the required outcomes. This phase will often include an analysis of the necessary structures, culture and power relationships for the future as well as a review of the present situation. The information can then lead to a

needs analysis based on the differences found between the analysis of the present and the required future.

2.7 Fullan's Stages of Change: stage 3, institutionalisation

The final stage described by Fullan (1991) is that of institutionalisation. This refers to the ability to embed the changes to the extent that they become normal for the organisation. Fullan (1991) argues that even with an action plan in place and undertaken there is still a further stage if change is to be sustained over time. A frequently heard lament of educational psychologists is that they are always making the same suggestions within the same organisations and to the same staff (Wedell, 2000). These may be about different pupils or aspects of curriculum delivery, behaviour or classroom management, but still include similar interventions. To ensure against this, there must be intentional work carried out to ensure that the structures, systems and values are developed to support change over time for the individual and other individuals or groups with similar difficulties within that particular organisation. Stoll and Fink (1996) have explored these issues at the level of organisational change, suggesting that there have to be elements of top down change which marry to the bottom up influences. This suggests that school consultation must include intentional addressing of structural changes in order to establish step change or change that enables the organisation to establish new ways of working with particular types of difficulty.

2.8 Understanding the Effects of Consultation on the Consultee

To understand how to influence these processes, an exploration of the literature on consultation with particular emphasis on the significance of the consultative experience from the consultees' perspective may be helpful. This perspective could give us a better understanding of the effects of a consultation. Although Miller (1996) does consider the consultees' experience in relation to behavioural difficulties and consultation, there is little research, which directly focuses upon the consultee perspective. Nonetheless, the literature relating directly to the process of consultation could be considered. This will help identify the significant components of the consultation process. However, first it is necessary to agree a working definition.

2.9 Definitions of Consultation

The current interest in consultation can be traced back to Caplan (1970), who developed methods of working as a consultant with professional staff delivering services directly to children. Four main areas of work for consultation were postulated relating to the level of the consultee's professional knowledge, skill, self-confidence and professional objectivity. Caplan's (1970) major focus related to helping maintain and develop professional objectivity from the perspective of an essentially psychoanalytic framework. It is interesting to note that as far back as the 1960s it was considered that there was an important role for consultative support to practitioners. Gutkin and Curtis (1999) have taken this notion up more recently, stating that 'the ability of school psychologists to serve children has always been and probably always will be mediated

to a large extent by their ability to function effectively as consultants.' (Gutkin and Curtis, 1999, p. 599).

Consultation has been defined in a number of ways in the past and indeed there is still no clear universally agreed definition of what is understood by consultation. A good example of this confusion is evident in the specialist edition of a journal of educational psychology (Solity, 2000), in which a number of psychologists working in different local authorities present their understandings of consultation. Beyond that there are differing definitions from health and education, which lead to further potential confusion.

In the Solity (2000) publication, Wagner (2000) offers a very clear and detailed symbolic interactionist definition. Wagner (1995; 2000) has developed detailed working practices, which include observations of children, talking about issues for problem clarification and, when appropriate, individual interviews with the pupils. On the other hand, in the same publication, Lincolnshire County Educational Psychology Services describe everything they do as consultation (Dickson, 2000). Whilst this stance may have political usage, it seems simplistic and unhelpful when trying to arrive at a discrete definition of consultation.

Other papers in the Educational Psychology in Practice publication on consultation (2000) include varied descriptions of working practices without attempting to define consultation (Christie et. al., 2000). This approach is likely to lead to confusion and a lack of clarity around practice for both the consultant and consultee. Huffington (1996) argues that a clear definition, which leads to the ability to articulate, clarify and agree

the work relationship between consultant and consultee is a prerequisite to successful consultation. Without this agreement, the consultant and particularly the consultee may not understand their respective roles and responsibilities. This confusion may then lead to the actual work of change not being carried out as the responsibility for process and product is frequently left with the consultant, whilst, in Huffington's (1996) definition, the consultant remains responsible for only the process.

This research project focussed on an analysis of EP working practices with particular emphasis on the experience of the recipient of the consultation (i.e. the consultee). In order to carry out the latter part of this study, it was necessary to agree a clear focus of what to look at, which, in turn, also required an agreed definition of the consultation process. This will be discussed later in section 2.11.

Lundberg (1997) argues that there is a weak link between the practice of consultation and any theoretical basis and describes consultation as suffering from being under-conceptualised. Notwithstanding, several theoretical frameworks for practice have been developed over the years. These can be categorised in a variety of ways, one of which is to consider the approaches along a continuum from behavioural (Sigston, 1996) to psychodynamic perspectives such as those developed by Bion (1985) and Caplan and Caplan (1993). The main categories of model are outlined below:

2.9.1 Problem-Solving Frameworks

Typically these approaches concentrate on giving the consultee a number of steps to work through in order to ensure problem clarification and a move to possible solutions.

The number of steps and the degree to which they are articulated may vary but will always include:

- problem analysis and clarification
- action planning
- review and evaluation

The details of problem analysis and clarification seem to follow a behavioural focus since they concentrate on the presenting behaviours in formulating a framework for analysis and change. Although it is not necessary for such frameworks to be so limited, since the style of analysis could focus on specific theoretical perspectives, Gameson et. al. (2003) assert that they frequently lack any substantial theoretical underpinning to the approach to problem identification and solution finding .

2.9.2 Personal Construct Theory Framework

The greatest proponent of such an approach to consultation is Ravenette (1999). The approach is based on the work of Kelly (1955), who suggested that all people are their own scientific researchers, trying to make sense of the world through developing constructs of how best to understand the world. This approach relies on an analysis of the consultee's constructs and a framework to test these constructs and consider whether other more useful constructs may resolve the concern. What this approach does not consider in any depth is the etiology of the perceptions. It concentrates on the meaning

of individuals' constructs and seeks to enable change through understanding those constructs and promoting change through intervening with them.

2.9.3 Solution Focused Brief Therapy Framework

In recent years the work of Rhodes and Ajmal (1995) and Wagner and Gillies (2001) has led to the adoption of brief solution focused approaches to consultation in schools. Although this approach does include the possibility of the consultee exploring issues at a deeper level (Ajmal and Rees, 2003), it focuses on the concept of change occurring as a result of exploring the positive exceptions to the apparent difficulties. Resolution is brought about through trying to increase the prevalence of the circumstances when the difficulty is not apparent. This approach to solutions relies on working with the client to accentuate the positives and thus change the perceptions surrounding the difficulty. This approach does not seek to explore the etiology or any of the feelings, which surround the difficulty; it concentrates on reinforcement of the positives in the present circumstances and therefore can be considered as a broadly behavioural approach.

2.9.4 Symbolic-Interactionist Theory Framework

This theory states that people act towards things and others dependent on attached meanings, which derive from social interactions. The premise is that the understanding of the self is developed through exchanges of meaning that are reinforced through social

interactions. This leads to a concern with roles and role identification and how they are socially reinforced and/or threatened. Narrative therapy was pioneered in the late 1980s and has recently been evolved into a model used for consultation (Zimmermen and Beaudoin, 2002). It focuses on externalising the difficulty and then treating it as a person. Thus typically intervention revolves around questions such as ‘what is it like when ... comes to visit’. It is central that similar language to that used by the client is reflected back since otherwise there will be discontinuities in the meaning and understanding made by the client. This approach borrows some ideas from solution-focused work in that exceptions are sought, but there is a focus on the presenting difficulty, which is analysed in terms of the story surrounding the difficulty rather than the detail of the difficulty. Questions such as ‘what stops having power’, where the ‘.....’ is the client’s word for the emotion or circumstances that occur (e.g. anger, disaster, trouble etc.), are explored in order to give the client a framework for action to disempower the difficulty.

This approach is identified as different to the first two approaches because it requires a consideration of the social meanings that surround the difficulties. Exceptions are sought, but beyond the level of the actual behaviour.

The origins of this approach are in personal therapy, but there is increasing use of the approach in consultative work. Todd (2002) described the use of this approach as a method of working with staff in schools to explore the nature of difficulties in their setting and exploring times when the difficulty (personalized) was less strong.

2.9.5 Systemic Framework

The central tenet is that in some way each and every person involved in the difficulties has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. An oft quoted example of this is the adolescent who is acting out in circumstances where there are presenting learning difficulties and adult relationship difficulties at home. The gain for the young person is that he or she does not have to face the learning difficulty and does not need to experience parents being at loggerheads. The gain for the parents is that they do not have to face their difficulties and can feel united in focusing on concerns for their child and the teacher can blame the child for his or her behaviour rather than needing to focus on the necessary differentiation and the teacher's own classroom practice.

Dowling and Osborne (1994) have written extensively in this area and developed a consultative model based on these assumptions, which base their origins in systemic family therapy. The consultative process to be undertaken within this framework is focused on tracing how it is that all parties are gaining and then creating intervention that will enable change. This will frequently involve an injunction, which is aimed to disrupt the status quo and thus ensure change, though not necessarily the outcome. It has been argued that the responsibility of the consultant is to shift the homeostasis. Responsibility for the outcome remains in the domain of the consultee (Flaskas, 2002). This issue will be revisited in the discussion about Schein's approach to process consultation (2.10.3, p. 39).

2.9.6 Psycho-Systemic Framework

The final type of consultative framework has evolved from psychoanalysis. Obholzer and Zagier Roberts (1994) developed the work of Bion (1985) into a consultative approach that concentrated on the basic drives that need fulfilling for people to feel at ease and be able to work effectively. Although this approach does have its place in the toolkit of educational psychologists, it is an approach that is more readily adopted in the area of mental health consultation (Caplan, 1993).

2.9.7 Similarities and Differences Between Consultation About the Individual and About the Organisation.

The present work has drawn on consultative work at all levels of intervention. This is because to enable step change, there is a need for change at the organisational level even when consulting about an individual. It is important to recognise that there are differences in the work, which may require different approaches and skills. Consultation at the organisational level ordinarily takes place over time (Southworth & Lincoln, 1999), whereas, in the experience of the author, the individual focused consultation, although frequently part of an on-going relationship, will usually be one to three sessions long and frequently just a single consultation.

Additionally the issues about an individual are supposedly external to the consultee whereas, because he or she is part of the organisation, it follows that organisational change will involve personal change. Thirdly, the power issues differ. The requirements for organisational change demand some repositioning (structural or relational) of

everybody in the organisation, whereas the demand for change is not necessarily so widespread at the individual level.

It can be argued that the similarities of the work outweigh the differences. Whatever the level of the work, consultants tend to build up a relationship over time. This relationship may then underpin and influence the consultation process. Additionally to affect an intervention for the individual it is often necessary to involve changes at a variety of levels including classroom practice. The major difference that remains is that of the need for structural change, but, if change is to occur at level 2, so that the school does not require support in the future for similar individual cases then changes at the structural level may be required.

2.9.8 Summary and Ways Forward

With so many possible different approaches to consultation, it is important to explore the possibility of a model of consultation, which may help put a framework around these models of practice. It will be useful to focus on a process model, within which a number of approaches can be tolerated.

2.10 Schein's Model of Consultation

Schein (1987; 1988) categorised consultation models into three types of working relationships between consultant and consultee as below:

- purchase of information or expertise;
- doctor-patient;

- process consultation.

Psychologists can work in all three of these ways. Perhaps a detailed analysis of practice will bring to light pertinent differences. The consulting educational psychologist only visits occasionally and the present climate is one in which schools are increasingly being encouraged to take the lead in raising standards at the whole school and individual level (DFEE, 1998). Dependency is a central issue, especially since schools are now mainly independent and responsible for their own destiny and school self-review is now central to assessment of the ability to develop (OFSTED, 2003).

2.10.1 Purchaser of Information or Expertise

Schein (1988) points out that the first two models of consultation tend to revolve around the consultant taking ownership of the question at hand. The model of purchasing information or expertise suggests that the consultee does as the expert consultant tells them to. For this model to be successful in influencing the required change, the consultee has to be completely clear as to what it is that he or she wants or else rely on the consultant being able to decide accurately what is needed. Schein (1988) points out that it is not really possible for a consultant working with a school, as a person external to the organisation, ever to fully grasp all the relevant issues without a reliance on the consultee for information about the organisation and how it works. This model then, tends to have limited use in the world of education, although it is prevalent within education. Many SENCOs will call in the 'expert' with a hope of a 'cure'. This approach may lead to disappointment, since the consultation process in schools is much more complex. Investigation of a student's learning should take account of the

environment within which the learning is to take place, so an effective consultation model needs to take into account information about the environment and about the possibilities for the staff, who will be involved in carrying out any agreed changes.

2.10.2 Doctor-Patient Consultation

The second model: that of doctor-patient, has been attempted especially in relation to pre-OFSTED reviews. Similarly to the first model, the consultant is perceived of as in an expert role. Even if the consultant is able to make an accurate diagnosis of the situation, the process issues need to be considered in order to manage change in the way suitable for a particular staff member within a particular organisation. Kubr (1996) and Turner (1988) point to these same notions as being central in the business world, in that ownership needs to be maintained by the consultee if change is to occur. Consultants are respected for their ability to conduct 'a human process that facilitates needed learning and change' (Turner, 1988, p. 12) as well as for their skills and expertise. In effect then, Turner (1988) and Kubr (1996) are advocating that consultants should adopt Schein's (1988) third model: the process consultation model, which is discussed in the following section.

2.10.3 Process Consultation

In essence, the process model differs from the above two models because the consultee remains responsible for the outcome and the consultant for ensuring that the required process is completed satisfactorily. The consultant's expertise remains in the realm of

understanding the necessary process to achieve change, but not for being the carrier of the expert knowledge to resolve the problem.

Recent school-based work relating to consultation at the school development level has reinforced the process model. Ainscow and Southworth (1996) carried out a school improvement project with primary schools, which was extended more recently in Essex (Southworth and Lincoln, 1999). Their findings showed that educational psychologists and other advisory staff had been successful in promoting school improvement through consultation when they had been able to:

- push thinking forward;
- frame the issues;
- encourage partnership;
- provide incentives (by, for example, creating deadlines by a future visit);
- and
- model ways of working .

Southworth and Lincoln (1999) promote the above process skills as being the most successful in school improvement work. For the purposes of the present study it was important that these issues were picked up at the individual level and considered from an outcome perspective and from the perspective of the consultee. To date the major emphasis of the research has not detailed the consultee experience, although Ainscow and Southworth (1996) did find that the consultee benefited from being a fully participant partner in the work. It must be recognised that the context of this research was different from a one-off consultation. The school improvement work was carried

out over a period of two years (Southworth and Lincoln, 1999). Teams of consultants were attached to individual schools with a remit to support the process of change in the school. Although the research did comment on the consultees' experience, it is in very general terms and only in relation to consultees playing a full and equal part in the process. The research concluded that consultation support for the process was better received than ready-made solutions, but there was limited investigation of the experience from the consultees' perspective. Further, the results were based on subjective reporting, which was then analysed into themes by the researchers. It is unclear whether consultees' views were positively correlated with objective measures of improvement.

Miles et. al. (1988) took a detailed look at the key skills necessary for the consultant. They carried out a two-year study of seventeen change agents working in three school improvement programs. The research included interview, observation, and ranking data from the change agents, their managers, and their school clients. They clustered their data under six headings, which included: incident linked skills; skills of outstanding vs. average consultants; frequently used skills; skills listed as strengths; skills ranked as typical; and skills recommended for training. Their analysis pointed to eighteen key skills for staff supporting change. These were:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| interpersonal ease; | administrative/organisational ability; |
| conflict mediation; | control / management skills; |
| group functioning skills; | initiative taking; |
| collaboration; | training/running workshops; |
| resource bringing; | trust/rapport building; |

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support;	demonstration;
diagnosing individuals;	confrontation skills;
diagnosing organisations;	educational content;
master teacher skills;	confidence building.

Miles et. al. (1988) grouped these eighteen key skills and developed six training modules, which were used to assist consultants in their work as change agents. The modules identified included:

- trust/rapport building;
- organisational diagnosis;
- dealing with the process;
- resource utilisation;
- managing the work;
- building skill and confidence in people.

Although the research design relied on a significant degree of client opinion, it refocused attention onto what core skills are necessary for successful consultation. This issue will be picked up later in the results section.

2.10.4 Consistency in Approaches to Consultation

When describing the work of educational psychologists, Labram (1992) notes that three principal models are used: those of process consultation (Schein, (1988), mental health consultation (Caplan, 1970) and the problem-solving model (Miller, 1991). The latter

two tend to fit into the first two models of consultation offered by Schein (1988). In these first two models the authority and ownership has a tendency to pass to the consultant, since the consultant is presented as an expert who will be able to offer ready-made solutions to the presented problem.

Wagner (1995) states that, through the use of a model of process consultation, the responsibility for the pupil, and the prioritising of work, remains with the school. The ownership remains with the person who will be present at the face-to-face and day-to-day level. If ownership is passed on, the responsibility for ensuring change also tends to be passed on. This leads to a situation in which the face worker has neither ownership nor responsibility; so the necessary interventions for change are much less likely to be carried out. Wagner (1995) states that, in those models of consultation shown to be effective for promoting change in schools, it is a central tenet that teachers are awarded the status of skilled and effective professionals who do operate as direct change agents. Educational psychologists are perceived as being effective in collaboration with teachers and not as direct change agents (Wagner, 1995).

It is unclear as to whether this idealist position works in practice. Previous discussion has shown that the consultant needs to keep hold of the process details throughout the period of intervention and change (Southworth and Lincoln, 1999). Gutkin and Curtis (1981) asserted that consultants were 'unable to make much ... happen in classrooms without the active support of the teachers who taught in and controlled those environments'. The experience of the present author is that consultees frequently require expert knowledge from the consultant. In order to influence what happens in the classroom, the practice of building a robust positive relationship that enables the

consultant to direct the consultee may result. Although such an approach to consultation can be construed as collaboration, it may more truthfully be described as having a significant degree of coercion.

One further consideration is how consultation approaches can fit with present educational psychology models. Wagner (1995) suggests that, within a successful model of consultation, there should be significant influences from models of symbolic interactionism, family systems theory and personal construct theory. Turner et. al. (1996) have argued that the process consultation model can be shown to be consistent with many of the theoretical models being used in educational psychology services at the moment. These authors make particular mention of solution focused brief therapy approaches and those of systemic approaches to work with families.

It remains to be seen whether there is a model of consultation being used by educational psychologists consistently. Some authorities have prepared guidance and given associated training in an attempt to promote consistency, (for example Redbridge, Essex, Kensington and Chelsea, Lincolnshire); yet, in the present author's experience, through looking at files, managing a number of consultants and talking with schools, this does not seem to have led to consistency of delivery in at least one authority and in relation to paperwork from some other authorities. Argyris (1990) and Argyris and Schon (1996), have argued that everyone holds both an espoused theory of practice and a different theory-in-use. The espoused theory is based on beliefs, values and attitudes, whilst the theory-in-use is more basic and relies on notions of survival and the skilful management of situations that could be perceived as upsetting, threatening or embarrassing in order to reduce the potential impact of such feelings. Whilst all people

espouse a more laudable theory of work, what they actually do is based on the theory-in-use. This means that change in practice is often not forthcoming even when practitioners espouse their allegiance to the suggested changes. The significance of this is that many psychologists may espouse a theory of consultation, but it may not hold any congruence to their practice. It should be noted that this position has not been validated experimentally as yet, although the assertions of Argyris and Schon (1996) do present a coherent and potentially useful model of what may be happening.

Equally possible is that since there is, as yet, no agreed definition, process, model or consistently applied theoretical underpinning to such work, it is unlikely that there will be much consistency of practice.

In summary, although still to be tested, it can be argued that there is a strong likelihood of inconsistency in practice among psychologists and that even the individual psychologist will not necessarily practise what he or she espouses. This situation may well leave the client or consultee confused, especially when there is a change of the attached psychologist working with the school.

2.11 A Working Definition

For the purposes of this research, it is necessary to have a working definition to focus subsequent information gathering procedures. Huffington (1996) has a useful clarification:

'... a process involving a person who is invited to help a client with a work-related issue. The client can be an individual, a group or an organisation. The

essential issue is one of responsibility for the process, and this may help to clarify the difference between consultation and other activities, such as supervision, counselling, therapy, teaching, advising and management. The responsibility for fulfilling the task of the organisation in the consultation process lies with the client, whereas the responsibility for the consultation process lies with the consultant.

The consultant uses his or her skills and knowledge about the process of change to enter into a mutual exploration towards an understanding of the meaning of the problem The consultant's position within the system offers a different perspective from that of the client.' (p. 104-105).

The present definition suggested is that consultation is ***'the practice of developing problem clarification and subsequent actions with the direct worker'***.

For clarification of the focus of work it is essential to understand with whom the consultant works. This can be construed at three different levels:

1. the focus of concern for the consultee (often a pupil);
2. the professional in the school, who is looking for a problem solution (often the class teacher);
3. those who are asked for help with finding an effective way forward (often the SENCo or headteacher).

The consultant may work at the third level and may or may not see or work directly with the first level in any particular case. If there is work at the first level, it is for

information gathering rather than for purposes of direct problem solution. The focus of the consultation remains with supporting the third level although it may involve the second level in order to influence those who are likely to be responsible for carrying out the agreed intervention. Notwithstanding, the primary goal can be construed as '*the joint development of a new way of conceptualising the work problem so that the repertoire of the consultee is expanded and the professional relationship between the consultee and the client is restored or improved. As the problem is jointly reconsidered, new ways of approaching the problem may lead to acquiring new means to address the work dilemma.*' (Huffington, 1996, p.245.)

3. CHAPTER 3: THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

The above sections have considered:

- firstly; recent research and information related to the achievement of whole organisational change and development;
- secondly; definitions of consultation and core skills involved in relation to whole organisation development and school improvement.

There has been a detailing of the elements, which need consideration in terms of both participant and process. Further, it has been shown that the consultant needs a good understanding of the process of analysis, action planning and change as well as knowledge of the organisation's culture, structures and power relationships.

As mentioned in the introduction, when undertaking consultation work in schools, the consultant will tend to work with one or more consultees and the consultant – consultee relationship is a crucial factor. A review of the relevant literature will aid an understanding of the process necessary to promote successful change. Much of the research on the consultant-consultee relationship is based on individual interpersonal analysis and little has considered the effects from the basis of discourse analysis or other qualitative methods. This concern will be picked up in the methodological section: first a review of the relevant research base, most of which originates from North America.

3.1 Consultant-Consultee Relationships

A debate has developed between *coercion* and *collaboration* (Erchul, 1999; Gutkin, 1999). A number of studies have considered whether the consultant and consultee work at similar levels of authority, with different roles to play (collaboration), or whether in fact the consultee is subordinate to, and led by, the consultant (coercion). The history of this debate is embedded in traditional definitions of the professional practitioner as expert. On closer reflection, there have been some differences in definition of coercion and collaboration. Gutkin (1999) viewed collaboration as joint decision-making, whilst coercion was defined as unilateral decision-making. Others have defined coercion as influencing outcomes through use of coercive power (Schulte & Osborne, 2003).

Both Gutkin (1999) and Erchul (1999) consider that the above debate may not be the most helpful way forward. The style of the consultant / consultee interaction may in fact not be best analysed along the single dimension of coercion to collaboration. Gutkin (1999) suggests that a more fruitful line of research may be to consider the dimension of directivity alongside the dimension of collaboration. By disentangling these two dimensions, it may be possible to come to a better understanding of the successful elements of the consultation process. Erchul (1999) on the other hand, points out that it may be important to take into account the effect of the consultee on the behaviour of the consultant. Through this debate a concern has been raised about the issue of who leads the behaviour of the consultant. It could be that the consultant's behaviour is best considered prompted by consultee behaviour for one or more of the following reasons:

- a response to the consultee behaviour within a given consultation;
- a response to the consultee as a result of experience of a previous consultation;
- as a by-product of previously held schema by the consultee of the consultant's role and responsibilities.

A review of the literature indicates this aspect has not been sufficiently considered. It seems that there is a gap in the literature with respect to experimental designs, which have taken the actual discourse as central. With the exception of Miller (1994, 1996), most, if not all research in this area has taken an externally based analysis of the discourse in which consultant behaviour and resultant consultee feelings and actions have been central themes. For example Sheridan et. al. (2002) looked at the nature of consultee and consultant speech, but did not reflect on the meaning made from the participants' perspective. Miller (1994, 1996) did consider the issue of consultee experience, but solely in relation to behavioural issues. The research concentrated on building up theory from the experience of the research using the principles of grounded theory. The research did not undertake an analysis of the flow of conversation from consultant to consultee or visa-versa using for example discourse analysis. More recently, Knotek (2003) researched consultants working with student study teams in two schools. This study took a qualitative approach and triangulated information from a variety of sources including audiotape transcriptions and interviews. Although a number of consultations were considered (seventeen cases), its sample size was only two establishments so was significantly smaller than the present study and although interesting may have limited value, from which to generalise.

Clearly it would be possible to examine the question of whether consultant follows consultee or vice-versa from a positivist perspective. It may be more fruitful to focus on the perceptions and perspectives of those directly involved in the consultation experience, since, as Erchul (1999) asserts, the interactive nature of the consultation relationship is central to the personal experience of a consultation and the consequent behaviour.

To explore the interactive nature of the consultation process, consideration of the inter-participative meaning within a given consultation and its relationship to behaviour and outcome is necessary. In this research project a qualitative approach to these questions was adopted.

It is important to consider other aspects of the consultation literature. One significant area is that of the likelihood of suggestions for change leading to positive actions, since the main rationale for adopting consultation as a model of practice is to enable change to occur.

3.2 Practices to Help Gain Consultee Compliance to Agree Actions

Petty et. al. (1997) reviewed the literature on 'The Elaboration Likelihood Model' and concluded that long-term change is achieved as a result of '*effortful cognitive activity in which the message recipient draws upon prior experience and knowledge to scrutinise and evaluate carefully all of the information presented in support of the advocated position*' (Petty et. al., 1997, p. 109). Essentially the argument is that observable change only occurs if the consultee fully engages at a rational level, weighing up the logic of

the arguments and only then acting. There are other routes to change, which are referred to as peripheral routes. When these routes are used, change may occur, but the consultee will be open to other influences and not necessarily working to consolidate previously agreed actions. Therefore, for the consultation to be successful, the interaction(s) must have a purposeful and effortful focus, which considers all aspects of the issue and details a way forward which is meaningful for the consultee. Petty et. al. (1997) argue that peripheral influences such as expertise or positional power may influence change but in these cases the resultant changes will most likely be short lived.

Gutkin and Conoley (1990) point to the lament of many consultants: that there is a view that consultees will often agree with the arguments put by the consultant, but then not carry out the agreed intervention. It is suggested that this is the result of failure to engage the consultee at the level of active involvement in evaluating the recommendations in terms of the consultee's knowledge, experience, attitudes and goals.

It has been suggested that a number of 'tricks' can be used to encourage greater involvement in the process. For example, through correlational analysis of the verbal interactions between consultants and consultees, Martens et. al. (1989) found that a consultee was more likely to engage with a consultant and share his or her thinking if the consultant could show agreement with the consultee's perceptions of a problem. The ability to do this can be enhanced if a consultee rehearses the counter arguments so that these can be considered in detail during the consultation. While it is possible for this process to occur within a consultation spontaneously, it is also possible for this to be achieved through displays of the appropriate empathy and counter arguments if the

consultant has prior information. This may then lead to a more positive and active involvement on the part of the consultee and therefore to a greater likelihood of manifest change. Snyder and DeBono (1985), when studying advertising, found that the use of messages, which articulate similar cognitive schemas to those of the recipient, increased the recipients' perception of the quality of the advertiser's wares. Resultantly, the recipients were more favourably disposed to the advertiser. It follows that the ability to work as a consultant through the use of similar cognitive schemas to those of the consultee will be stronger if prior knowledge is made available.

In summary, Petty et. al. (1997) point out that it is essential to find ways of engaging the consultee at an effortful and meaningful level. One way to enhance the probability of this happening is to use similar language and cognitive schemas or constructs to those of the consultee and to show sympathetic understanding and acknowledgement of the consultee's position. Further, if the consultant is able to gain prior knowledge of the consultee's position, a useful strategy can be to rehearse counter arguments, which may then be better advanced.

3.3 Influences of Power in Consultation

Adding to the emerging picture, Erchul and Raven (1997) have reviewed the literature on social power in school consultation. Their paper emphasises the need to look clearly at all the possible active influences pertinent to a consultation. Erchul and Raven (1997) identify six sources of power, which can be used to influence the consultee, and which are potentially available to the consultant. These are:

- '*coercive power*' or the power available to the consultant to try to force a consultee into a given action;
- '*reward power*' or the power available to the consultant to give praise or tangible rewards to the consultee;
- '*legitimacy power*' or the power which the consultant may have due to his or her position and status;
- '*expert power*' or the power invested in the consultant due to apparent expertise;
- '*referent power*' or the power resulting from the consultee identifying with the consultant; and
- '*informational power*' or the power resulting from the consultant giving argued coherent and cogent information to the consultee.

To help understand how to be successful as consultants, the influences of the sources of power and how they come into play are reviewed below. This discussion is based on the work of Erchul and Raven (1997) and an a priori analysis of the logical requirements for the use of each power stance.

An important distinction should be made between those sources of power which require surveillance and those which when effective do not need to be revisited. The use of coercion and of rewards may be effective in the short term, but since they do not relate directly to the actual message being given, they may not enhance the likelihood of long-term change. Notwithstanding, if they are used, coercion and rewards are likely to be more effective in creating change, which has a long lasting effect, when revisited frequently.

Whilst other forms of power which may be used, such as legitimacy, expertise and reference, do not demand the use of on-going surveillance, they are socially dependent because the use of these types of power requires respectively: a relationship in which the consultee recognises an obligation to accept the consultant's advice, invests the consultant with the status of expert or has a desire to identify with the consultant due to for instance similar professional backgrounds.

Erchul et. al. (2002) made the point that age and gender have significant influences on the consultee's acceptance of advice. They use as an example the requirement for the consultant to prove his or her worth is more difficult for young female consultants, although the effects on the social relationship through the consultant findings ways of using referent power can help the consultant to be accepted and influential.

The final type of power discussed here is *informational power*, which has been shown to be the most relevant in creating change in the beliefs of the consultee (Petty et. al. (1997). It seems, therefore that the promotion of change through consultation is best achieved through the imparting of clear, rational information, delivered through a personalised argument that takes account of the consultee's conceptual framework. If the consultee engages fully and with effort in this process and as a result his or her opinion is changed, then the expectation is that lasting change will occur. It may be worth emphasising that other strategies to enable the consultee to become effortfully and meaningfully engaged may relate back to the other sources of power. For example, the act of using similar cognitive constructs to the consultee suggests that referent power is being used to gain the consultee's engagement.

3.4 Effects of Consultee Perception of the Consultant's Status

A further aspect of informational power has been considered in the literature: that relating to the perceptions of the consultee. Caplan (1989; 1993) has considered the fact that the consultant is not always in a position to ensure that serious consideration of the information she or he has to give will be made. For example, the doctor/nurse relationship is traditionally very hierarchical. If the consultant has a nursing background, it may be difficult for a consultee who is a doctor to treat the consultant with appropriate seriousness. This leads to the need for some consultants to establish the right to be in the position of consultant, prior to the consultee treating the consultation with an appropriate level of gravitas. Caplan (1993) asserted that the consultee needs to value the consultant in order to make full use of a consultation.

It may be that in circumstances where a power issue is central, more indirect methods of using informational power are the most useful. In the case of medicine it can be more effective to relate a particular change of treatment to another successful case thus enabling the decision-making influence to remain apparently with the doctor. Similarly, in school consultation, if the consultant is seemingly disadvantaged by age, or apparent lack of experience, alluding to a successful example from another local school, can enable informational power to remain effective in a situation, where the necessary consultee effort may not be forthcoming unless such additional measures are taken.

Erchul and Raven (1997) suggest in their review that the position is very complex, with a number of additional factors influencing the effectiveness of a consultation. Gender differences in approaches to consultation with respect to levels of coercion have been

reported (Henning-Stout and Conoley 1992) with males operating at the more directive end of the continuum between coercion and collaboration (Conoley and Welch 1988). This research does not report which gender of consultant is more successful in enabling change, but does assert that more overt methods of coercion are used by male consultants, whilst more covert methods, through apparent collaboration, may be used by female consultants: the important point being that it is argued that the behaviour of both genders could be construed as coercive.

More surprisingly Rhoades and Kratochwill (1992) showed that consultees viewed consultants more favourably when they used technical language and did not involve the consultee in problem-solving techniques. This finding may suggest that consultees tend to view consultants in a more favourable light when it is possible for the consultee to remain separate from the process of problem solving. Technical language, whilst possibly impressive, does not require engagement in the way that is required when sharing problem-solving techniques. The concern this raises is that potentially without the engagement required by joint problem solving, the consultee remains a receiver of wisdom and therefore relatively passive during the process. It is important for the present purposes to note that whilst favourability is reported, the study did not explore success with respect to take up and resultant change either immediately or over time.

Also this finding is in contradiction to the experiences reported by Southworth and Lincoln (1999), who, when considering organisational change consultancy, found that the consultee had felt that consultation had been more effective when the consultee was fully engaged. It is concluded here that despite the potential impressiveness of technical

language, it is important that consultees are enabled to become fully engaged in the consultation process.

3.5 Using Expert and Referent Power

Significantly, some researchers have found the use of *expert* and *referent* power to influence positively the outcome of the consultation process. Raven and Rubin (1983) found evidence that expert power tended to influence opinions and beliefs but it was referent power that actually affected behaviour. It may be that in the case of expert power there is little identification with the consultant and therefore, to the consultee, it does not seem possible to make the changes suggested by the expert. Aronson et. al. (1966) found that small errors made by the expert tended to enhance his or her ability to influence. It is suggested that such mistakes make the expert more accessible to the consultee. The importance to the present review relates to the central role of relationship and influence in consultation.

In the case of referent power, investment in exploring the similarity of levels of competence, interest and experience increases the likelihood of behaviour change: because of this identification the consultee recognises the possibility of successful change and therefore can and does act. Hovland et. al. (1953) identified a concept they termed the 'boomerang effect', whereby consultants can achieve exactly the opposite effect from that which is desired. This is especially likely when there is low congruence in purported values between consultant and consultee. The required actions need to be viewed as achievable and appropriate for the consultee to act. When the underlying principles behind suggestions for action are in conflict with the consultee's view, then

the consultee is likely to act independently, which may lead to opposing actions. For example, the suggestion of approaching attention seeking behaviour as attention needing, with a consultee who holds a very critical or punishing approach to behaviour management may lead to further entrenchment in the view that the child is to blame and needs punishing.

Whilst referent power might be successful if the consultant were perceived to be in a similar situation by the consultee teacher, previously it was noted that informational power is most effective to promote change. Therefore it may be most appropriate to conclude that there is a need to form a relationship with the consultee, through which it can be established that there are similarities of experience, values and beliefs. This relationship then serves to lay the foundations, from which to be able to create change through the use of other power stances, particularly informational power.

3.6 Summary of Successful Strategies to Engage the Consultee

In summary, the research reviewed so far suggests that there are a number of actions, which can be taken to enhance the likelihood of engaging the consultee.

Fundamentally, these revolve around the need for the consultee to believe that the consultant understands the presenting issues from the consultee's perspective. It is necessary for a consultant to relate to the consultee in a positive and sympathetic manner. It is more likely that the consultee will become engaged and therefore promote real change if the consultant is seen as referentially similar to the consultee. The suggestion above is that it is necessary to build a positive and equal relationship if, as a

consultant, one is going to be able to engage the consultee at the level necessary to lay the foundations for significant and long lasting change.

Finally, it is important to remember that the research reviewed in relation to organisational change suggests that a consultant needs to develop a full understanding of the organisation and how it functions (sections 2.1, 2.2). The consultant needs to understand the school and how structural, cultural and relational power operate in an integral and interactive manner if she or he is to be in a position to help develop appropriate and agreed interventions.

3.7 Resistance Research

So far the review has considered the need to engage fully with the consultee and the ways in which different power sources may influence consultation outcome. The next important area of research to consider is that of overcoming or managing resistance. O'Keefe and Medway (1997), who have reviewed much of the literature in this area, assert that resistance is not necessarily a bad thing. Resistance may point to rational difficulty which needs to be worked through: resistance can be '*an intelligent response to proposed changes that may or may not benefit the help seeker in desired ways*' (Wickstrom and Witt, 1993, p. 159). It can be argued therefore that in some circumstances, resistance may actually point towards active, effortful involvement on the part of the consultee.

O'Keefe and Medway (1997) consider in some detail ways of diagnosing the bases of resistance and resultant ways of working with the resistance to overcome it. Two

mistakes, which often occur, are those of assuming that consultants know that an attitude change is needed and /or that the consultant understands the underlying basis of a given attitude.

The first assumption; that of assuming that an attitude change is needed may not be correct for a number of reasons. It may be necessary for the consultee to recognise the relevance and significance of his or her attitude to enabling a problem solution. Thus the consultant's task would become that of articulating the positive and helpful nature of the consultee's attitude, rather than challenging it. Equally, it may be that the consultee holds an appropriate attitude but this attitude is not coming to the forefront because of the consultee's understanding of what might be the so called 'correct' attitude in the situation. This can be the case in relation to pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Miller (1996) describes situations when one teacher may be positive about developing an individualised programme of support, but at the same time may also feels that other staff in the school consider it best if the child were to be educated elsewhere. Finally, a resistant front could be presented not because of a difference in attitude, but because of the consultee perception that lack of position or skills renders him or her unable to carry out the suggested intervention.

In overcoming this type of resistance, it may be necessary to consider the use of referent power (Erchul and Raven, 1997). Also significant is research carried out by Gutkin and Hickman (1988). This showed that feedback and relevant information as to the degree of control over behaviour that classroom teachers have, can increase teacher perception of their levels of control (or skill), which can, in turn, enable an appropriate intervention to be undertaken. Thus, if the use of referent power is not possible or is unsuccessful,

relevant feedback and information offered to the consultee may serve to overcome this sort of resistance.

Caplan and Caplan (1993) emphasise the need to take time to understand the pervasive attitude of the organisation and its significance to the consultee's beliefs and values. A perception that the consultant may be suffering from arrogance or lack of time can get in the way. This can result in an assumption that the consultant may be jumping to a conclusion which is incorrect and which then negatively affects the acceptance of change on the consultee's part.

Another source of resistance can come from confusion or misunderstanding. At times, consultants do not acknowledge (or practise) the necessity to communicate in jargon-free language. He or she may not always ensure the use of clear detail, summaries, examples and feedback of what has been understood to ensure that the message is transmitted and understood in its entirety. When the message is not clear, resistance may result as a way of covering the confusion felt by the consultee. In some cases, the consultee may leave the consultation thinking that he or she knows what to do, but, when trying to enact the intervention agreed upon, may be far less clear. Clear examples and follow-up opportunities in which problems can be reviewed may help to overcome these particular difficulties.

In summary, when considering resistance behaviour, it is most important to take the time to understand fully its origins and meaning. It is significant that resistance can be positive to the consultation process if managed appropriately.

3.8 Consultation and Group Processes

To complete this review of the literature it is important to consider the effects of the group on the consultation process. Increasingly, educational psychologists are being asked to work as part of a team within, without and attached to schools. Kelly and Gray (2000) advocate a wide variety of interfaces for the future role of educational psychology services, including work with pre-school providers, schools, professional agencies, carers and others. Stringer and Powell (2004) have developed the role in community educational psychology, in which educational psychologists are working within all aspects of the community to enhance individuals' life opportunities.

If psychologists are to be effective in a full range of consultative roles, it is necessary to consider how consultation can best work with and in groups. Gutkin and Nemeth (1997) have reviewed some of the relevant literature. As a result they point to the importance of recognition of the effects of the power of the majority, of group polarisation effects and having shared norm identity. Not taking all three of these aspects into account can leave a group in a position whereby (the most) efficient decision-making is unlikely to occur.

Group polarisation research shows that groups tend to make more extreme decisions than individual members do on their own. Equally, individuals tend to decide along with the majority even when the evidence clearly points in a different direction. This effect is at its strongest when there is a highly cohesive group, under significant stress and faced with a difficult problem with uncertain outcomes and no well-defined problem-solving procedures (Janis and Mann, 1977). It is noted that the above

description is not dissimilar to situations in which educational psychologists sometimes conduct consultations.

Group norms and behaviour patterns are at their most fluid during the inception of a group. When a group is fully established, behaviour patterns tend to become more solid and therefore more difficult to shift. This is worth considering when or if setting up a group to work on a particular issue, since, when set up and running, the shared norms and behaviour patterns are likely to have a significant effect on decision-making in relation to process and outcome.

The literature highlights the value of minority dissent. Nemeth and Chiles (1988) found that a single voice of dissent has a significant effect on the diversity of future decision-making of a group. Such dissent does not need to be outspoken or confrontational but rather needs to be presented in a manner that negotiates a different view to the supposed norms. In these circumstances, the most influential behaviour is to challenge quietly the assumptions being made by the group. This may promote a more open debate and consequently a more effortful involvement in reaching a consensus for a way forward. The behaviour of the individual dissenter, if the opposing view is presented in the spirit of negotiation, can thus be described as encouraging the effortful and meaningful involvement necessary for successful consultation. With respect to the promotion of change, it is important to recognise the strength of working at the group level. Baxter (2000) found that behavioural change at the school level has more significant long-lasting effects when the consultation process is carried out jointly, with participation from all the relevant people (stakeholders) and over time. Baxter (2000) paraphrased Lewin (1947), saying that '*group problem-solving results in a more lasting commitment*

Submission for Thesis at UCL.

to behaviour change in group members than other forms of intervention, including advice giving and training.’ (p.37)

4 CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH ISSUES

4.1 Limits to the Research Base

The above summary of the research on consultation has concentrated on the particular aspects of consultation relating to process issues, definitional issues and consultation in the light of change and school improvement. The research procedures and findings reported below add to the present research base through looking at the issue of consultation with respect to educational psychology practice in England and particularly the personal experience of the participants in initial consultations. Given that the literature shows that:

- there is an ever increasing rhetoric around the importance and use of consultative approaches within the work of educational psychologists;
- there are a number of models of consultation being used by educational psychologists;
- espoused theory of practice may vary from actual practice;
- it is necessary for the consultee to be cognitively engaged in the consultation process for change to result;
- there is a limited understanding of the experience of consultation from the participants' perspectives

A critical consideration and resultant increased understanding of the interplay between consultant and consultee is viewed as central to better understanding the elements of effective consultation. Prior to moving to an explication of the research reported here,

this section will outline the limits of research to date and show the rationale for the research described in this thesis.

4.2 Unique Aspects of the Research

This research project offers a unique addition to the research base in this area for the following reasons outlined below.

4.2.1 Limits to Research on Process Issues

To date the vast majority of research in the area of consultation has considered either outcomes from observed analyses of consultations (Graham, 1998) without asking the participants for accounts of their own experience or from asking consultees about their experiences through questionnaire alone (MacLeod et. al., 2001). Miller (1994) did consider the experience of teachers and psychologists, but only in relation to the management of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This research will build on Miller's (1994) research by using a more direct methodology, developed from both grounded theory and content analysis. The present study was unique for two reasons; firstly its methods of enquiry and secondly, it considered the inter-relation of experiences of all the participants. The study focused solely on the process of consultation, rather than the management of particular pupils. The focus, therefore, is significantly different from that taken by Miller (1994).

Petty et. al. (1997), Gutkin (1999) and Baxter (2000) have all reported that the involvement of the consultee is essential in ensuring positive and useful change

resulting from a consultation at the individual or school level. A number of methods or strategies to enhance the likelihood of purposeful involvement have been systematically researched. Without a full understanding of the experience from the participants' perspective, the research base in this area remains limited. If effortful involvement is central to the process of consultation, then it is important to understand the meaning and definition of effortful involvement from the perspective of the participants, particularly the consultee. This seems to lead to the conclusion that qualitative approaches to investigations may be required.

Although a number of researchers have called for methods other than positivist, quantitative approaches to research in this area (see for example Gutkin, 1993; Kratochwill and Stoiber, 2000; Nastasi, 2000), to date, it is rare for school psychology literature to report qualitative findings (Polkinghorne and Gribbons, 1999). One notable exception has been the work of Athanasiou et. al., 2002, who carried out, from a qualitative perspective, a study involving four consultant-consultee pairs. Their research questions addressed notions of causes of behaviour difficulties, ideas about teachers' roles in consultation and beliefs about the consultative process from the different perspectives of consultant and consultee. Amongst other findings, they reported that a key issue in successful consultation relates to the perceptions of the quality of the relationship, irrespective of particular methods of consultation. In their research they collected data from a number of sources based on interviews, questionnaires and focus groups. They did not include analyses of actual transcripts from consultations, which might have thrown further light on the actual experience of consultation from the participants' viewpoint if then compared to information based on reflective recall, gained from interviews and focus groups.

Erchul et. al. (2001) make a strong plea for qualitative research, which focuses on the real and recalled participative experience of the participants. Erchul (2001) states that most school consultation research has considered experiences only from looking in on the dyad in question. Whilst such research can offer good quantitative information, it cannot comment reliably on beliefs and values, or what participative experiences actually drive and direct the course of an interaction. Although Athanasiou et. al. (2002) address beliefs and values from a qualitative viewpoint, their research methodology remains at the level of retrospective information, since they base their research on interviews around case studies. This approach does not actually focus on the real experiences; rather only reported information. In order to focus on Erchul's et. al. (2001) concerns, it will be necessary to devise a research programme, which involves both interviews about certain consultations and transcriptions of actual consultations.

4.2.2 Aspects of Service Evaluation

To evaluate any given individual consultative support it is most effective if supported by both soft and hard data analysis of what has been effective in a given situation. In recent years there has been a drive towards the use of hard data to try to evaluate change and progress. Although hard data is important, much of the consultation literature suggests that the perception of the relationship is central to consultees taking on new initiatives and working through suggested interventions. Athansiou et. al. (2002) found that both consultants and consultees felt that the most important aspect of enabling change to occur centred around two aspects of consultation. These were the relationship between the participants and the requirement for any suggestions to fit within the

phenomenological position held by the consultee. The consultant needed to place their intervention within the consultee's worldview or work to change that worldview. The implications for service evaluation are that hard data alone is likely to focus only on outcomes and not on the processes, which enable successful consultation strategies to develop. Evaluation details need to be based around 'hard' data supporting an analysis of the agreed changes to be achieved along lines of process and product within the school. However, further 'soft' data aimed at identifying the actual processes of consultation will need to be collected.

4.2.3 The Geographical Limitations of the Research

The vast majority of the research in this area has been conducted in the United States of America. It is therefore centrally important to develop a research base in Britain. Some researchers have started to carry out work in Britain, but it is very limited. The recent AEP journal vol.16 issue 1 (Solity, 2000) did focus on consultation solely, but it did not focus on the experience of either consultant or consultee. It focused on how a number of local education authorities and individuals within those authorities conduct consultation. There were no papers which either critiqued or added to the extensive American literature reviewed above, nor were there any, which considered the experience from the participant's perspective. This project will add to the literature base and help start a relatively new area of research within the consultation literature.

4.2.4 Limits of Quantitative Approaches

Most research in this area has taken a quantitative paradigm. The present research is based on qualitative interviews, which are analysed using grounded theory and content analysis. Issues, which underlie the consultant-consultee relationship, will be particularly important to the longer-term effectiveness of consultations. Educational psychologists tend to work in the same patch of schools over significant lengths of time. In fact there is much pressure from schools to maintain consistency and continuity of personnel. Discontinuity of EP is one of the greatest complaints from parents (Kelly and Gray, 2000). The resulting extended relationship means that the work of a consultant in one particular session will be built on and respond to the potential ensuing relationship. Therefore a quantitative approach is likely to miss significant detail based on the forming of a relationship over time.

The use of both grounded theory and content analysis will be complementary. Grounded theory focuses on the actual meaning of a discussion and building up a theoretical understanding from the data, whereas content analysis concentrates on the content of the communication. The two methods of analysis are of relevance when considering consultation, since it is not only the actual content of the discussion, which is important in promoting change, but equally feelings left with the consultee and how the relative weight and relevance of the parts of the discussion may affect those feelings.

Further, most consultations are not one off experiences, but form part of an on-going relationship between the school and the educational psychologist. This fact leads to the requirement to investigate consultation, not only from the perspective of an individual

occurrence, but also through consideration of the values, experiences and perspectives brought into the consultation as a result of previous experiences.

4.2.5 Ethical Issues

This section identifies the main ethical issues and makes comment on how they were addressed. Fox and Rendall (2002) note that ethical principles for educational psychology research are not as developed as those for other psychology disciplines. The principles of the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2000) were followed in this study a short explanation of which follows.

4.2.5.1 Consent

The first issue was that of gaining agreement to carry out the research in one local education authority. This had aspects relating to the authority and to individual schools. The possible concerns of the authority were dealt with by writing a proposal, which was discussed with three senior managers. The discussion involved some changes and a debate about how this research might or might not fit the agenda of the authority. After discussion, it was recognised that this research might be useful in identifying future approaches for consultation and difficulties with present practice.

Prospective participants were gathered through an additional question on a questionnaire that had been sent to 46 psychologists. The question explained the research and gave information about the time commitment, the feedback of findings and assured of confidentiality. The research hypothesis was not discussed both because the

methodology being adopted did not require a clear hypothesis and because it was felt that any sharing of prior assumptions might affect participant behaviour during the research. This is in line with the new guidance from the BPS (BPS, 2000 p.6).

Notwithstanding, it is recognised that an ethical issue remained: that of using some participants for whom the researcher was the line manager. It was considered that the research was ethically valid, since potential participants were assured of confidentiality and feedback, on which comment would be taken as part of the iterative process of grounded theory methodology.

Thirdly, participants in schools were approached for their agreement. Head teachers and consultee were informed about the research and asked if they would participate, having had the time commitments and so forth outlined. Schools were informed that the research was taking an in-depth look at consultation between educational psychologists and school based consultees. They were not informed about the perception of the school from the psychologist's perspective, nor were they informed that the consultant's perceptions of the school's effectiveness might be part of the research design. It is recognised that there could be an ethical issue embedded in not having informed the schools as to the perception of the consultant. However such information might have biased the results. It was felt that this issue was covered in the guidance from the BPS as outlined above.

4.2.5.2 Deception

The BPS (2000) suggests that deception should be kept to a minimum and only employed by withholding the least possible information about possible findings. This issue has been dealt with in the preceding section.

4.2.5.3 Withdrawal from the Research

It is acknowledged that this issue was not addressed satisfactorily. Although participants had every opportunity opt in or out in the first instance, the option for withdrawal was not articulated at all. In fact due to the incremental nature of the research more was asked of participants than may have been clear from the outset.

4.2.5.4 Debriefing

It is considered that part of this issue was managed ethically, through feedback and moderation of findings being part of the design. It is acknowledged that there was no formal debriefing at the end of the research study, particularly in relation to school-based staff. The issues arising were fed back to participants along with non-participants and colleague who had completed the first questionnaire through a variety of sessions held within the service in which the study was undertaken. This cannot count as debriefing and in hindsight it is acknowledged that this approach to feedback could be conceived as insensitive and potentially upsetting for individual participants.

5 CHAPTER 5: METHOD

5.1 Methodology

The following section will outline methodological concerns, which need to be taken into account when designing research. The final research design will then be described in detail.

5.1.1 Focus of the Research

This project is particularly concerned with exploring the meaning of consultation to the participants. Research should consider what is understood by consultation in educational psychology from all the stakeholders' perspectives.

It is an aim that this research should add to the literature on the elements of successful consultation for differently functioning schools. Ravenette (1999) has suggested that the process of change relates primarily to an understanding of the personal constructs of the adults involved. According to Ravenette (1999), without such an understanding then the meaning or relevance of changes from the consultee's perspective may be lost.

Observable change is more likely to occur as a result of the relationship that can be built between the consultant and consultee. To explore this issue it is necessary to ascertain the meaning that is made of any given consultation by those directly involved in the consultation.

The majority of research to date has not analysed the actual experience of the participants within a consultation (Erchul, 2003). Whilst the research literature has been able to make some assertions about a number of issues relating to power and influence, it is still not clear what is the experience of the participants. This limits the ability to identify what are the most relevant and critical aspects of a given consultation to a real understanding of change. Thus there is little certainty about how to go about creating an effective and efficient consultative service. There is a need to complete more research on the variety of ways in which it is possible to present significant and important themes within a consultation process in order to maximise the potential for a positive outcome. To add to the present body of knowledge and offer the opportunity to explore what makes for a successful consultative model it is necessary to consider the issues from the perspective of those involved within a given consultation. If this is to be done it is important to use a methodology, which is able to explore the experiences of those involved as well as being able to address issues arising from the literature review.

5.1.2 The Need for a Qualitative Paradigm

From a philosophical perspective, it is debatable whether the world can be construed as a solid objective experience, or whether in fact the only valid way to look at the world relates to a more participative experience (Capra, 1985). Within the social and interpersonal world, Harre and Secord (1972) considered this issue when conducting research on football hooliganism and crowd behaviour. What they found was that any one picture of the experience did not and could not make sense of the data. Rather a picture of reality could only be constructed by an analysis of the experience from a

variety of different perspectives. In their view, it was only through such a methodology that some semblance of a 'shared reality' could be developed.

5.1.3 Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Paradigms

Lunt (1998) has written about the growing tension and chasm between positivist and non-positivist research paradigms. The work considers their respective allegiances to quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and shows how there is a growing tendency to see one or the other as necessarily paramount, dependent upon one's worldview. This is an interesting concept, which is increasing in favour as qualitative methodologies gain respect. Many researchers still consider that the two epistemological perspectives can complement each other to add value. For example, Miller (1994) in his doctoral thesis uses both quantitative and qualitative information to enhance his exploration of the support systems available to staff, pupils and parents. Further, Morgan (1998) notes that research in health areas is tending towards a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Morgan (1998) asserts that one method will be used to supplement the other primary or principal method. To date the norm has been for qualitative methods to be used to supplement the more central use of quantitative methods. Morgan (1998) suggests the converse, whereby central qualitative methods are supplemented with quantitative methods has been seen as more problematic. Morgan (1998) considers this hierarchy of methods to be the result of a lack of recognised qualitative methods rather than a result of any genuine inadequacies. Although there is still some way to go before qualitative and quantitative methods are viewed as being of equal importance (Stoker and Figg, 1998), research critiques are beginning to consider appropriate criteria for recognising good qualitative research.

Salmon (2003) has developed 'an epistemology of quality.' (Salmon, 2003, p. 25), which describes some details necessary to good qualitative research.

Elsewhere (Burden, 1994; Woolgar, 1996) it is suggested that mixing these paradigms can be problematic in itself. At one extreme, there is a worldview that absolutes can be found (Ayer, 1971). This perspective would posit that all research should build on positivist knowledge. Hawkings (1991) critiques the suggestions of Popper (1959) that the scientific method is one where a theory is put up to be disproved by contradictory data. In suggesting this, Popper was one of the early pioneers to question the possibility of being able to prove a definite objective reality. Rather, it was articulated that scientific methods could only at best disprove a null hypothesis.

More recently the Popperian (1959) perspective has been called into question. Robson (2002) states that real life scientists seek 'to say something sensible about a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally 'messy' situation' (p.4). It is suggested that to understand the real processes of scientific enquiry it should be acknowledged that the theoretical perspective is to a degree pre-set by the researcher involved. Hawkins (1991) states that 'in practice, what often happens is that a new theory is devised that is really an extension of the previous theory' (p.10). Even in the purest apparently most objective enquiry, the researcher will set his or her outcomes within a predetermined theoretical paradigm. This of course, in itself, will bias the questions and the interpretation of results found. Woolgar (1996) articulates the perspective that science is not based on findings of some form of absolute knowledge, but rather follows a line of enquiry founded on 'social relations, beliefs and value systems that pertain within (already established) scientific communities' (p. 207). Therefore it can be argued that scientific

knowledge is in fact based on a social construct, which interacts with the objective physical world. The result of this socially constructed understanding then becomes what is so often referred to as the reality of the world.

5.1.4 The Researcher's Contribution to the Research Process

Woolgar (1996) and Cohen and Manion (1989) state that it is most important that the researcher's contribution to the research process is acknowledged. These biases can operate at conscious and subconscious levels, so are difficult to eliminate. However with an acknowledgement of them it is possible to interrogate the data analysis in an attempt to minimise the effects. Further, McBride and Schostak (1993) suggest that bias can be reduced through a process of referencing and cross-referencing the data during the indexing or categorising procedure. As will be detailed in the following section, this issue was taken into account in the present research. Where possible the data collected through semi-structured interviews and transcriptions of recorded 'live' consultations, after an analysis by the researcher, was returned to and shared with the participants in an attempt to enable further critique and analysis of the data through the use of the principles of focus groups.

The present research considers that it is necessary to move into more qualitative methodologies in order to enquire into the interactive nature of the consultative process.

Within any consultative process there are a number of stakeholders. Mullen (1999), when paraphrasing some of Laing's ideas, shows how, in any interaction there are at least six perspectives at play (Laing, 1972; Laing et. al., 1966): those of the two

individuals are added to by the perspectives of each individual as to the other's beliefs about him or herself. Finally, each person will have a perspective on his or her beliefs' of the other. Therefore, a consultant's interpretation of what he or she hears will be influenced by his or her own filters and through weighing what he or she hears against personal views of what the consultee might be trying to say and in relation to a view of the consultee's pre-conceived view of the consultant. This was summed up by McNamara and Moreton (1995) when quoting Cooley's (1908) concept of The Looking Glass Self:

'I am not who I think I am. I am not who you think I am. I am who I think you think I am.'

Such filtering processes will also operate for the consultee.

The present research will endeavour to unravel the issues appertaining to the different perspectives and meanings in a consultation. Erchul et. al. (2002) point to the effect of the consultee on the consultant behaviour. It is important that an approach to the research is taken, which allows for these different perspectives and gradually builds up a picture of the various stakeholders' views and experiences, without starting from a pre-determined position, theory or paradigm. Thus it is necessary for this research to follow, in the main, a qualitative or non-positivist methodology.

5.1.5 Differences Within the Paradigm of Qualitative Method

Burr (1995) considers the importance of Social Constructivist approaches in relation to such questions of meaning. Essentialist theorising, which views research as attempting to discover the essential nature of human beings, is contrasted with the view that

different personalities and experiences lead to differing ways of constructing the world. The former position is essentially positivist in nature and promotes quantitative methods of enquiry, whereas the latter demands a qualitative approach in which the differing worldviews can be explored and built upon.

In considering a way forward within the possible qualitative frameworks, it is useful to rehearse the various methods that could be used. Fuller (2000) outlines a number of different possible frameworks within the qualitative methodology. These have been taken from Henwood (1996) and can be described as in the following table:

Table I: Frameworks for Qualitative Research

<u><i>Epistemology</i></u>	<u><i>Methodological Principle</i></u>	<u><i>Method</i></u>
Empiricism	Discovery of valid representations (using induction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data display model • content analysis • protocol analysis
Constructivism	Interpretative analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discourse analysis • narrative analysis
Contextualism	Construction of Inter-participative meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grounded theory • ethogenics

Fuller (2000, p. 43)

Elsewhere, constructivism has been referred to as hermeneutics and contextualism as heuristics (Moustakas, 1994).

The issue in relation to empiricism has been discussed above since it is fundamentally a quantitative methodology. Some researchers have tried to bring the differing paradigms together. For example Norwich (1998) considers that empiricism makes no sense without there being an interpretation based on participation or some form of human perspective on the data. Equally there can be no participative interpretative purism without the participant relating to an object of some form. In reality positivist and non-positivist methods cannot be fully divorced from each other.

5.1.6 Limits to Hermeneutic Approaches

In relation to this study, the differences between constructivism and contextualism are of particular importance. Firstly, constructivist approaches (or hermeneutics) follow a methodological principle based on 'interpretative analysis'. This style of epistemology follows the principle of a prior representation or representations of the world to which the researcher is wed. Fuller (2000) argues that discourse analysis and narrative analysis follow a procedure of interpreting recorded discourse or narrative into predetermined cells or categories in order to establish whether particular beliefs or assumptions are valid. In other words the categories are each set up as null hypotheses, but rather than attempting to disprove them, the narrative data is assigned to the null hypotheses. This has a degree of objectivity and rigour to it, which is immediately seductive. The interpretative cells or categories can of course be derived from previous research and therefore an assumed validity can be achieved.

Even when assigning pieces of narrative to a particular category, there may be difficulties about understanding the meaning. For example Casteneda (1993) considers

that interpretations of the world result from 'our energetic conditioning' (page viii). He holds that people conform to a fundamentally positivist perspective on the world, which restricts the possible ways of seeing and interpreting events. Yet, for example, the Innu people of northern Canada believe that the relationship between the gun, the bullet and the death of a caribou is not a linear one. Rather the relationships here involve interpretation of dreams and spiritual beliefs (Samson, 2003). The difficulty elucidated here; that of prior categorisation, is well described in the opening chapters of 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy' (Adams, 1979). Ford, the principal character has knowledge that the end of the world is nigh and therefore does a number of things that are totally sensible within that context. Yet to the earthlings surrounding him, and as which he is masquerading, the actions not only are nonsensical, but also are interpreted to have a particular meaning, which rests within the experience, or in Castenenda's (1993) terms the 'energetic conditioning', of these observers. Although interpretative analysis can be thought to aid objectivity, by starting from a position of interpretation it may bias the findings towards the researcher's worldview and that of the research to date. Thus interpretative analysis falls into the traps, which Hawking (1991) raised in critique of Popper: namely that in reality there is no holy grail; rather theory and interpretation tend to be built on the back of previous theory.

When considering the efficacy of dowsing, Matthews (1998) wrote about an experience, during which the participants took little notice of the evidence in front of them. Rather they explained the evidence within theories already adhered to both within the group and the accepted narrative of the society, even though in order to do this some evidence had to be discarded. The experience involved searching for a water leak through surveying a map and through using dowsing equipment. The map proved useless in

pinpointing the leak at which point the group stopped searching. Interestingly for fun somebody had through dowsing, positioned the leak, but this information was ignored as fantastical. Later on it was found to have been correct. The article goes on to explore this experience in relation to philosophy of science and concludes that it is undoubtedly the case that scientists and other researchers ordinarily prefer to interpret data within already agreed theories. Iliffe (2004) summed this concept up by saying:

‘I understand that medicine is the natural home of hypothesis testing, but that we do not test hypotheses under circumstances of our own choosing but according to our hopes, fears, and competing demands.’ (p.773)

5.1.7 Advantages of Heuristic Approaches

Epistemologies, which are explored using contextualism or heuristics-based research can overcome some of the major difficulties discussed above. There are no ideal methodologies or methods, although it can be argued that, by basing research analysis in grounded theory many of the potential methodological difficulties are addressed. The principal factor in grounded theory is that categorisations and groupings are built up from the raw data without prior categories being assumed. This is a major departure from the process of categorisation when using an interpretative approach, with predetermined categories and assignment of data to the predetermined categories. When using grounded theory the researcher starts without preconceived ideas, considers the data and builds up a picture from the data, which is only then fitted to a theoretical background. This approach was originally described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), when attempting to develop a system for discovering theory from data rather than using

data to test a preconceived theory. The aim with this approach is to elucidate themes and ideas, which come from the data.

5.1.8 Grounded Theory

In a critique of grounded theory, Pigeon (1996) states that in fact grounded theory cannot purport to discover theory from the data without any intervening factors. It is suggested that theory is developed through an interaction or interplay between the data and the researcher's experience. This position is reminiscent of the position articulated earlier and attributed to Cohen and Manion (1989) and McBride and Schostak (1993). It is appropriate to conclude that there are established systems of meaning, both within previous research and within the experience and 'biases' of the researcher, which will form a starting point from which new discourse can be inserted and future theory established.

As with any methodology, grounded theory has limitations. One of the major concerns is its susceptibility to researcher bias, due to his or her previous experience and learning. To overcome this, two precautions can be taken. Firstly, the researcher should ensure that he or she tries to recognise and articulate his or her own bias. Secondly, the language of any discourse should be presented in the style, which is known to be most suitable to the participants through a review process with those involved with the research. Even with these provisos the interplay between researcher and participant will play an important part in the data collection process, the analysis phase and the final reporting.

With respect to the interplay between researcher and participant, Robson (1993) notes that this in itself is a potentially rich source of data. The researcher, because of being a fully participant player, will have a great deal of information which may either take a long time for others to access or will not really be available to non-participant researchers. For example, how does one understand the informal structures and relationships within an organisation, or the relevance of political and structural aspects, without some concept of meaning from within the organisation? Robson (1993) concludes that in some situations insider knowledge may well be essential if one is going to be able to make meaningful interpretations of the data found. It must be recognised that insider knowledge can create biases to which the researcher may inadvertently fit the data. Additionally and unconsciously, the researcher may only 'discover' data that reinforces his or her already held perceptions and prejudices.

It should be concluded therefore that any qualitative data collected and analysed through a process such as that described above may contain biases, the effects of which need to be minimised. McBride and Schostak (1993) concluded that after building up a theoretical understanding of the data, a careful re-analysis is important in a final attempt to reduce unnecessary biases in the conclusions drawn.

There are a number of issues remaining. It is, for example, most important to consider the bias of the researcher. As soon as one moves away from a positivist frame of design, then the researcher must consider his or her own interpretation of the data and how this might actually be biasing the findings.

It has been argued that it is considered possible to overcome this issue to a large extent by making ones own biases overt from the start (Cohen and Manion, 1987). This argument is unconvincing, since it is a truism that in itself a 'baring of the soul' does not necessarily protect from biases. A review of the literature around creating change in perceptions shows that it is possible to expose one's vulnerabilities and yet manifest no change in perspective or practice (Masson, 1997).

A second potential bias is that of the questions asked in the first place. This bias can operate in two discrete ways. Firstly, it has been argued that the questions asked relate to the answers given (Feyerabend & Grover Maxwell, 1966). This is so in the literal form of what questions are asked, but also, in relation to the language used to ask the questions.

These concepts need further explanation. Originally, Feyerabend was of great importance in his critique of the position Popper (1959) put forward. Feyerabend & Grover Maxwell (1966) explored the idea that the very theory that is posited necessarily informs the manner in which an investigation is undertaken. This means that certain possibilities are explored and other possibilities are ignored and therefore made redundant in the first instance. This 'bias' results from the very setting up of a null hypothesis and thus, by definition, possible findings are limited.

Finally, there are a number of significant linguistic issues, which emanate from the work of Wittgenstein (1958). He conceptualised the idea that thought is defined by its language. The language that is used forms the meaning and interpretation of events and

ideas. Therefore the language available to one will affect, and possibly bias, thought processes.

For the present research project, it is of the utmost importance that questions asked are put in linguistic terms that do not merely inform the researcher's possible biases as a result of using his or her language codes alone. Rather the language used needs to be informed by the participant practitioners' language codes, whilst being made accessible to the reader/masses.

5.1.9 Issues to Address When Using Grounded Theory

5.1.9.1 Category Saturation

With grounded theory it is necessary to stay in the field until no further evidence emerges. This process is known as category saturation. The categories emerge as the data is collected and category saturation occurs when no new categories emerge. This suggests that the number of participants should be decided by the degree of saturation reached. Dick (2002) suggests that as categories emerge, new participants should be sought especially those that may refute the emerging category. In this research such an approach to category saturation was not taken, although interview questions were differentially interrogated to inquire more deeply of emerging issues.

5.1.9.2 Issues of Validation

Although Glaser (1992) argued that verification belongs to quantitative research, Goulding (2002) asserts that category saturation builds in a mechanism that leans

towards verification because “it may be strongly argued that grounded theory is validational owing to the symbiosis of induction and abduction during constant comparison of data” (p. 44).

Glaser (1998) maintained the position that the systematic gathering of data and the interplay between the collection of data and analysis allowed theory to evolve:

‘...one gets data in an area of substantive interest, and then tries to analyse what is going on and how to conceptualise it while suspending one’s own knowledge for the time being. The researcher starts finding out what is going on, conceptualises it and generates hypotheses as relations between concepts’
(Glaser, 1998, p. 95).

Grounded theory enables the researcher to compare, analyse and systematically conceptualise data from theoretical sampling. It is through this process that categories may emerge and the main issues for the participants can be discovered. The process may not necessarily be straightforward and the researcher may experience a lack of clarity in the course of allowing the theories to emerge. The researcher must be conscious not to force the data but allow the categories and properties to emerge from the data. Glaser (1998) advised the researcher to note any concerns that may bias the research and record them during the memoing process, a process of keeping notes of ideas for codes, relationships of codes and emergent theoretical positions. (Glaser, 1978). The researcher maintains a memo fund so that ideas coming out of the interviews can be stored, built upon and not be forgotten. This helps to ensure that ideas are not forgotten and can be referred to and codified as the categories emerge.

5.1.9.3 Use of Literature

During the process of data collection the researcher should begin to analyse the data through constant comparison, note taking, memoing, and categorising. When the categories have emerged and are saturated and no new data can be added then the sorting process begins followed by the writing process. (Dick, 2002). Glaser (1998) indicated that in grounded theory a variety of data sources can be employed such as observations, interviews, conversations, journals, letters etc. Although, he encouraged the immediate collection of data through memos and notes in preference to delayed methods such as taping and transcribing interviews, it has been argued that a lack of transcription can limit the objectivity of the process (Dick, 2002).

Glaser (1998) insisted that the theory must emerge from the data and emphasised that the researcher's knowledge relating to the phenomena should not corrupt the data or theory likely to emerge from the data. Knowledge and theory gained from other sources should be perceived as another informant. Glaser (1978) suggested that knowledge and theory gained from other sources if used appropriately should assist the grounded theory researcher in developing a theory that goes beyond thick description. Dick (2002) argues that it is best to read around the subject under investigation prior to carrying out the actual research, but that the literature in the precise area of research should not be studied until it is emerging from the data, since otherwise bias is likely to constrain the coding and memoing.

“Grounded theory is based on the systematic generating of theory from data, that itself is systematically obtained” (Glaser, 1978, p. 2). The task of the researcher is to gather data and analyse what is going on and how it might be conceptualised. Glaser (1998)

argued for this to help generate theory, the researcher needs to suspend any outside knowledge and focus on what emerges from the data. The extent to which outside knowledge can be suspended is dependent on the researcher distinguishing between outside knowledge and knowledge emerging from the data. It is acknowledged that, in this research a thorough literature review was undertaken prior to gathering data and it can be argued that this may have influenced the findings. However, the use of others to verify the emergent categories goes some way to limiting this potential difficulty.

5.1.9.4 Carrying out the Interviews

Ideally interviews should be unstructured and take on the appearance of a normal everyday conversation. However, it is always a controlled conversation, which is geared to the interviewer's research interests. The element of control is regarded as minimal, but nevertheless present in order to keep the informant relating experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the problem (Minichiello et. al. (1995). The techniques used to control the unstructured interview involved a developed list of prepared questions, which were used as prompts in a conversation along the lines of the research interest.

5.1.10 Use of Coding

The use of coding has met with opposition during the evolution of grounded theory. It has marked significant disagreement between the two founders of grounded theory. A brief outline of the developments in grounded theory may help to clarify the context in which grounded theory will be applied in this research.

Glaser & Strauss (1967) outlined the reasons behind the development of the method and the procedures for applying it. Glaser (1978) emphasised that in essence grounded theory is a method of enquiry where the theory emerges from the data. Strauss and Corbin (1990) took grounded theory in another direction by focussing on the mechanics of the methodology. Miles and Huberman (1984) encouraged the use of coding when collecting data. "Coding is not something one does to get data ready for analysis but something that drives ongoing data collection" (p. 63). Kools et. al. (1996) developed these ideas into a number of coding procedures, for example open, axial and selective coding, and techniques of comparison that can be used for intentional manipulation of the data.

Glaser (1992) opposed Strauss & Corbin's (1990) theory saying that overemphasise on the mechanics could diminish the degree of theoretical sensitivity and thus limit the ability for theory to emerge from the data. Stern (1994) argued that Strauss and Corbin (1990) effectively stopped at each word and asked 'what if?', whereas Glaser (1992, 1998) kept attention focussed on the data asking the question, 'what do we have here?' "Strauss brings to bear every possible contingency that could relate to the data whether it appears or not, while Glaser lets the data tell their own story" (Goulding, 2002, p. 47).

5.1.11 Relationships to Content Analysis

Another related qualitative method of analysis is that of content analysis. Stemler (2001) gives a useful overview of content analysis. In his paper it is given the broad definition of 'any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages' (p.1).

Unlike grounded theory, content analysis does not purport to build theory solely from the data. Notwithstanding there are two different strands to content analysis: those of emergent coding (Haney et. al., 1998) and a priori coding (Weber, 1990). When undertaking emergent coding, the data will be reviewed by, ideally, more than one person and from that perusal a view on the coding categories will be agreed upon. The content of the data is then coded according to the determined categories.

When using the a priori method, the categories are decided upon prior to viewing the data.

Traditionally content analysis was thought of as useful for word frequency counts, but its use is far wider than that. It is a method of systematically ‘compressing many words of text into fewer categories based on explicit rules of coding’ (Stemler, 2001, p.5).

However Shapiro and Markoff (1997) assert that content analysis should only be used with other measures in order to enhance the validity and reliability of the results.

Erlandson et. al. (1993) suggest that content analysis is made more credible when triangulated with other methods of analysis.

5.1.12 Methods Adopted in the Present Research

In this study the research methodology will follow the principles of data collection and analysis promoted by Glaser (1998) where the emphasis is on the categories and theory emerging from the data. It is the aim of the researcher to collect the data in the context of Glaser’s (1978) understanding of theoretical sensitivity where the theory emerges

from the categories arising out of the data. Rather than driving the analysis, coding formed part of the analysis through helping to organise emergent theory.

Easterby-Smith et. al. (1996) categorise the grounded theory process of analysis into seven distinct stages: *familiarisation; reflection; conceptualisation; cataloguing; concepts; recoding; linking; re-evaluation*. Tentative forays into the data occur in the first instance followed by a cyclical process of coding units of text into categories of meaning, which both fit the data and give a clear theoretical description. The theory is built from the data without dogmatic recourse to prior theory. This process of data analysis can be conceived as a creative process, which will lead to two distinct types of code: namely those abstracted from the language of the research and those constructed by the researcher (Glaser and Strauss, 1968). Pigeon (1996) and Henwood (1996) state that the success of the coding process will depend on the researcher managing to acquire a suitable level of abstraction from the data. The codes derived from the interviewees' words tend to be tied to the context of the data, whereas the codes employing the researcher's own words will be more theoretically based and will include his or her prior interpretation of the literature.

It should be noted that the analysis of the transcripts of tape-recorded interviews was undertaken using a content analysis approach. The previous findings were used to formulate the categories of investigation during this final phase of the research.

It is acknowledged that in deciding the categories, there was no use of another investigator as suggested for emergent coding. It is therefore most suitable to assert that the methodology of the final phase of the present research is best described as following content analysis using an a priori method of coding.

5.2 Research Questions

There are a number of key questions, which this research wished to explore. These are derived from an analysis of the relevant literature and from an interest in gleaning a better understanding of the issues from the perspective of the participants, whilst balancing this against the reality of consultation as viewed from live taped recordings. Although the essential questions are numbered for ease of reference, no hierarchy of importance is implied.

1. What are the aspects of consultation, which are considered key in consolidating change in a school?
2. Are the key aspects of success the same for consultant and consultee?
3. Do the essential aspects of consultation differ when the working relationship is considered to be positive as opposed to when the relationship is perceived by the consultant or consultee as obstructive or difficult?
4. What is the relationship of experience between consultant and consultee and how do the perceived levels of experience and training effect consultation?
5. What are the similarities and differences between the consultant's descriptions of what happens in a consultation, the consultee's description and the actual recording of a consultation?

6. What is the relationship between espoused theory and theory-in-use as described by the consultant, consultee and recorded description of a consultation?
7. How are the issues of power used in consultations and which aspects of power are helpful in forming a positive working relationship and in enabling change?
8. What importance is there in having an understanding of the dimensions for change; namely structure, power and cultural aspects of the organisation?
9. Are there particular dimensions of analysis, which could be used to group schools into those, which can work well with a particular model of consultation and those, which have different needs?

5.3 Researcher Pre-assumptions

When carrying out qualitative research strongly influenced by grounded theory, it can be concluded that it is not appropriate to set a null hypothesis, since the theory should be built up by careful and iterative analysis of the stories told during interview and taped conversations. The major focus therefore should be on the research questions and an interrogation of the transcribed results to inform discussion around those questions.

It should be recognised that the researcher, through his own experience and an analysis of the literature, is bound to carry some preconceptions into the research arena. For this reason it is considered helpful to propose hypotheses at this juncture, in order that the

reader can be informed of the researcher's expectations prior to considering the descriptive analysis of the results.

In this research it was predicted that:

1. there would need to be particular emphasis on developing successful use of referent power in order to establish effective relationships prior to using informational power.
2. the use of informational power will be key in enabling change, as in agreeing the actions to occur and how change / progress may be measured.
3. the consultation will need to include an analysis of the working aspects of the dimensions of structure, culture and power as well as regular reviews of how things are progressing.
4. the consultation skills necessary to promote change in a school environment for the lower attaining 20% of pupils are different dependent on the school's overall effectiveness as perceived by the educational psychologist.

5.4 Research Procedures

The following section will outline the research procedures adopted for this research.

Initially there will be a rationalisation for the procedures offered. A table outlining the

phases of the research follows, which may help clarify the process for the reader. This is followed by a more detailed description of the phases undertaken.

Table II: Outline Details of the Phases of the Research Undertaken

Phase	Description of Activity	Who was Involved	Reason for Activity
I: Postal Questionnaire	42 questionnaires sent out to consultant psychologists; seventeen (40%) were returned completed	All practising educational psychologists in one large shire county	- to collect views about what makes for successful and unsuccessful consultations - to gain an understanding of the language used by consultants when describing consultations - to compare field workers views to those in the literature
II: Interviews with Consultant	8 educational psychologists completed semi-structured interviews with researcher. Interview focussed on the detail of one successful and one unsuccessful consultation	All consultants worked in a large shire county and had previously completed the questionnaire and agreed to participate in more in-depth study	- to gain an in-depth understanding of consultants perceptions of the processes in successful and in unsuccessful consultations
III: Interviews with school-based Consultees	16 consultees were interviewed by the researcher. The consultees were picked from the consultant's identification of one successful and one unsuccessful consultation. There were two consultees matched to each consultant as below: Consultant A with Consultee A (successful) Consultant A with Consultee B (unsuccessful) Consultant B with Consultee C (successful) Consultant B with Consultee D (unsuccessful) And so forth for each of the eight consultants	All consultees were in the role of special needs co-ordinator although some were also head teachers. All consultees came from the same large shire county	- to gain an in-depth understanding of consultees' perceptions of the processes in consultations and how the perceptions might differ with matched pairs between consultations felt to be successful and those considered unsuccessful from the consultant's perspective

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Phase	Description of Activity	Who was Involved	Reason for Activity
IV (a): Reviews of findings for each consultant – consultee pair with the two participants	Each of the consultation pairs attended a feedback session during which the arising themes and provisional categorisations emerging were shared and discussed	All sixteen consultant – consultee pairs were involved in this phase	- to share categorisations and findings with the participants as part of the iterative process of defining categorisation more precisely
IV (b): Focus group with consultants	The eight consultants met with the researcher to discuss overall findings and make any further clarifications	All eight consultant psychologists were involved in this phase	- to further develop the iterative process of categorisation
IV (c): Meeting with participants	In conclusion to this phase all participants were asked to attend a debriefing session during which the process was explained and there was a final opportunity to comment on and possibly influence categorisation	6 consultants and 2 consultees were able to attend this meeting. These were consultant A, C, D, E, G, H and consultees C (successful), E (successful).	- to ensure that all participants had the opportunity to attend a debriefing session - to further develop the iterative process
V (a): Taped Recording of First Consultations	Recordings of ‘live’, first consultations were made. These were later transcribed	All 8 consultants were involved with this part of the research. However it was undertaken with different consultees from the earlier parts of the research. Further there was no control was perceptions of effectiveness of the school for promoting change	- to gain greater insight into the actual activities and processes of a first consultation - to cross reference the findings of the previous phases of research and to test those findings against ‘live’ practice
V (b): Meeting with consultants to consider transcriptions	The researcher met with available consultants in order to share the transcriptions of the ‘live’ first consultations. Only the transcripts of those present were shared for reasons of confidentiality	3 consultants attended this meeting. These were consultant A, C, G. There were no consultees present	- to share the transcriptions and test them for accuracies, inaccuracies and meaning - to share the finding with the group and to involve them in the iterative process of identifying the meaning of the findings

5.4.1 Phases of the Research

The research process followed a logical sequence of events designed to ensure that, as far as possible, the inherent weaknesses in the design were minimised. A series of studies was completed, which allowed for a process of fine-tuning the investigation in a step-by-step manner. This enabled an increasingly clearer understanding of how to address the design weaknesses and created the necessary conditions for exploring the stakeholders' perceptions of the consultative process. There follows a numbered outline of the phases of study. These have been arranged into four phases, since the meetings with participants is viewed as part of the analysis rather than a phase needing further discussion here.

5.4.1.1 Phase 1: The Postal Questionnaire

In an attempt to address the potential for language bias, a postal questionnaire was initially sent to a number of educational psychologists. This questionnaire (Appendix I) asked about successful and unsuccessful consultations. The success or otherwise was considered in terms of what issues, dilemmas and questions arose and what language the research participants used. The results of the questionnaire then informed both the choice of issues and the language to use when exploring them.

Twelve of the forty-two questionnaires (29%) were returned. This was a disappointing level of return. It may have been due to the questionnaires going out at the end of a summer term. The researcher thought that this would allow people time to complete the questionnaires without the stress of term-time work. It may have been that people just

wanted to relax or went on holiday. Alternatively, individuals may have forgotten to complete the questionnaires until returning after the summer and then thought it too late. In any event the return rate was too low, so another request went out at the beginning of the following winter term. This second sending produced a further five returns, bringing the return rate up to 40%. Since the questionnaires were meant to be a general introduction to the research, this figure was considered adequate, though still disappointing, since for example Horowitz and Sedlacek (1974) reported levels of 69% questionnaire returns without repeat requests, being usual.

5.4.1.2 Analysis of the Questionnaires

The questionnaires were analysed by the researcher the findings were used to form the basis of semi-structured interviews. In order to address the issue of researcher bias, 4 questionnaires (23%) were analysed additionally by another colleague. The reason for this was to search for similarities and differences in categorisation and understanding of the questionnaire results. This process is recommended by for example Stemler (2001) because it reduces potential bias occurring as a result of the researcher's pre-assumptions.

In the first instance the two researchers worked separately so that their primary categorisations were completely independent of one another. Then the two research analysts discussed their findings. A debate ensued, through which an increased understanding of the possible categorisations emerged, along with further understanding of any linguistic biases and interpretations. The underlying principles of grounded theory are to develop an understanding of what is happening through an iterative

process during which the data is interrogated through 'constant comparison' (Dick, 2005). It is therefore appropriate to invite another researcher to investigate the data as part of the process of building up an understanding of what the data is saying. In the event analyses of the questionnaire results did not throw up any significant differences. Nonetheless it was important that the potential for biases was explored.

As outlined above, this iterative process is entirely in keeping with the qualitative research methodology adopted here. Whilst it cannot be concluded that necessarily a greater 'truth' was discovered, the iterative process helped keep an understanding of the possible biases in the conscious mind, whereby their influences could be better recognised.

5.4.1.3 Phase 2: Interviews with Educational Psychology Consultants

The second phase was to complete semi-structured interviews with eight educational psychologists. All were asked to identify two schools: one in which they felt they had been effective in making a successful change and one where they had not. All psychologists worked within one large shire county, but they were distributed across three relatively autonomous areas within the county. Thus practically they did not all work closely together. There was a significant gender imbalance within the consultant educational psychologists, two being male and six female. This reflected the gender imbalance across the service and indeed that of services in England (AEP, 2003). The ages ranged from twenty-nine to fifty-six, with the mean being thirty-seven. Three participants were over the age of fifty and the other five below thirty-five. The level of experience varied widely with two psychologists having been practising for over twenty

years and the others all having had less than three years experience as educational psychologists. There were no psychologists in mid career. Participants were either in their last decade of practice or relatively newly qualified. One psychologist was in her first year of practice.

When using grounded theory methodology, the theory emerges during the process. As a result, as interviews continued it was necessary to emphasise different aspects of the questions in order to explore emergent understandings and to re-interrogate previous participant's assertions. Dick (2005) asserts that the first interview is an exploratory process during which the researcher is trying to discover 'what is going on here'. At this time the memoing process starts so that any ideas of what might be going on are recorded. Subsequent interviews need to explore the previous memoing in order to get more deeply involved in the potential emergent theory. Ideally interviews should continue until saturation is reached. However in the case of this study the number of participants was limited.

The details outlined below explain the order of the work carried out. It should be noted that the emphasis of questions did change to reflect an exploration of the issues and theoretical positions beginning to emerge. These were then tested through a process of further reflection with the participants through a number of focus groups. This process is recommended by Dick (2005) amongst others.

The semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix II) was constructed through consideration of the areas highlighted through the literature review along with an analysis of the questionnaire data. The answers to the questionnaire were analysed in

terms of the cells identified within the literature review and then used to formulate the actual language to be used. Further, prompt questions were decided upon in a similar fashion.

The question styling was tested for validity by asking an educational psychologist colleague to give a view on these aspects. Due to the complexity of this, a first draft of the questions was drawn up by each independently and then the researcher and colleague discussed similarities and differences with access to the raw data from the original questionnaires. This can be thought of as a continuation of the iterative process, which was started with the analysis of the questionnaires. Through this methodology a final format for questions and additional prompt questions was agreed. There was a high level of agreement in the first instance although the actual wording was at times different. Through discussion with reference to the raw data it was possible to agree the final questions, which were then used for phase II of the whole research. It is recognised that the postal questionnaires had been completed by only consultants, which may be a limiting factor in this research. (see Appendix II)

The interviews were based around a first consultation about a given child. The concept of first consultation was deliberately left open since part of the research question was to consider whether there was a consistent understanding of the definition of a first consultation. The analysis of the literature showed the importance of exploring the potential variance around definition. It was unclear as to whether the participants' definition would include all or some of:

- work carried out prior to a first formal meeting;

- relevant knowledge and experience of the child;
- what was perceived as forming the process and product of a first consultation.

In fact, there was considerable variance in understanding, which will be explored in the results section.

This second phase included asking educational psychologists to comment on the consultation process in relation to a school in which the psychologist thought his or her work was successful and one in which it was felt to be unsuccessful. The rationale for this was to aid an exploration of similarities and differences in the consultation process dependent on the perceived success of the relationship between consultant and consultee.

The literature review noted that the relationship between the consultant and consultee impinges significantly on the effectiveness of the consultant. This difference in effectiveness may result from consultee expectations, rather than directly from consultant behaviour. It was thought therefore that to interview SENCOs in schools perceived as effective and less effective by the consultant, within a paradigm that had consistency of consultant, would help this research form a view as to the effect of differing relationships and differing needs of individual schools.

Each of the eight educational psychologists was asked to outline the change situation and the staff involved.

Submission for Thesis at UCL.

The semi-structured interview schedule with specific questions and supplementary optional follow-up questions was used in individual taped interviews to explore the process of consultation from each stakeholder's perspective.

Although the majority of consultees were SENCOs there was some variation. Of the 16 consultees, one was a teacher of children with SEN and second in charge of a department for SEN, two were heads who also held the mantle of SENCO and two were Headteachers, who were not the SENCOs. All staff worked in primary schools, with the exception of the second in charge of a department, who was a secondary colleague.

Key areas covered in the interview schedule included:

- coercion vs. collaboration / directive vs. non-directive approach
- central effortful rational argument vs. peripheral argument
- types of power used and with what effect (coercive, reward, legitimate, expert, referent and informational)
- length, depth and breadth of involvement
- number of people (staff) involved and whether involved as single entities or as a group
- communication methods used including use of questions (Hughes et. al., 1997)
- solution focused principles
- use of systems analysis
- respect for consultee professionalism
- exploration of context from the consultee's perspective

Submission for Thesis at UCL.

- process of reaching solutions / ways forward
- consultation methods found most useful (Schein, 1988)
- key skills which were helpful (Miles et. al., 1988)
- other issues arising from the postal questionnaires
- whether there were effective outcomes to the consultation
- how outcomes were 'known' in long and short term.
- the relevance of relationship issues over time to the effectiveness of the consultant.

The same questions were asked of each participant along with supplementary questions to elicit the full story from the different perspectives as outlined in the methodology section. Differential use of language for different participants was considered since issues around the use of language were identified through the questionnaires. The decision was to use the same semi-structured interview format with both consultants and consultees. The language was changed as required within individual conversations. It may be that this concern about language remained a bias within the research, since there was no objective control over differential language for interviews with consultees as opposed to consultants. Any differences used were dependent on the view of the interviewer, who was trying to gauge the best use of language during interview, but may thus have inadvertently affected answers given.

This research has taken the position that Guba and Lincoln (2000) outline: that post-positivist inquiry searches for probable facts or laws from which commonalities can be inferred and possible cause-effect linkages drawn. It follows therefore that each individual may interpret particular language differently and that each person and sub-

system is contained by time and place (Creswell, 1998). The approach used to minimise biases and misinterpretations was that of summarising and reflecting back what the researcher had heard and asking the participant to repeat and clarify as required. This was done through the use of summarising, paraphrasing and reiterating.

Information in relation to culture and relational aspects of change, as well as information relating to the integration or organic nature of the three dimensions required to enhance change ability, was considered. Specific questions were asked to cover these issues. This information will be discussed in the results section.

5.4.1.4 Phase 3: Interviews with School Based Consultees

It can be argued that the third phase formed part of phase 2. For the sake of clarity it has been separated here. Phase 3 is defined as the interviewing of the consultee in identified schools. In the first instance it had been hoped that this research would confine itself to an individual case and explore the detail of the initial consultation from the perspective of both consultant and consultee. In reality it proved impossible to keep either consultant or consultee focused on the one case to be discussed. Educational psychologists in the consultant role were better at remaining focused on the individual consultation. Most frequently consultees shifted the focus to talking about their experiences of consultations with the particular consultant rather than remaining focused on a particular consultation. Further at times consultees talked about their experience of consultation generally, without sticking even to the consultant in question. This issue will be explored further in the discussion of the results.

The work undertaken in phase 3 was to gather information about the consultee's experience of the consultation and consultation with the educational psychologist in general in order to compare the consultee experience to the consultant experience. The semi-structured interview was designed to draw out similarities and differences of experience in order to help understand the process from the participants' perspectives. This was done with the consultee from each of two schools identified by the educational psychologist. Thus comparisons could be made across schools, across educational psychologists, and between schools defined as being positive to work in and schools defined as being less easy to work in. Through this it was hoped that a rich exploration of the differences between working in positive schools and less positive schools could be undertaken and resultant inferences for practice drawn.

5.4.1.5 Phase 4: Taped Recording of First Consultations

The final phase of the research was to carry out taped interviews of a first consultation between the educational psychologist consultant and consultee. It may be thought that it would have been beneficial to the research design if these consultations had been carried out in one of the previously identified schools for each psychologist. On further analysis, there were two significant reasons why the taped consultations were perhaps better undertaken with the original educational psychologists but in different schools.

Firstly this last phase was not part of the original design. Rather this was a development resulting from the earlier results. As noted above, during the earlier phases, it became clear that there were significant differences between the information being reported by the consultant and the consultee. Additionally, interviewees found it particularly

difficult to focus on a particular consultation and in some cases even on the particular consultant alone. It became increasingly clear that, whilst the analysis would capture the perceptions of participants, it would be different from the reality of an individual consultation. The undertaking of this last phase of the study is in keeping with the notion that through the investigation, additional questions may become important and therefore additional information and investigation may be required (Dick, 2002).

The data from the last phase of the research was analysed through transcriptions, which in the main could not be re-interrogated with the participants. There was an attempt to bring together participants that had been involved in the 'live' consultations, but this was not representative of the whole group. Also different consultees had been involved than those involved in the interviews.

This phase of the research added substance to previous findings, but did not continue the process of emergent theory. Rather the analysis during this phase considered the content of the transcriptions in the light of the previous investigation through interview. An analysis of the content of chunks of conversation was undertaken, the detail of which served to deepen and reinforce previous findings. The process adopted here was one of content analysis as outlined above (page 96).

Whilst it can be argued that the perceptions of the key participants are in fact of greater importance than the reality (Burns, 2000), it was considered significant to try and interrogate information from actual consultations as part of this research. Argyris and Schon (1996) made the point that espoused theory is often very different from actual theory in use, or the consultant's real practice. Additionally, since this research relied on

semi-structured interviews, it was reasonable to suppose that in answering the questions put by the interviewer, who was a local area senior educational psychologist, there may have been some degree of answering questions in a manner that would inspire confidence in or impress the interviewer and / or make significant points of aspiration rather than reality. This potential bias could be applied to educational psychologists and to the consultees interviewed who may have wished to be seen in a particular light, or have taken the opportunity to make general points rather than focusing solely on the consultation being discussed.

The second reason for not interviewing the same consultation pairs relates to the issue of sensitisation. Any exploration of ideas will in itself tend to change practice, so it was felt important to ensure that at least one person in the consultant – consultee pair had not previously been interviewed.

In the planning of this last phase, it was considered that the taping of real first consultations would make a significant addition to the findings. With this additional information it became possible to compare perceptions with a real consultation and to explore the notion that the perceptions in themselves would affect practice.

There are implications for the present research in using different schools and consultees. The ability to explore issues around espoused theory and theory in use is affected by the change of consultee between different phases of the research. It was still possible to investigate differences of experience between consultant and consultee and to comment on any differences in the consultant's behaviour between the consultant's assertions, the experience of the consultee and the transcribed, recorded 'live' consultations. The

results should be considered with caution, because the approaches to consultation may differ dependent on the consultee. The original interviews did not ask about the consultations with the consultee who took part in the transcribed 'live' consultations. It might have been possible to follow up the recorded interviews through a reflective interview with each participant. In the event this activity was not undertaken. It was decided that the evidence from taped interviews was of relevance, since consultants professed to use many similar approaches to consultation throughout their work and because primarily this research wished to consider the possible differences in experience amongst participants.

5.4.1.6 Phase 5: Analysis and Review of Interview Information

After collecting and analysing the data through the use of the iterative process of grounded theory practice, each consultation group was brought together. This involved the consultant and the two related consultees. The process of analysis was undertaken over time. At first the researcher analysed the data into possible categories, as seemed best to fit the data.

During this process individual statements were considered and assigned categories dependent on what was thought to be the significance by the researcher in relation to the literature and the sense that had come from having conducted all the interviews. This process included continual re-assignment as, through looking more closely at it, the understanding of the data changed. . This process followed the recommendations detailed in a previous section and is in keeping with the assertions of Dick (2005), when he addresses the notion of the central aspect of this research methodology being about

the emergence of understanding and theory. As understanding emerges categories may change to take account of the revised understanding. Although the researcher had declared relevant biases prior to analysis, it is not possible to consider this process to be outside of the researcher.

In order to try to overcome a significant degree of potential bias, the general views coming forward were shared with the participants, along with the information and analysis appertaining solely to their own data. They were asked for comments in relation to their understanding and to experimenter accuracy. The information from this process was analysed and added to the previous information in order to minimise researcher bias and to reach a further level of abstraction. In the event, little new information was attained.

The analysis was written up and shared with a colleague for comments. Richardson (2000) makes the point that qualitative research does not end with the writing. Rather the writing itself should be viewed as a continuation of the analytic process.

Categorisation and re-categorisation occurs through the actual process of writing during which new structures and relationships may be discovered. By allowing a colleague access to the work at this point further verification of the results was attained. Creswell (1998) makes the point that qualitative research should be critiqued through using eight verification procedures. These are:

- prolonged engagement and persistent observation. (partially achieved through the multi-stepped approach to this research)

Submission for Thesis at UCL.

- triangulation of sources, methods, investigators and theories. (approached through different methods of data collection and by involving others in the analysis of the research data. It is recognised that this does not achieve triangulation)
- peer review or debriefing. (partially achieved through involvement of colleagues)
- negative case analysis through using (rather than discarding) dis-confirming evidence. (achieved through the analysis of the data as reported in the results section)
- clarifying researcher bias from the outset (partially achieved. Athanasiou et. al. (2002) comment that ideally the literature review should be completed after the inquiry has been completed. In this case the literature review informed the inquiry and therefore in itself may have biased the inquiry)
- soliciting informants' views through member checks (achieved through the review with participants process)
- rich, thick description that allows reader evaluation (achieved through the use of quoted material to back up researcher's views)
- audits of process and product by external consultant (approached through colleague's access to the raw data and written versions of the work. However an audit is not considered to have been achieved)

5.5 Addressing the Potential Limitations of the Study

Several potential weaknesses in the research design have been raised through the method section. There follows an analysis of the major weaknesses of design, many of which (where possible) have been addressed during the execution of the research.

5.5.1 Research Design and Process

These measures served to reduce the biases inherent in the methodology. However non-verbal cues will remain and there is still a danger of bias creeping in, resulting from researcher participation. Potential biases and the measures taken to reduce their influence are discussed below:

- possible researcher bias
- categorisation validity
- the effects of the language used in interview
- appropriateness of questions
- time commitment for research
- time commitment for interviewees

An attempt to overcome some of the potential shortfalls was made by three distinct actions:

1. an open ended 'loose' questionnaire was sent to a number of educational psychologists and teachers in order to gain some first ideas of suitable categories for questions as well as what language to

use. The semi-structured interview was built only after taking cognisance of these findings.

2. the data was categorised first by the researcher and then sample data was categorised by another educational psychologist. The results were then compared and further categorisation occurred as necessary.
3. after categorising the data it was fed back to members of the original participant groups in order to check if there was agreement with the findings and the interpretation thereof. Further adjustments to categorisations were made in the light of comments made, when considered appropriate by the researcher.

In the present research, a colleague analysed a significant portion of the data independently of the researcher in order to minimise the effects of the bias described above. Where there was agreement it was thought that reasonable validity and verification was achieved. In circumstances where immediate agreement was not achieved, further consideration occurred which took the form of a debate with a third party who knew nothing directly about the research. The third party was present to ensure that the language used was appropriate. For this aspect a volunteer professor of linguistics, who specialises in the meaning made of language codes, was asked to comment on the relevance of the use of language to aid appropriate categorisation.

5.5.2 Researcher Bias

This issue was tackled by asking a research assistant to look at the interview transcripts. Similarities and differences of categorisation were discussed and agreement reached. Further, the results were fed back to the participants for their opinions, which ensured that every opportunity to overcome bias was taken.

The iterative process of analysis in itself helped address researcher bias, since the process of categorisation challenged the previously held assumptions of the researcher and demanded clear articulation and rationalisation of the categories used and their meaning.

5.5.3 Categorisation Validity

This concern was approached through similar means to those used to counter researcher bias, namely by asking a colleague to categorise samples of the data independently of the researcher.

Secondly, in feeding back the information to the participants there was an additional opportunity to check that the analysis of the data was reasonable and sensible as well as being acceptable to the participants in the research. Further, this process helped address an ethical consideration. The participants were able to gain from the research through the feedback process and discussions of the results at that point.

5.5.4 Language Effects

The design took this issue into account by the use of the questionnaire prior to forming the interview questions. The questionnaire went to both consultants and consultees. This information was then used to form the questions. At the end of the interview phase sample participants were asked for their views on the language and whether it had been helpful in the data collection process. In the event little concern was raised. These issues had been managed in the interviews themselves, through putting similar questions in different words to help explore consistency and through re-phrasing questions when it seemed to the researcher that there were confusions or uncertainties on the part of the interviewee.

5.5.5 Appropriateness of Questions

This aspect of possible difficulty was overcome by feeding back the findings to the participants and checking that he or she considered that everything necessary had been explored. In the first instance, questions were devised using the information from the research review and the questionnaires. After categorisation, the data was considered alongside the research in order to ensure all issues of relevance had been covered.

5.5.6 Time Commitments

Time commitment cannot really be considered as a source of bias, although had participants not been aware of their time commitments it was considered possible that they could have dropped out, which would have had a deleterious affect on the research,

especially when using the design in question. However all participants were asked if they were happy to participate and informed of the time commitment required. In the event nobody dropped out during the interview phase.

5.5.7 Biases Due to Participants' Wish to 'Please' the Researcher

In the view of the researcher this aspect of bias was probably the one with most potential bias. However participants were not prepared for the questions and did not have any idea of the body of research or the views of the researcher. Educational psychologists had been trained at different times and some had received direct training on consultation. Nonetheless, there were no discussions of the role of consultation prior to this research. Participants had only their own ideas of possible correct answers. It was made clear to all participants that there were in fact no correct answers and that what the research was trying to consider was the reality of practice rather than the theory of good practice.

Secondly the interview findings were balanced against taped conversations of a 'real' consultation. This further reduced the potential effect of the bias, although of course participants were aware that the consultation was being taped which may have affected their behaviour in itself. However when asked after the taping of the consultations, five consultant and seven consultee participants said that they had forgotten about the tape recorder very rapidly. Further there was no evidence of hesitation or faltering on the actual recordings, which might have been expected if participants were being affected by the recording. Nonetheless, it should be noted that for three consultant colleagues there was a perception that their practice had been affected by being recorded.

5.6 Notes on the Use of a Pilot Project

When undertaking any research project, it is always sensible to carry out a pilot project, which closely follows the main project. The aims of the pilot are to:

1. iron out any difficulties which may occur in the full project.
2. develop understandings which will enhance the main study.

The idea is that the pilot study and the main study can be seen as complementary to each other, with the main study being informed by findings from the pilot study. This latter issue is of relevance here.

The present investigation set out to examine not only the meaning of consultation per se, but also those of differing consultation skills dependent on school efficacy. This study was carried out as a series of steps, each informed by the previous phases. It is therefore inappropriate to think of one particular phase as a pilot; rather the whole research project led to a realisation that it would be necessary to tape record first consultations and to compare the results of those with previously attained interview data. It is considered most appropriate to conceive of this study as following a series of phases, which were informed by the previous work.

6. CHAPTER 6: RESULTS

6.1 Framing the Results from a Philosophical Perspective

This section will present the findings, which emerged through the research processes. It is inappropriate to claim any certainty from these results due to the size of the sample and the limited spread of the sample.

It can be argued that generalisation of most findings should be treated with caution. Feyerabend (1987) among others, has asserted that quantitative information is based on statistical beliefs, which in themselves do not produce certainty. Rather the quantitative position relies on the proposition that it is reasonable to assume that a particular level of probability can be treated as if it contains certainty. When such a statistical finding can be bedded in a theoretical paradigm the assumption of proof reaches a position of ascendancy. However, the position which can be achieved through such a positivist argument is, asserts Feyerabend (1987) manifestly flawed, since it relies on statistical principles, which at best can only inform as to a temporary disproof of a null hypothesis (Popper, 1959).

The literature on methodological principles and assumptions contains further arguments, which point to the dangers inherent in positivist explorations of complex social and interpersonal scenarios, such as the present research. For example Bernstein (1996), when considering classifications reached through rigorous research methods, nonetheless notes that the resultant classifications often come 'to have the force of natural order and the identities it constructs are taken as real, as authentic, as the source

of integrity.’(page 21). Yet the classifications reached are no more or less than constructs, which are primarily reliant on the researcher and his or her perceptions of reality. It is therefore more appropriate to explore the present results, not as a way of reaching some absolute truth about consultation, but as a way of adding depth and breadth to an understanding of the consultative process. The author hopes to offer insights into the real dilemmas and tensions present within any given consultation and thereby to elucidate ways forward in the management of educational psychology services. The results will enable readers to reflect upon an analysis of what occurs within a consultation process.

The qualitative information, which will be explored below, offers a rich basis of understanding of the complexities involved in any given consultation. These range from issues of power, to those of complementary roles and relationships and the structure and culture of different organisations. The discussion of the results will focus on the main areas of concern identified within the literature and articulated within the key questions (page 95) in order to establish whether this research corroborates or differs from previous findings. There will then be a section, which considers the unique findings from this research. This final section will concentrate on the new potential categorisation of information, having followed a grounded theory approach to analysis.

6.2 Information from the Postal Questionnaires (phase I)

The following section details the results gained from the seventeen completed postal questionnaires (phase I). A content analysis was made of the sequences, themes and improvements listed by each respondent. Closely similar arguments were collated under

a single heading and a frequency count was made of the references to the concepts under each heading. This method is outlined in, for example, Robson (2002).

6.2.1 Question 1: *Considering a consultation with a successful outcome*

This question was split into three parts in order to encourage participants to consider the sequence of a consultation, the main themes and any improvements that could have occurred in relation to both the outcome and the process. These were dealt with separately.

It was expected that the sequences would be similar across different educational psychologists. From the responses to the questionnaires, it was very difficult to pick out any consistent ideas. The concepts of consultation ranged from one participant who started with a description of the interview and assessment of the child, through to another, who suggested that the main sequences of the consultation related to the consultant's perception that he really had little to offer. This was articulated in the case of a successful consultation being based on a process, which relied on '*the teacher's expectation that I would reach the same conclusion as she had arrived at herself, several months previously.*'

Although there was some degree of consistency across questionnaires as will be shown below, the consistency was limited and should not be construed as suggestive of consistent practice of a model for consultation. The number of questionnaires mentioning the particular phase of consultation is recorded in brackets.

Submission for Thesis at UCL.

- Discussion with SENCo - 9 (53%)
- Data usage of similar difficulties - 5 (29%)
- Discussion with class teacher - 5(29%)
- Agreeing priorities for change - 5(29%)
- Clarifying situation - 5 (29%)
- Discussion with Teaching Assistants (TA) - 4 (24%)
- Talking with parents - 4 (24%)
- Liaison among professionals - 4 (24%)
- Use of research information 're possible solutions - 4 (24%)
- Discussing successes to date - 4 (24%)
- Joint problem solving - 4 (24%)
- Listening to anxieties - 4 (24%)
- Clarifying EP's perception of the difficulties - 4 (24%)
- Deciding and agreeing actions to occur - 4 (24%)
- Meeting involving school staff and other professionals - 2 (12%)

It is of interest that there was so little consistency in approaches to the consultative process. Whilst it is reasonable to assume that any one consultation will differ from another, if there is as little consistency in process as suggested by the responses to the above question, a number of difficulties are likely to present themselves. For example, how will a consultee be able to prepare for a consultation if he or she cannot rely on a common understanding of the likely agenda?

If there is so much inconsistency, it seems likely that educational psychologists are using different psychological constructs to determine their working practices. From the

questionnaire results there seems to be no framework to which everyone is operating, even in the situation where all those asked to complete a questionnaire worked for the same service. Thus even at the level of espoused theory of practice there are significant differences among individual practitioners.

The service being researched, whilst promoting consultation, has tended to articulate a problem-solving framework of practice. The questionnaire results point to a variety of conceptual frameworks being used, which cover a number of different psychological theories. For example, one psychologist stated that the most effective aspect of consultation was allowing individual staff '*space to explore, without interruption*'. Another talked about the need to '*impart a genuine open minded attitude in the teacher, which would have allowed for more than the one outcome she had in mind*'. This participant commented that teachers most frequently think of teaching as a parenting task rather than a research or knowledge based task. Still other comments pointed to the role of senior managers in '*making things happen*' and the need to work with the parental anxiety rather than by directing an intervention.

Additionally, there were comments which related to the role of the consultant in '*holding the anxiety*', which seemed to imply a psychotherapeutic perspective and one return described the importance of '*understanding each stakeholder's perspective*' in order to consider a systems theory based solution to the presenting problem. This description suggested the use of personal construct theory, along with systems principles. Still others considered issues from the basis of brief solution focused theory and some seemed to present no theoretical underpinnings to their practice.

The analysis of question one showed there were a wide variety of approaches being adopted by different consultants. Whilst this may in part relate to different types of difficulties being brought to the consultation interview, it could suggest that there are no clearly agreed approaches to consultation nor indeed understanding of what a consultation should entail. Nor is there evidence of any agreed theoretical underpinnings and psychological theories, which might be required to practise consultation. In order to explore this further and to help with the search for consistencies, it may be appropriate to look at less successful consultations. It may be that greater consistencies can be found through looking at the common themes, which may present when things go wrong.

6.2.2 Question 2: *Considering a consultation with an unsuccessful outcome*

There was greater consistency when looking at unsuccessful consultations. A strong theme that came through related to the consultee having a predetermined agenda, often filled with negative views about a particular child (often also the LEA) and usually concerning the consultee having already made up his or her mind about the appropriate outcome. The consultee often blamed the difficulties on the consultant or the consultant's employer, namely the local education authority. This frequently related to the perception that the LEA was withholding resources or to ideological issues surrounding the principles of inclusion. There was no room for manoeuvre for the consultant.

Although all but one educational psychologist (16; 92%) chose an example, which related to the consultee having a fixed, usually blame based agenda, very different wordings were used to describe such issues. These ranged from the consultant, who saw

the problem as her '*incapacity to say something, which makes the teacher stop and think*', through to there being not enough time: '*time prevented me from being able to salvage the situation*'; and '*time to confront the teacher about her beliefs and the effects of self-fulfilling prophecies*', to the '*EP being stuck in the middle*' between the LEA and the school and feelings of blame back to the school for '*not taking actions at stage 3*' (School Action Plus (SA+)).

It can be concluded that there are significant issues relating to power and the lack of shared and agreed perceptions of the consultant's role. The language used when answering questions in this section of the questionnaire tended to be blaming of the consultee. This suggests that a number of consultants considered that there is a particular expected outcome of consultations, which rests to a significant degree with the consultee. This is an interesting idea, when considered against Schein's (1987) model of process consultation. Schein (1987) makes it clear that, when following the process model, the consultant is responsible for the process and the consultee for the outcome. The questionnaire results suggest a very different construct, in which the consultant may feel it is an impossible task to manage the process due to the consultee's behaviour and preconceptions.

A second theme in unsuccessful consultations was that of ensuring the involvement of the correct people. Again the issues varied in that two psychologists considered it to be of the utmost importance to have present those that worked directly with the child concerned. Four others felt the presence of the SENCo was central, in order to ensure 'follow through'. Still others (2) considered the '*clout*' of senior managers to be central to successful consultations. Nobody mentioned the need for there to be any presence or

involvement of the child or the parents when considering what might have made an unsuccessful consultation more successful. This was surprising, given the move towards greater pupil involvement (Fielding and Bragg, 2003) and community psychology (Stringer and Powell, 2004).

6.2.3 Question 3: *The most important elements to ensure successful consultations*

The final part of the questionnaire referred to the five most important elements of successful consultations. Again there was significant variation among respondents. There was general agreement (82% of respondents) that a central element to successful consultation lay in all participants having a clear and agreed understanding of their role and the agenda for the particular consultation. Other issues varied. Four participants (24%) mentioned the need for enough time and six (35%) others pointed to the need to ensure the relevant people were present. One was firmer about this issue, stating that the agent of change had to be identified and needed to understand and accept his or her role. Other issues mentioned, but by less than 4 respondents included:

- the need for good listening skills,
- the requirement of ground rules to ensure that everybody is heard appropriately,
- clarity of purpose and goals,
- ensuring that all aspects of meaning are 'unpacked' and made clear,
- consultant educational psychologists being taken seriously by schools and consultees,

Submission for Thesis at UCL.

- the need to establish common ground and acceptance of what is reasonable,
- ensuring an evaluation structure for decisions and actions,
- ensuring participant ownership,
- the need for consultations to include not only those who will carry out the interventions, but also staff with enough authority to implement and evaluate them,
- ensuring that the right questions are asked,
- having a venue with suitable status and privacy,
- having as much information as possible as to each stakeholder's views prior to the consultation so that the meeting does not become 'hijacked',
- re-framing and re-phrasing the issues as part of problem clarification,
- ensuring that those required to implement the plan can identify what they will do and what they expect to happen as a result.

The list of the elements present in successful consultations, whilst not exhaustive, did cover many of the themes in the literature. The outstanding concern raised for the purposes of the present research was that each consultant had very different statements included in his or her own list. The greatest consistency lay in the consultants' pleas for an agreed understanding of the function of consultation, the role of the consultant within consultation and the requirement for an agreed agenda for any given consultation. The plea for clarity suggests that there is presently no consistency of practice. Other elements required for effective consultation were mentioned only by individuals.

6.3 Phase I: Themes Arising from the Questionnaire Survey

The primary reason for completing questionnaires with consultants as a pre-investigation to the main study, was to ascertain any aspects needing further research. The presenting issues were to be added to the list of key questions emerging from the literature.

There was an additional reason, which was to consider issues around language in order to attempt to reduce any bias resultant from language codes. In the event, the information contained in the completed questionnaires varied so widely in both content and style that it was concluded that the major requirement would be to ensure that questions were asked openly with further questions being asked for clarification.

A number of themes did emerge from the subsequent questionnaire data, which are outlined below. These themes were explored in the interview and the transcribed, recorded consultation phases of the research. In those cases where the language style was considered significant, this is commented upon.

6.3.1 The Need for Clarification of the Role and Practice of Consultation

The questionnaires pointed towards there being little consistency of understanding of the meaning or function of consultation. Over 50% of the questionnaire returns commented on the very real frustration that occurs for all participants when this is the case. It seemed that, in part, this resulted from the school's agenda often being resource driven, whilst the educational psychologists perceived their role as essentially related to

problem clarification and solving. The majority (82%) of returns from the question on unsuccessful consultations pointed towards participants holding different agendas and to the consultees having pre-emptively decided what would be a successful outcome. One psychologist stated that her feeling was of '*being caught in the middle*' between the bidding of the LEA and the wishes of the school for the pupil to transfer to another school. Another referred to the frustration resulting from not being able to interact with the consultee to enable a discussion about possible alternatives.

Although frustration with the consultee was aired vociferously, it was rare that consultants acknowledged similarities among their own perceptions of consultation. Therefore it seemed particularly important to explore the level of consistency in the process, function and product of consultations and the meaning of the behaviours either between consultants and consultees, or within the group of consultants and indeed the group of consultees.

6.3.2 Issues of Influence

A number of questionnaire responses (59%) alluded to issues around power. This theme presented itself in a variety of ways, which ranged from one psychologist, who noted her inability to say the right things to 'loosen' the consultee's predetermined views, to another who recorded that he was not taken seriously. A further three (17%) noted that had there been more time they could have confronted the consultee and / or ensured that their (the consultants') view was heard and agreed to. It seemed that another area to explore was that of power and the power relationship not only in an individual

consultation, but also with respect to roles and expectations held by the consultee outside of a consultation, which might affect the consultation.

6.3.3 The Relevance of Ownership

This theme came through strongly, but in a confused manner. 53% of respondents mentioned the need for ownership to be established. Yet the majority of those (82%) also mentioned that their dissatisfaction at the outcome of the unsuccessful consultation was due to the inflexibility of the consultee. This suggests that the requirement for ownership lay at a superficial level. It seemed to refer mainly to the idea that without ownership consultees were unlikely to carry out an agreed intervention. Whilst this notion is undoubtedly correct, another concept, which is integral to the notion of ownership, refers to the link between the ownership of the problem, the effortful involvement in seeking understanding and potential solutions and the responsibility for carrying out appropriate interventions as agreed by the consultee, rather than as imposed on the consultee. In trying to understand the concept of ownership it may be important to include notions of the consultee's world-view and how this may relate to his or her subsequent analysis of the issues and understanding / acceptance of possible ways forward. This notion of ownership needed further exploration through interviews.

6.3.4 Who to Involve?

This issue came through from the lack of consistency in the respondents. There was a great range of ideas about who should be involved. In two cases there was a mention of the importance of the presence of powerful people in the school's hierarchy in order that

an intervention could be achieved. Others referred to the importance of the SENCo's presence and still others to the need for the presence of the agent of change.

Nobody referred directly to the need to involve parents or pupils. It may be that respondents assumed they were being asked only about consultations between school staff and the educational psychologist. Notwithstanding, one respondent did go into some detail about the need to work through parental anxiety. Whatever the reason for a lack of inquiry about the pupil or parental perspective, there was little agreement as to who the consultee was in the school. Therefore the issue of who to involve needed further exploration to help understand the complexities behind these inconsistencies.

6.3.5 Questioning and Listening

The final theme to arise from the questionnaires was that of listening and questioning skills. 67% of respondents mentioned the importance of setting the scene correctly so that each participant could be heard as necessary. Others (28%) mentioned the need for ground rules and one other mentioned the importance of getting the questions right in order to elicit the appropriate conversation. This notion is central to a variety of approaches to consultation and central to achieving interesting and different ways forward (Hymer et. al., 2002), yet was raised by only one consultant in response to the questionnaire.

Three respondents (17%) mentioned the need to live through '*the chaos phase*' and one talked about '*holding the anxiety*'. Considered alongside issues relating to the needs of the consultants for solutions that fitted their views of the function of consultation, the

situation becomes more complex. For reflective listening to happen (Peck, 1998), there needs to be an open agenda and all participants need to feel that their contribution is worthwhile and will be listened to with appropriate gravitas. Problem analysis, re-framing and solution identification are then achieved through the strategic use of questioning to help move forward the thinking of the consultee and indeed the consultant, who may also be changed as a result of the consultation (Jensen et. al., 2002). This seems a complex issue in itself. When overlaid with issues of power and authority, which have already been alluded to above, the themes of questioning and listening become extremely complex and therefore worthy of further investigation through interview and analysis of recorded consultations.

6.4 Interviews with Consultants and Consultees and Analysis of Transcriptions of Recorded Consultations

Much thought went into whether this part of the analysis should rely on an amalgamation of the remaining information, or whether the interviews and recorded information should be split into their individual parts. If information from interviews with consultants was analysed in the light of consultee comments and information gained from the tape recorded consultations, a fuller understanding of the issues appertaining to espoused theory and theory in use might come to light. On the other hand, if the data was analysed separately for each phase of the research greater detail of individuals' experience would be the focus.

After much deliberation, it was concluded that the richest picture would emerge from an analysis of the information by individual phase, which would allow for a view to be

This is in line with the point emphasised by Glaser (1998), that it is important not to force the data into previously assigned categories. The process of coding and re-coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994) was carried on through 'constant comparison' until the researcher was satisfied that the main themes emerging were accounted for.

A similar process to that described above was used for the analysis of the consultee interviews, where again the questioning was varied through differential emphasis in order to explore issues arising in greater depth as required. This is in keeping with the suggestions of for example Minichiello et. al. (1995).

6.4.1 Phase II: The Consultants' Responses Within the Interview Situation

a) Perspectives on what is consultation

There is general agreement that part of a definition of consultation would include joint problem solving through discussion with staff in schools. In the main, respondents' definitions of consultation referred to its difference from the role of expert. For example: *'you are not going in as an expert, you know it better, you are going in and you go in an equal power sharing relationship'* and *'I think consultation model is an advantage because I don't feel that I would be happy to take on an expert role'*, and *'what I understand by consultation is a joint problem solving with schools as opposed to myself going in as an expert offering advice and strategies ...'*. Definitions referring to consultation as opposed to the expert role have prima facie strength, but when a definition is reliant on information about what it is not, it is likely to be weak.

formed on themes emerging for consultants and consultees separately. This information could then be considered in the light of the data from the transcribed recordings of 'live' consultations.

This analysis was then followed by a review of the information through interrogating the data for consistencies and inconsistencies within the individual cases by considering the four related investigations of a particular consultant interview, the two related consultee interviews and the associated transcript of the 'live' consultation. This information was then amalgamated in a search for common themes.

It was decided that the analysis should follow the structure of the interview questions (see appendix II), since they formed the logic of this research investigation. The essential questions would be addressed individually in the concluding section of the data analysis. Notwithstanding as issues arose throughout the sections, relevant questions would be addressed.

Phase II of the analysis followed the principles of Grounded Theory and the practice detailed in, for example, Dick (2005). Firstly the interviews themselves were slightly different in emphasis as they continued. This followed the principle of 'constant comparison' as suggested through emergent theory practice (Dick, 2005). Having completed the interviews, the transcripts of interviews were read and the information assigned to initial categories as suggested by for example Goulding (2002). The information was re-read with particular consideration of exceptions to the previous categorisation and for confirmation of the categories. Information was reassigned through a process of greater abstraction and reworking of the transcribed interviews.

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This research showed that the practice of consultation varies enormously from practitioner to practitioner, which may be in part due to the agreed definition being reliant on excluding factors such as '*not expert*'. There was one definition voiced which took a very different stance by being significantly wider and more active in nature: '*listening to the identified person in school, asking them questions in the expectation of a response to it, um the framing of the question and the response being in terms of the entire organisation of the school, the place of the child, the child as the focus of concern, um the place of the child in it and the entire organisational context; LEA context and the national government legislation context of the school*'.

This definition puts the consultative process in a much wider context than merely defining it as joint problem solving and a move away from the expert role. The participant giving this definition, continued by stating that in his view, it was not a helpful definition because '*it is not enough of what the school want. The school still see things, despite the EP claims to the contrary, problems as within child problems and so the consultation approach is not really enough of what they want.*' It seems that his concern about the definition relates more to the ability to practise within this definition than to the definition itself.

Immediately there seem to be some issues about power. On the one hand participants considered consultation as offering a route to sharing power and responsibility for problems. Yet the follow-up quote suggests that this model does not work because it does not fit with the schools' perspective. Rather there is resultant conflict in which '*the school will in effect manipulate the conversation back to the individual child and back to resources so they manipulate my conversation back to the ...*'. This text can be

seen as relating to power issues again, at two levels, not only through the use of words such as '*manipulate*', but also by the very fact of assuming ownership of the conversation. One of the differences between definitions could be argued to be about the degree to which power can be shared on an equal basis. The wider definition, which seems helpful in relation to framing the work required, seems to have fallen on fallow ground. The other though does not help in forming the breadth and depth of practice, although it does remain safe. Clearly there is some confusion here, which may be better addressed through consideration of the working definitions understood by recipients of consultants' behaviours, namely the consultees. This issue will be explored in greater detail in the analysis section on phase III.

b) The processes within a consultation dialogue

Participants were asked to describe the process they adopted when undertaking a consultation. Answers ranged from those who followed an intuitive model based around listening, through participants who adopted a model, which concentrated on exploring possible solutions, to more specifically structured approaches to a given consultation. The responses showed there is no consistent model being adopted. 50% of the respondents mentioned a framework to which they worked. This was based around a three-part problem-solving framework aimed at clarifying the issues, identifying possible ways forward and articulating the detail of the actions to be carried out.

The literature suggests that it is most important to clarify roles and role responsibilities in relation to each consultation. Only one respondent mentioned anything about discussing roles, without being specifically directed towards the issue. The majority of

consultants (75%) referred to the difficulties inherent within working in a consultative model, when school staff often already had a solution in mind and presented with a relatively fixed mental attitude. Further, 87% of consultants felt that there was pressure on them to come up with solutions and ideas. This was perceived as putting the consultant into the role of expert. The school staff seemingly wanted to take up a dependent role: *'they want you to be in charge and they want you to be the person to let them free of responsibility'*. It seems clear that a discussion about roles and expectations at the outset of a consultation might have helped consultants maintain a specific role and consultees to be clearer about their responsibilities and expectations.

When roles and role expectation were discussed overtly after a prompt from the interviewer, it became clear that individuals differed in their expectations of the role and how best to confirm those expectations. Two respondents thought roles became clearer over time: *'they are less officious when they know that they know the way you work'*. One other thought that her work was carried out at an intuitive level and as a result seemed to feel that clarity of roles might actually hamper the process: *'it tends to be very much conversation person to person with my trying to gain impressions I work too instinctively perhaps.'* Another thought that the roles were clear, but only at the level of the individual being clear about his or her own role. It was only through the discourse of the interview that this respondent began to reflect on the possible need for each person to have an understanding of how the other party perceived his or her own role: *'that sort of clarity is not there and the consultant is seen as someone who is going to solve the problem rather than manage the process – with greater discussion of the differing perceptions of roles the manipulations might be reduced.'*

The processes within consultation varied in terms of hierarchical structure. One respondent described the process as *'where there is one person asking the question and one person helping to provide the answer.'* She was clear that within a consultation she *'wouldn't feel able to suddenly say can you help me with this ...'* On the other hand two others felt that they should not offer solutions. Their responsibility lay in asking the correct questions and not in giving answers.

Participants veered away from perceiving a consultation from a narrow perspective. Two did consider that each consultation was a single and discrete act, but three others considered that consultation was a process rather than related to a single meeting. One went further and described consultation as *'even more than a way of working, almost a way of thinking and interacting.'* A further two participants felt that consultation grew through the relationship that was formed with the school and staff over time. This suggests that, for some, consultation was perceived as a process, the routines of which develop over time, through building a working relationship with the school staff, particularly the SENCo.

In the two cases where this process was articulated, other issues arose. In one case the consultative relationship was described as involving a very fluid set of circumstances, in which consultations were not set within any boundaries, although the consultant was perceived as being in an advice giving role. The other based her work on intuition. It seems reasonable to conclude that in reality the two respondents who perceived the consultative relationship as formed over time, do not have a clear definition of consultation. They have taken a position, which allows the contact relationship to develop over time with no particular direction to their working framework. Whilst this

may form an easy working relationship, it is likely that there will be significant limitations to the rigour of the relationship with resulting compromises over time.

c) Who is involved in consultations?

Consultants had differing opinions about this. Since consultation was seen as the whole process, many respondents considered that a large number of people might be involved in the consultation process. The main participants were seen as the SENCo, the class teacher, teaching assistant, parents and sometimes the head. One person did not differentiate between consultative visits that might be focused on a particular problem in a school and those that related to annual reviews or multi-professional meetings.

Although this might fit with the Lincolnshire definition that 'everything we do is consultation' (Dickson, 2000), it does not rest easily with the common definitions outlined in this research. All other respondents involved more than a single consultee in the consultation process, but each person tended to include different people. Two talked of consultations being a process, which first involved talking with key people and then moving to assessment work with the child. The final part of a consultation was perceived as about problem solving with all the available relevant school based people and for one, the parent as well.

Whilst the interview did not try to offer a definition of consultation, interviewees were asked to concentrate on a specific consultation. It is therefore of interest that such a wide focus was taken by participants. It was expected that participants would stick to exploring a specific consultation, in the sense of a single conversation. This was not the case. Wagner (1995) describes consultation as a process. Nonetheless her approach

focused on an individual consultation, during which a number of actions to be carried out might be agreed. Notwithstanding the influence that Wagner (1995) has had on models of consultation in educational psychology, the interviewed consultants expanded the concept of a consultation into a completed piece of work, which might involve a number of staff and other adults.

Another aspect related to the need to ensure change occurred as a result of the consultation process. Although there was difference among participants, there was general agreement that for a consultation to be useful, a practical plan of action was a required outcome. Two people considered it essential that the agent of change, or the person who would be carrying out any given intervention, usually the teaching assistant, was involved at the action planning stage of a consultation. Four others did not mention any particular requirement of people to be involved, other than those from the school who put themselves into the consultee position. Two others thought of the consultee as the SENCo. The presence of the head was sometimes assumed. Only one consultant mentioned the involvement of parents. This is discussed below.

d) The involvement of parents in consultation

In one case parents were considered to be central to the consultation process. On closer inspection, this aspect of the work seems to move away from a consultative model into a meeting management model. Two quotes, which may help illustrate this notion, are set out below:

'very often I will have a meeting with parents, SENCo, class teacher, TA and at this meeting I will then say, usually I have spoken to the class teacher and so on beforehand'

and

'I tend to land up sort of leading these, which I do not always intend to do but it sometimes, they (the school staff) sort of sit there and look at me and I end up with it'.

This type of meeting seems to fail to fit into a model of consultation on two accounts. Firstly, there have been prior conversations with the essential staff in the school, so it is difficult to imagine how at the time of the parental involvement, there is any opportunity for equality of power. Secondly, the consultant seems to be cast in the role of the chairperson. This allows the apparent consultees to pass the responsibility for the outcome and subsequent actions of the consultant. A perceived strength of this particular consultant, from the consultee's perspective was her ability to gain parents' confidence in and engagement with the interventions suggested. The consultee reported very positive feelings towards the consultant due to her ability to engage parents and to enable them to make changes at home.

This issue will be discussed in greater detail in the analysis sections. Here it is important to note that the consultant was participating in a process, which focused the difficulties with the parents rather than focusing on the capacity of the school to resolve difficulties themselves. It may be the case that the consultant had become involved, unwittingly in

colluding with the school in laying the responsibility at the door of the parents and in take a coercive role with them

On this point there was significant disagreement between the participant consultant and consultee. When these results were brought back to the consultation dyad, the opinion of the consultant was that she was in a role of mediating between the school and parents. Even though the consultee felt that the consultant had enabled the parents 'to see the error of their ways', she felt she had remained impartial and that there had been movement in both parties. The consultee felt that the difficulty that the school had, had been resolved by the intervention of the consultant with the parent.

With respect to the issues of power and consultation some interesting points follow from this discussion. Firstly, if consultation is meant to further empower the consultee, it is clear from the consultee's comments that she had put the consultant into an expert role and had relied on the consultant to 'do her magic'. Secondly, whether the consultant had remained impartial or not, the fact remains that the parents made the major changes and the consultee did not acknowledge any changes, which she may have made at school level. Two important points result from this. It is unlikely that the consultee's changes, if made, will be maintained over time because of the lack of ownership (Goleman et. al., 2002) and the power structure from the perspective of some of the participants was not one of equality. It seems that some degree of collusion did occur and enabled the consultee to feel supported, but neither effortfully involved nor significantly challenged in a manner that might support her growth and help to embed change over time.

e) Issues relating to the use of power

The literature review is clear as to what aspects of power are most suitable to use in consultations. It will be recalled that Erchul and Raven (1997) identified six independent types of power used in consultations. These were coercive, reward, expert, referent, legitimate and informational power (see p.55).

The two considered most useful were *information* and *referent* power. Informational power seemed to be most important in changing practice and referent in engaging the consultee in the process.

In this research, although all EP consultants claimed that they did not use coercive power, all the other five types of power were represented in the interview results. Interestingly the majority (83%) said that legitimate power was a central tool in their consultations:

- *'I do use legitimate power you know " the LEA has its procedures, we do have to operate within the law."*
- *'I probably use legitimate power if I understood it correctly in the sense well actually you know" the fact of the matter is unless you fill this form out it is not going through case management"*
- *'you might as well just do it 'cos I can't attend otherwise'*
- *'if we talk forever it is not going to happen unless you do it like this. If you fill in the IEP then ...'*

The literature suggests that this is not a positive power to use, since it relies on an unequal distribution of power, through which the consultant introduces external

legitimacy, which cannot easily be challenged by the consultee. On further exploration, it seemed that the reasons for using legitimate power may have related to anxiety. There was a clear perception from both consultants and consultees that most consultees in schools wanted the consultant to act as expert or to facilitate taking the difficulty away through some means such as requesting (and initiating) statutory assessment procedures.

f) Consultant as expert

The issue of putting the consultant into an expert role is interesting since there seemed to be two contradictory aspects to this. The present research showed that consultants felt that consultees wanted answers, whilst being clear that the consultant needed to respect them and understand fully the school situation:

- *'this week I was told that I was the expert and they wanted me to come up with the answers.'* But *'when I offered a possible way forward they said I didn't understand the situation.'*
- *'the trick is to come up with a solution that they already have but they want it from you 'cos you're the expert.'*

This was articulated in a number of ways, all of which suggested that the consultant needed to agree with the consultee. They wished the suggestions for action to be those, which had originated with the consultee, who had often already decided upon appropriate actions. This issue is explored further from perspective of the consultee below (p. 158)

This concern is central to successful work as a consultant. Athanasiou et. al. (2002) found that successful suggestions for interventions needed to be congruent with the consultee's view of the causes of difficulties. Therefore, the consultant needs to work through the consultee's perspectives, either to change them or to offer interventions that can be articulated as relevant to that view.

g) Consultants' perspectives on their authority

With respect to the assumed requirement to solve or take away the difficulty, all consultants mentioned in some way or other their anxiety and perceived lack of authority when undertaking consultation. Comments such as *'they are very aggressive at the beginning'* and *'there is an issue because you are not fulfilling the other person's expectation that they are somehow disappointed in you and actually reflect that towards you in terms of whether you are 'good enough' for that role.'* And *'the school really do want the conversation to be more or less exclusively a within child conversation'* and finally *'all the other messy issues we get involved with you panic'* There is an argument to be made then that the use of statements, which move the authority away from the consultant and consultee to another power such as the LEA or some other system removes the consultant from the anxiety. The consultant may feel happier when he or she is able to tell the consultee what they **must** do and thus move the conversation on. Whilst this behaviour is understandable it does undermine any pretence of equality and leads to shutting down the exploratory phase of a consultation.

Although reward power was seen as a useful tool, some respondents felt that they were not in a position to be able to reward the consultee. The literature suggests the use of

reward power reduces the equality within the relationship, though this issue was not mentioned by anybody. This may be because of a perception that the power does not lie with the consultant, as discussed above.

There was significant confusion between expert power and informational power. One participant put it very succinctly, saying that '*what I would see as informational power may be interpreted as expert power*'. This seemed to revolve around whether a possible way forward is offered as an interesting idea or whether it is imposed as an expert's solution. In reality the distinction may not be useful, since it probably lies with the consultee more than the consultant. One participant pointed out that he only very rarely used informational power or expert power because '*interventions only work if they originate with the consultee.*' Therefore even informational power must be used very carefully if it is not to be perceived as imposing a solution. Another participant said she found the use of listening skills with strategic questioning could lead to a useful agreed framing of the presenting difficulty. With this framework agreed, the use of informational power to introduce what the research concluded in relation to the presenting difficulty could be very successful in moving situations on. She felt it was important that the research or evidence needed to be introduced solely at the level of information, which could then be discussed in relation to its potential use in the particular school.

Although referent power was used to a significant degree in order to help form a positive relationship, this could be taxing. One participant stated that he had '*tried to (but) ... failed because nobody works harder than a teacher, nobody is more stressed than a teacher, nobody works longer hours than a teacher and they won't be seen as*

referred to me as being in the same boat. Whilst this may be a cynical perspective, there are potential dangers with the use of referent power in that it does assume similarity, which may be perceived by the consultee as in some way patronising or inappropriate.

Two participants based the majority of their consultative work on the basis of referent power. One stated that all the work was based on *'having a good relationship in which there is a degree of mutuality and synchronicity.'* Further, she said that such good relationships enabled her to be *'sneaky'* when necessary. She stated that she sometimes relied on the relationship to enable her to achieve specific ends through underhand means. She felt that she could achieve such ends because of having formed relationships, which had an emotional valence to them. This seems to fit into referent power better than any other type of power, but does suggest the use of behaviour in which previous 'favours' become part of the bartering system. Another explanation would be that the value of the relationship becomes so strong that the consultant is able to create win-lose situations to his or her advantage, moving referent power into the covert coercive realm, as asserted by Conoley and Welch (1988). This consultant had felt that many consultation situations started with the consultee being aggressive towards the consultant, a perception, which may corroborate the veracity of the previous statement.

- h) The importance of understanding the structure, culture and power relationships in a school

Participants were split as to the importance of the consultant's understanding of these issues. For 50% an understanding of these issues was central to their work, since it was felt that only through such knowledge could the consultant start to understand the 'story' surrounding the presenting problem. For these respondents the bigger picture was central to the whole process of consultation.

For others, it was felt that the consultant's understanding of such issues was of little relevance, since the consultee would be aware of them and how they might affect the situation. For these consultants any solution agreed on, if coming from the consultee with the support of the consultant, would naturally take into account the relevant issues relating to structure, culture and power relationships.

The present research can conclude that there is more sympathy with the position, which asserts that an understanding of the bigger picture in relation to structure, culture and power relationships within the organisation is important. This information can rest with the consultee, but since it is often available to the consultee only at an implicit level, is best held by the consultant. The information needs to be made explicit so that both parties reach a common understanding of the presenting problem and work to find a solution.

- i) The balance of time spent on developing solutions in relation to problem exploration

As discussed in the literature review, research suggests that the most effective consultants often spend more time on problem analysis and clarification than on searching for solutions. Interview results showed that the relationship between problem analysis and focusing on the solution was about half-and-half. On further investigation it was not clear how the two phases were separated. One participant noted that *'you know schools often have a resource solution in mind .. and so we lurch from actual information gathering to 'the solution is a statement' (of special educational needs).'* In addition, another noted that *'at the beginning I might be suggesting this is what we need to do and then the information gathering is to do with what I suggested needs to be done.'* Both these quotes suggest that in some circumstances there is an immediate jump to a solution, without any real exploration of the problem. This way of working could be perceived as contrary to a consultative approach.

- j) Establishing a suitable venue, time and atmosphere for consultation

This issue was perceived as important, but not really being within the control of the consultant. One participant said that because the EP visited the school to consult the consultant needed to fit in with the school: *'although they are coming to us with the problem we are going to them physically. So you just literally play it by ear and take the situation as you find it.'* Another participant noted the limitations imposed through working in a system of predetermined visits to schools. In her view this led to a situation where the consultee was trying to stack the visit with so much work, that

consultations became rushed and therefore were not carried out satisfactorily. The overriding theme seemed to relate to the lack of control that the consultant had over the situation. This was due to being on the consultees' territory and because of the restraints surrounding the job.

k) Approaches used during consultations

Approaches varied significantly. With the exception of three participants, all considered that they used some form of problem solving framework, usually three-part in nature (see p.36). There were many other theories brought into play as required. These differed across individual consultants, independently of the presenting problem. For example, one participant considered that he used a systemic approach based in systemic family therapy models. Another based much of her practice in personal construct theory and a further three felt that solution focused therapy approaches offered useful insights into the consultation process. Another consultant based his practice in psychodynamic theory. Additionally, intuitive practice was mentioned. Each of the theoretical approaches has value to offer within a consultative framework. For this research, it is interesting to note the wide variety of theoretical perspectives being used without any reflection as to which approach might best fit any given situation. It seems they are often being used in an unstructured way: *'probably a little bit of a mixture of most I think. I have them in my subconscious somewhere, but they must be very jumbled up.'* Rather the theoretical underpinnings seemed to relate to the individuals' preferred choice, or what came to consciousness at the time. This position is emphasised by Farrell (2004), when using Goode's (1969) assertion that 'actually most professionals do not use much of their abstract knowledge and perhaps for most problems do not

really apply principles to concrete cases, but instead apply concrete recipes to concrete cases. The physician learns much but utilises relatively little of it in his (sic) normal practice.’ It seems that little has changed since 1969 and a call for further structure might be considered useful.

1) The use of questioning

The interviews investigated the use of questioning skills as an integral strategy within consultation. Two participants mentioned the importance of asking the correct questions and one laboured the point that questions needed to be open and exploratory rather than directed. In fact he felt that invitation was a better word than questioning: *‘yes I have been a bit sloppy I suppose. I could make it even more reflective ... “tell me how you feel” : that is an invitation rather than a question.’* Others, who talked about questions, identified the significance of question usage and saw questioning as a central tool to enable the consultative process to occur through reframing, summarising and asking the probing question that moved thinking on. When asked to describe this in more detail, participants became flummoxed and talked only in general terms. This issue is illustrated below:

‘they don’t know how to answer it and I don’t really know what to say when they don’t know how to answer it, so we both get stuck and we move more quickly and then we come to some agreement’.

This quote exemplifies the level of vulnerability and confusion that some consultants feel. Without a clearer practical theoretical model to call upon, consultations can

become rushed and undirected, thus leading to a search for an agreed solution, without going through the required prior processes.

6.4.2 Summary

It seems that consultants' interviews show that the consultative experience is very individual. This part of the research has started to explore the complexities facing consultants, when they are employed within a local education authority, which in turn has its own agendas and relationships with schools. It has been shown that there was very little consistency across participants. It seemed that most consultants had not really considered issues relating to the suitability of venue. In the same vein, it will be recalled that consultants had not thought through the need to clarify roles and role responsibilities. Rather the process consultants undertook seemed opportunistic and reliant on stealth, intuition and the consultant keeping his or her concentration on the focus required. The process was not ordinarily discussed in detail and the venue, time expectations and so on were not set intentionally or overtly. In this situation, it seemed unsurprising that much confusion and difference of practice and expectations prevailed. There was no clear agreed focus on theory or practice, which left individuals confused and uncertain about what they should be doing.

So far the experience of consultants has been explored. The study will now turn to the experience of consultees in schools both where consultants felt they had worked with a degree of success and in less successful circumstances. This information will be compared to the consultants' perspectives on their experiences and practice to inform issues around espoused practice and its relation to the experience of the recipients.

6.5 Phase III: The Consultees' Perspective

This part of the analysis draws on the issues articulated by consultees, irrespective of the perceived success of the consultation. Following that analysis any themes, which were different dependent on the success criteria as defined by the consultant will be discussed. It will be recalled that consultants defined their experience of working with consultees in a specific consultation as successful or unsuccessful. The concluding paragraphs in this section will try to draw together any general themes appertaining to all consultees interviewed.

6.5.1 Helpful Characteristics Found in Consultants

There seemed to be consistency in basing the positive and successful experience around a '*good relationship*' and partnership with the consultant. In all cases there were comments such as the importance of '*valuing*' the consultee and the notion that the consultant was committed to the school in a general sense. In two cases consultants had given the SENCo their home telephone number. In another case the consultant had telephoned with some advice outside of the consultation and in all cases the relationship with the consultant had been established for some time. There were identifiable characteristics that were present in consultants that were considered helpful by consultees. These are listed below:

a) Being able to transmit an empathic understanding of the context

This seemed to result from knowing the school over time and from having built up an appreciation of the way the school worked and the 'plight' of teachers. Therefore, consultees mentioned that it was important that the consultant had been a teacher prior to taking up his or her consulting role:

'... has been a class teacher like us, but she has also gone away and done some extra training.'

'... always uses her own teaching experiences to help give practical useful advice.'

It seems that the use of referent power is being advocated.

Further from the consultees' perspective a good understanding of the context for the individual child **and** for the agents of change was of paramount importance. This is contrary to the ideas held by a number of consultants interviewed. All interviewees in the consultee group mentioned this issue. Sometimes this was in the positive context of their feeling that the consultant really understood their situation:

'oh I would say yes you must have that really otherwise you are perceived as the person who floats in and out once or twice. You must understand how the school works'

'oh I think ... does understand the structures of our school – obviously all schools are very different and I think it is very important that

whoever is going into whichever school takes the time to understand you know how it works.'

'much better if they do because they know if they understand the ethos I suppose of the school then they are in a better position to understand the problems that any pupil might have ... and if they know the variety of people in the school I think it does help to be familiar and to be a familiar face.'

'at the same time willing to listen to what this particular context, this particular school is about.'

'I think unless she can see those children in the context of the whole school she is not going to understand why those children are such a concern to us.'

Sometimes it was in relation to the mutual trust within the relationship:

'you know, we really know her and she knows us. So we can work together and move things on together. She's really empathic to our situation you know...'

or in relation to the pertinence of advice:

'we've worked with her for a long time four years now and she knows what will work in this school and which staff can do what. So we really value her advice.'

or through the way advice may be given:

'it is very important that people don't talk down to you ...'

Occasionally it was in a more negative sense in the lack of perceived realism in relation to the class teacher or pedagogic context of the school:

'some of the suggestions given for say an IEP (individual education plan) were quite directive but not in a way about how actually realistically getting, get a child to actually do what you want them to do.'

'.... Was taking the lead without taking this school into context....'

'there are lots of ideas given about workstations being very specific. That is not what a reception class is about, we don't have specific – have you ever tried it –the class teacher has sort of hit the roof on the basis it would throw her entire behaviour reward system...'

b) The need to be seen as being on the side of the consultee

The clearest difference between successful consultations and the less successful was the degree to which consultees felt heard and supported. There was a clear theme of feeling special and being valued in the successful consultations, whereas in the unsuccessful ones consultees felt that:

- they had *'not been listened to sufficiently'*,

Submission for Thesis at UCL.

- there had *'been too much time spent on problem exploration'* to the point of the consultee *'having to repeat what was obvious'*,
- the *'ideas for action were directed'*,
- *'the consultant did not spend enough time on solutions'*,
- *'the consultant did not get to know or understand the difficulties'*
- there was no feeling of *'valuing'* the consultee's *'professional experience and expertise'*,
- possible solutions followed a dogma rather than being dovetailed to the actual circumstances: *'she always gives us theoretical idea, but they don't always fit our school.'*
- *'these people come in and get a snapshot and go away and make recommendations – and it's not the EPs fault but....'*
- *'perhaps do an observation, then produce these targets and she has been using targets for a child she has only seen for half an hour...'*

Whereas successful consultations left the consultees feeling valued and better from the experience:

'but the wonderful thing is that quite a few EPs you feel better when they have come, it's almost as if they have done their psychology on you, because you are encouraged and enthused and that's part of being a good EP.'

c) Building a positive confidential relationship with the consultee

This issue seemed central to carrying out consultancy within a school context. Whilst of great importance, it seems to stem from a particular understanding of consultation, which may relate more to the history of educational psychology practice in schools than to consultation per se. Underlying this issue may be a fundamental misunderstanding of consultation. The consultative relationship, since Caplan's (1970) description of the process, has been based around the consultee bringing a difficulty to the consultant to gain support from the consultant in finding a resolution. Successful consultation requires trust in the consultant. However, it seemed that in many of the research cases, the issue of relationship moved beyond that of trust into friendship and the expectation of a discrete and almost personal relationship with the consultant.

- *'I really like our EP, she is committed to us and has become a good friend. We often meet outside school as well.'*
- *'some Eps we just can't connect with, but ...is great. She cares about me as a friend and so do I'*

In itself there is no difficulty with this, but it does suggest that collusion may become an issue, since boundaries may become eroded over time. Further, the responsibility may shift to the consultant through aspects of relationship building. This is a complex issue, since on the one hand the consultee needs to feel special and exclusive, and on the other hand the relationship needs to remain at a professional level. This issue can be illustrated by a number of exemplars as below:

'she is not coming, at times it felt like people are coming into with um, to carry out their duties. But with ... it wasn't just face to face actually, it is always actually on the 'phone as well and with her home 'phone number ...'

'we think of her as our EP. She is the sort of person who you know will ring us if she has got anything that she thinks will encourage us you know..'

'but I think it is a case of personalities and it depends who you happen to get.'

One consultee articulated this issue particularly clearly saying:

'what I feel is I want this consultant to, I don't want her to take my emotion or whatever, the baggage away with them, but they are here to support and for it to matter to them as it matters to me but also not only they need, they can't get as dragged in as much, as obviously they have got to produce this objective view.'

Craib (2001), with others, made the point that for there to be change, a relationship is required. However that relationship has to keep clear boundaries if the different professional roles are to be maintained. It is primarily the responsibility of the consultant to maintain the boundaries, initially through articulating the roles and role responsibilities and subsequently through reminders and managing the process. It seems in a field where there is so much confusion about roles and expectations the boundary issues become of even greater importance. It seems that the individual differences

obvious in these interviews, and the resultant confusion in the minds of the consultees point towards the need for greater clarity.

d) The ability to use reframing, summarising and listening skills effectively

All consultees mentioned the importance of listening skills, but only a small percentage commented on what was important in listening skills. Those consultees with the experience of a less successful relationship (from the consultant's perspective) commented on the fact that the consultant did not listen. This was made clear either through the fact that *'she had already made up her mind what to advise us about'* or because *'we never have enough time to put our point of view'* or through the notion that *'he is only interested in and will not try to understand and think about the need to see difficulties in the context of all the other children.'*

On the more positive side, consultees commented that reframing skills are central to a positive consultative experience:

'sometimes what I find is so good, especially when you receive this report is that they put what you've said in nice clear statements and I am terribly woolly and I go off and there it is I think ... and they have taken it in. It's rather like making a cake, you have taken all the ingredients and produced it and I think yes And that's really helpful because it helps clarify my own picture of that child or whatever. It's a two-way thing.'

The issue of listening is a subtle skill, in that many consultees in schools are sensitive about their teaching experience. This seems to result in a number of school staff feeling very fragile and brittle when in the consultee position. This is well illustrated by four quotes:

'...and personally after 30 years I like to feel that that I have got, I am in a position to make quite a considerable input just to be able to consult with just a bit more expertise than I have got...'

'but I think teachers, particularly teachers, can feel very, I think it is threatened.'

'in terms of that I did not feel equal because ... took the lead. She hadn't totally listened or hadn't fully understood the extent of the need within the school and how much we felt it was not working. I think she was very positive about Well he is intelligent, but he cannot actually access the curriculum and she didn't seem to have that balance put into it.'

'but the comment if you like "no we are not going to look at behaviour support because behaviour support would be too behaviouristic. Um when you are struggling with a child and you really do not know where you are going with them, that is quite difficult and that comment really, really was not helpful...'

Judging from the interviews with consultants and subsequently those with consultees, it seems that there is, at best, a varied understanding of listening skills. Educational psychologist consultants do not demonstrate a consistent understanding of listening skills and therefore the experiences of consultees are very varied.

It is important to take into account the possibility that consultees have an expected outcome and therefore the issue of 'good listening' may be compromised by the requirement of the consultee to gain a particular predetermined outcome. The resolution of this issue may be illuminated through the investigation of the transcripts of the 'live consultations'. Here, it suffices to note that if the process is not outlined overtly at the beginning then participants will have different perspectives and expectations.

e) The requirement of expert knowledge and advice

When asked to define consultation, the majority of participants (69%) defined it as asking the 'expert' in:

'for me it is bringing in someone from an agency who has skills that I don't have, or has specific skills at a higher level.'

'...benefit from their increased skills'

'I am really keen for her to come in because basically we want to know more to do for this particular childthat I can hopefully steal off the information.'

'it is when generally it, if a problem arises within the school with the education of a student then we would consult an expert...'

One notable exception was somebody who said *'well I'm thinking, well I'm not sure what you mean by consultation. It might not be what I mean by consultation.'*

Regardless of the ensuing discussion, this is an interesting point, since it implies that there has been no sharing of or discussion of the notion of consultation.

Through consideration of the whole transcripts, another agenda starts to emerge. The relationship between the wish for apparent expert knowledge and the assumption that actually the consultee 'knows best' is strained. This was best summed up by the comment from a consultee who professed to have a very positive relationship with her consultant but who said at the very end of the interview (immediately after stopping recording) .. *'but really, I wonder why we have to go through this whole thing, when it just slows down getting the resources we all need for the student.'*

It seems that whilst most consultees voiced the opinion that they wished to glean additional expertise, in reality what they wanted was a verification of the view that they had already come to. This was voiced in two distinct ways. Firstly a number of consultees stated words to the effect that *'we felt we need to involve to reassure mother and to support us in moving on really...'* The consultee is transferring his or her responsibility for helping the parent in a given process:

'and she gave parents a lot of time in the school and they had a sneaking feeling somebody is going to look after them. They were different people after that.'

Secondly, the involvement of the psychologist, still referred to as a consultant, is actually about moving the resources agenda forward. Although all consultees understood the psychologist was not directly responsible for resource allocation, the main requirement from the school's perspective, most frequently amounted to 'jumping through hoops' in a process to prove the need for additional resources:

'they have the power in a way because of the hierarchy and if I didn't in a way respond to the EP's power then things wouldn't move forward because they have got the power of the final power of making a decision as far as I am concerned.'

'I just wish there was a way, which things could be moved more quickly. I don't know if that is possible.'

'For example, I had a boy I had to keep going back and trying things when it was so blatantly obvious that he was a boy of above average intelligence who had got every characteristic of dyslexia....'

'I think if we are honest what they want is support in the classroom there and then.'

'whichever route you take, that's it at the end of the day that's what we are hoping will be the outcome – that there is more support in the classroom when teacher is trying to...'

The consultant psychologists then are actually perceived as experts both vis-à-vis their knowledge base and with respect to their arbitration over resources. This is in stark contrast to the position adopted by the psychologists when advocating working from a consultative perspective. It suggests that in reality consultants are invested with a significant degree of authority, which they may not in fact have.

Although consultees perceived consultants as having additional expert knowledge, they were not always happy to acknowledge it in practice. A thread ran through 69% of the consultee interviews, which made overt the requirement for the advice to fit with their understanding of the difficulties. If the expert position was to be used, it needed to be

delivered through use of both *referent* and *informational* power (p.52). This information fits with the research base, but does not follow the perceptions of consultees. They frequently felt directed to carry out interventions that either did not lie easily with their circumstances or did not acknowledge their perceptions of the difficulties. In some cases this was perceived as inevitable, but in others it undermined the effectiveness of the consultation.

f) The consultants' ability to support consultees with parents

38% of consultees attributed expertise to the consultant in enabling parents to be '*brought on board*'. This expertise seemed to be invested in the consultant in a manner that passed the responsibility to the consultant, who in meeting with the parents was expected to manage to shift the parents' position in order to resolve given difficulties:

'she gave parents a lot of time in school um, and I think that is what made it particularly successful'

'of course she worked very well with the parents and made them see our side of things'

When these quotes are considered from a consultative perspective they are of concern.

If the role of the consultant is to support the consultee in better understanding the difficulties and in finding ways forward to alleviate them, it seems unhelpful for the consultant to carry out independent work away from the consultee. There can be no learning for the consultee. In reality the difficulty has been explained to the consultant and then passed over to the consultant to resolve:

'when you are talking about very grass root things and the parents are very volatile and sometimes people have got up saying they are not going on. She has got an incredibly calm manner and puts people at their ease. I don't know really she is just very very nice and they always come back happier.'

Whilst it is the contention of this research paper that there are significant issues about power and collusion, potential opposing interpretations should be explored. Three dyads pointed to other interpretations in the reviewing focus group. The conversation highlighted that work with parents was not one-sided and at times involved a conciliatory process. In these cases, school staff had been seen alone as had the parents. There had followed a larger meeting with both parents and relevant school staff, at which time approaches from the critical dialogue literature were used to confront issues from all perspectives. The aim had been to find possible ways forward that were acceptable to all. Whilst the positive nature of this work is not in question, it remains uncertain whether this work was consultation. It is the contention of this paper that such work is not consultative in nature, although it may well serve to resolve a particular conflict in certain situations.

g) The usefulness of a wider range of experience

Many consultees (75%) mentioned the importance of the wider experiences that a consultant has. This was based both on their additional expertise through training and their knowledge and understanding of other school contexts. This was perceived as central to the consultant's tool kit in the sense of being able to offer credible advice. For

instance a consultant was able to suggest places to visit in which the advice was actually working, thereby reassuring consultees of the worth of the advice. Additionally, this opportunity was seen as part of enabling the consultee to get to grips with the practicalities:

'it would have been useful as well thinking about it now it would have been useful to have been sort of said 'right if you go and visit that school you might be able to see how they have worked it there within a reception class.'

'... Will 'phone us and say sort of 'I've just met so and so who had some really good ideas that might help you....''

'when she comes in and accepts that these children aren't, are severely disturbed or in need of whatever it is quite reassuring. I mean it tells us that we are not overreacting 'cos there is a danger...'

'I would expect To come in with her expertise and she sees a lot more children like this than I would ever...'

'just reassurance that we are actually doing the best that we possibly can...'

It seems that the consultant can draw on his or her wider experience in a moderating capacity, although no consultees mentioned anything about experiences, in which the consultant might have suggested they were overreacting. It seems that, whilst theoretically the consultant could have a moderating role, the reality is that he or she is expected to agree with the school and confirm their concerns. This is well articulated by a consultee talking about the emotional effects of having a request for a statutory assessment refused:

'It can cause interminable personal hurt. But a couple which we have had come back and the school have felt personally hurt. No I think it is important for you to feel that yes this child is going to be important to them too.'

h) Having the ability to challenge

Although it was recognised that the ability to disagree with the consultee and to challenge was important, it was mentioned only in relation to two cases. From the consultee's point of view, the requirement for very good interpersonal skills seemed more central:

'I mean she will challenge and doesn't necessarily agree with our perception of things. But then we value that whereas with other people we won't'

Many more comments referred to a feeling of not being heard when consultants were disagreeing or trying to move things on. The central theme seemed to be about consultees feeling that the consultant was too individualistic in his or her approach and did not take into account the need to consider the other pupils in the class or school.

Two quotes illustrate this:

'I think that's something we have all noticed haven't we that whenever we have had an intervention about a particular child the person doing it sees that child's needs.... Much as we want to do that we have to think of more than just that child's needs. I don't want to interfere, I don't want to make it look as if I am

blocking, but as the head I have got to see it from, I can't just see it through his eyes.'

'the ed. psyc. role; it could be their focus is on one particular child and doesn't really understand or take totally into account the amount of work, which needs to be done with the others, with the class...That comes out with the consequence of working with an individual child.'

This issue can undermine the consultee's engagement in the process, since the consultee is immediately focusing on the difficulties, but not necessarily sharing those difficulties. If the consultant is to be successful in enabling changes to occur for the individual, it is a prerequisite that the problem identification phase includes an in-depth discussion about the context for changes and takes into account issues relating to the learning opportunities for other pupils. Otherwise the very enthusiasm and positive thinking on the part of the consultant, towards the identified child may undermine the agenda for action.

The other issue in relation to challenge was that of infrequent and irregular visiting, which meant that the consultant was perceived to have gained only a glimpse of the difficulties. Most consultees felt that the consultant 'needed to see the problem for themselves', yet were very aware that *'one person coming in just once sometimes can throw the situation because an observer can actually change a situation.'* It was argued that consultants do not recognise the day-to-day reality of the situation since what they see is either atypical or is seen only over a short period of time. This can relate to the child and to how the adults are operating during observation. One consultee admitted to 'setting up' the situation so that difficulties would occur and then becoming frustrated

when the consultant commented on the possibility of more appropriate teaching and classroom management techniques being required. Another situation backfired when the consultant commented favourably on a teaching assistant's management skills. The consultee felt that she herself had seen the situation over a much greater length of time and that the management skills could not be sustained at a high enough degree.

Although consultees usually preferred consultants to '*have made their own observations and assessments so they know the difficulties* and consultants preferred to trust their '*own judgement 'cos then I know what is happening*', such interventions sometimes served to change the relationship and not always in a positive manner. For example there is often a difference of opinion resulting from the specific observations, which sometimes are perceived as being atypical of the pupil. Also the very presence of another body in the classroom can change behaviour.

A less potentially vexed approach might be for a first consultation to occur prior to any observation. Within any agreed agenda for action as a result of the consultation, it may be appropriate for consultants to undertake observations and / or assessments, but there needs to be a clear focus to such actions with specific questions being addressed, resulting from the consultation.

i) Flexibility with regards to time

One of the greatest frustrations experienced was that of time. This was voiced in relation to the infrequency of school visits made by consultant psychologists and the time limitations imposed by full agendas. This was seen as a significant barrier to using

a consultative model, rather than a referral model. Consultative models promote a shared responsibility for use of time, whereas in a referral model that responsibility is passed to the psychologist. Where this was seen positively the consultant gave additional time to that allotted and tended to maintain contact with the school consultee through both formal and informal structures outside of the official contact time.

j) Sharing of power and knowledge

The theme of power balances and imbalances arose frequently. When defining consultation almost all consultees referred to the sharing of power. They stated that school staff came with an intimate knowledge of the child or the difficulty and the circumstances of the school and the consultant brought additional expertise to the consultation, in the guise of further training, a background in psychology and the experience of dealing with similar difficulties in a wide variety of school settings. The knowledge invested in the consultant suggested a power imbalance. Although some consultees felt that *'you agree on things with someone who is not judgmental, someone who is bringing you advice but you don't have to take it. (It is given in the sentiment of) I am offering you these things but see how they work out and we can come back...'* there was a high expectation that the consultant would make recommendations, which should be adhered to prior to any further action or progress towards additional resources.

Interestingly, in one case where the consultant had articulated how clearly she did not give advice, but rather she listened and drew out the recommendations from the consultee, both associated consultees perceived her as very directive. In one case this

was perceived as helpful since her ideas were useful, but in the other it was seen as untenable because her behaviour was felt to be arrogant and did not take into account sufficiently the school perspective.

k) Ability to clarify roles and role responsibility

Although there was some recognition of differences in roles, it was poorly addressed in comparison to its importance in the literature. The consultee perceived him or herself as having a difficulty with a child in school. The consultee would then *'sit down and say look this is what I've been asked. I need your help to glean that.'* And *'certainly my detailed knowledge about the child, which of course the person I'm consulting with doesn't know.'* (spoken by a consultee).

The consultant was seen as bringing answers to the situation at best through clarifying possibly confused thinking, but ordinarily by using his or her expert knowledge and experience to make new and different recommendations or by suggesting that the school move the case on to statutory assessment.

The role differences articulated above differ from those suggested by Schein (1987, 1988) when describing process consultation. The consultee viewed consultation from the purchaser of information or expertise model. This discrepancy of models is likely to lead to significant confusion unless clarified through conversation, during which roles and role responsibilities would need to be addressed.

1) Ability of consultant to engage the consultee

This theme is central to the literature on successful consultations. Without effortful involvement change is unlikely to occur and will not be sustained over time. Yet with a model that bears closest resemblance to the purchaser of information model, the requirement for effortful involvement or engagement with the consultant is limited. Consultees were frequently appreciative of the work of the consultant, but their accolades were peppered with comments about the positive relationship and the pleasantness of the consultant rather than about the level of challenge or required engagement with the process. Some consultees felt more enthusiastic and at times more skilled after working with the consultant but nobody mentioned the effortful involvement required. This seemed a significant limitation to the present consultant – consultee relationship with regard to facilitation and maintenance of change.

6.6 Phase IV: Analysis of Transcripts of ‘Live’ Consultations

So far, the discussion has only considered participants’ perspectives on their experience. To consider these issues in relation to what actually happens in a consultation, it is necessary to analyse transcripts from recorded ‘live’ consultations. Eight consultations were recorded: one for each of the participating consultants.

This section concentrates on the conversational aspects of the consultation and illustrates the subtle interplay between consultant and consultee. . The method of analysis is best described as content analysis as outlined in Robson (1993) and Stemler (2001) and discussed above (page 93, section 5.1.12). The information from the

transcriptions of the 'live' consultations was analysed in chunks of conversation as well as through coding the data into categories relating to the previous analyses. Through this process the additional information was used to comment in greater depth on the prior findings and used to inform as to the veracity of the previous findings and interpretations thereof. Thus this process supported the reliability of the assertions previously made, a notion that is suggested as important when carrying out qualitative analyses (Salmon, 2003).

Although, similar to previous findings (Tindal et. al., 1993) participants tended not to follow an order of discrete stages to their consultation, to aid analysis and ensure clarity for the reader, in the reporting of the analysis the stages of consultation have been dealt with discretely.

The consultations tended to jump from problem identification to solution possibilities and back again. Little time if any was spent on considering methods of evaluation and the first two phases were inter-linked.

6.6.1 Stage I: Problem Analysis

In 88% of the consultations, less time was spent on this stage than in seeking solutions.

The literature suggests this should be the most extensive phase, yet both consultants and consultees moved rapidly through to focusing on the possible solutions without making a wide or deep analysis of the presenting difficulty. The process tended to follow a model of the consultant asking what the difficulties were and questioning the consultee for information. The following excerpts illustrate this theme:

'right oral comprehension ... so he has a reading cognitive problem as well'

'can I interrupt that receptive matters rather than expressive .'

'what other medical difficulties does mother say he has....'

Alternatively the consultant seemed to be identifying the difficulties as written in the file, taking that information as correct and in effect informing the consultee of what the presenting difficulties were:

'the file indicates that literacy was the main problem and obviously there was an issue about his feelings which was to be resolved.'

The nature of all these consultations was that the consultant closed down the process at the beginning of the very phase when the conversation needed to be wide reaching and discursive. It seemed that the consultant was prepared to take the word of the consultee or use file information and his or her own assessment without further exploration of what might be the presenting difficulties. For example, in one consultation the consultee is trying to describe the behavioural difficulties: *'um it is in play time more than classroom time ... I must admit he has never ever ever been rude or anything. He is a real I mean he is always very friendly. He is lovely in class you know he is needs attention a bit but it is not a problem and he is not. He doesn't get into problems in class it is at other times and things.'*, whilst the consultant has already decided that the focus of the difficulty is literacy and the school's inability to organise an appropriate programme of support: *'Right but that daily that you aimed for hasn't managed to be established yet this term because of I think it is important just to recognise that you*

know whilst you are aiming it hasn't happened, which is why maybe we haven't seen the progress.

There seemed to be a lack of clarity of the consultant's role. The consultee tended to be interrogated in order for the consultant to gain enough information to be able to offer possible solutions. This had direct effects on the power relationship with the consultee being locked into an inferior position. Expert power was used and the tenor of the conversations ensured that the responsibility for answers was firmly transferred to the consultant. The relative amount of time spent on this phase during this style of information gathering ranged from 10 – 40% of the overall consultation time and overall these consultations tended to be shorter in length than the ones discussed below.

It is important to note that the majority of consultants using the interrogatory method did try to explore the issues beyond those, which were first offered. But this was with an objective of information gathering rather than open, non-judgemental exploration.

Questions were such as:

- *'was this noticed by last year's class teacher'?*
- *'so mother says he is dyspraxic, but is there any corroboration of this'?*
- *'what did the speech therapist have to say'?*
- *'what is he like in less structured situations'?*
- *'what is (the child's) view of / feelings about his difficulties.?' (said twice)*

Additionally, there was no attempt to summarise the difficulties or make a clear conceptual statement about how the presenting difficulties, when all the surrounding

factors are taken into account, might be understood. No such framework was offered, which seemed to leave the consultee needing clarification from the consultant.

There were two notable exceptions to the above generalisation. Both these consultants based their interactions with the consultee on an extensive period of reflecting back what the consultee had said, which was answered by an agreement and either further clarification of the point or progression of the analysis. In these cases, the work of the analysis was undertaken by the consultee, with the consultant helping frame the information through occasional questions for clarification. At the end of the extensive period of analysis (approximately 45 – 60% of the consultation) the consultant summarised the issues and reflected these back to the consultee. There seemed to be effortful involvement from the consultee.

Another consultant used the technique of non-interruption by saying monosyllabic words during pauses, which served to encourage the consultee to continue with her story. This technique, whilst enabling the consultee to tell her story from her perspective, did not seem to help move the consultee forward in her thinking. The consultee remained of the view that the case, which the consultant thought should be dealt with within the school's resources, required recourse to a statement because the school was ill-equipped to meet the presenting needs. In this case towards the end the consultee was talking about '*a appointment with the paediatrician on Thursday and mum was hoping that he would get a diagnosis of Aspergers or something like that ... that would really help the case.*' And '*I think she is expecting us to go forward with statementing.*' This non-interventionist approach failed to enable different possible

solutions. By not using summarising skills, it seemed that the consultant reinforced the fixed agenda held by the consultee.

The most effective approach seemed to be that of frequent summarising and clarification in order to allow the consultee (and perhaps to force the consultee) to take a new look at the difficulties from a wider perspective. This approach seemed to require effortful involvement of the consultee, which has been seen as a requirement of effective consultation (Petty et. al., 1997).

It was noticeable that not one consultant seemed to use any particular psychological theory to inform his or her support of the consultee. Even in the cases where there was overt use of summarising and re-framing skills, there was no clarity of the framework for analysis, which might have included personal construct theory or systems analysis or a consideration of the difficulties from a social constructivist standpoint. The only clear approach was that three consultants looked for exceptions: *'is there an example you can think of in literacy where he surprised you and he has been motivated ..?'* This might be considered to originate from Solution Focused theory, but this approach was not used to consider how things might be if they were better and furthermore they were restricted to the very early part of problem analysis. Whilst this approach could have been helpful, it also seemed to close down the possibility of a wide ranging discussion about the presenting difficulties.

6.6.2 Stage II: Solution Identification

In three cases, there was no attempt at an analysis of the presenting difficulties; rather the consultant went directly into solution exploration. In two cases this seemed acceptable to the consultee, though it would be interesting to know whether the agreed solutions were actually carried out. The third situation is worthy of further exploration, because it informs on issues relating to the use of power and the subtle interplay between consultant and consultee. This is particularly well illustrated by the quote below: (A = consultant; B = consultee)

'A: with early reading research, is he making progress with that?

B: to be honest we haven't we haven't. What we have nightmares with teachers being off.

A: it hasn't really happened.

B: that part hasn't happened.

For the next three minutes, the conversation considered how often he is heard read.

Then

A: I mean if she could do just one session before lunch maybe or one session before anything in the morning

B: there are problems with that, partly because she (the teacher assistant) travels in...

A: maybe that is what we need to look at then

B: I suppose that's right but

A: but if you got to that. If she is with you then at that particular time.

B: there's a trouble with changing places, long training, don't know what is involved

A: I mean no interruptions as long as it is monitored you can sort of let somebody know how to do twelve minutes quite quickly. I mean Might be a good model for her....

B: I don't know how often she would be. Oh yes.... (said very quietly)

This content of this discourse illustrates that the underlying issues were not dealt with. The consultee obviously had concerns about what was being suggested. Yet the consultant challenges her to take on the research finding without ever allowing for a discussion about what is really holding back the consultee. It seems unlikely that the issues are only organisational, but even if they are, the consultation might have been more effective in it had focussed on supporting the consultee in finding her own way through to a useful solution.

One other case worthy of note is that of when the consultant tended to use monosyllabic acknowledgements as a way of allowing the consultee to develop her story. In this case the solutions were primarily discussed via the notion that actually what the consultee and her colleagues were already doing was working. Whilst this was acknowledged, it was not enough for the consultee, who wanted the process moved on to statutory assessment. The move towards a focus on solutions was achieved through a summary sentence, which then led to a subtle move away from acknowledgement of the consultee having done well:

A: 'in summarising then, that um, that since you had that meeting with the mother, since you put him on School Action Plus, since the TA provision had been allocated and maybe because of other factors as well, the home factors, that his behaviour has improved.

B: we're trying to integrate him more within the general life of the school...'

There followed a discussion about whether to put the young person forward for statutory assessment or not. The consultant tried to develop a framework of understanding relating to the child having difficulty with verbal communication and consequently becoming anxious:

A: I've just got a little idea I'd like to test out with you... this sort of conventional framework of psychologists' tests, verbal abilities and non-verbal abilities, his non-verbal abilities were very high

B: yes

A: *verbal abilities were a long way below average*

B: *right*

A: *so it's possible that, that you know he has a genuine difficulty understanding some of the things he is asked to do*

B: *good yes, yes I understand that*

Up until this point, the conversation seemed helpful, however:

B: *all the time if he wants to answer a question he can, but he has to direct it to the TA*

The conversation then returned to the argument about resources in which the consultee's perspective was that of '*what do we have to do, just take away the support and let him flounder. Because since we're making progress we can't move him on...*'

The latter part of this dialogue saw the consultant taking an increasingly smaller part, seemingly being swallowed up in the consultee's belief that she was in a Catch-22 situation (Heller, 1996). She repeatedly articulated that only by failing the pupil could she get what she believed she required. The consultant's interjections reduced in frequency, length and volume until he started to moderate his position by agreeing with the consultee, saying '*so you believe that is not making any real progress and you need more support*'. This was reminiscent of the interview quote suggesting that teachers always held the moral high ground (p. 147) and illustrates how the consultee can return to her original assertions and the consultant can become increasingly impotent and possibly increasingly anxious (and closer to burnout; Mills and Huebner,

1998) due to his or her perceived ineffectiveness. It will be recalled that this was raised as a concern by some consultants when interviewed.

It seems that this illustrates the need for effortful involvement. This consultation started with acknowledgement of the consultee's story, but did not involve her effortfully in an interaction, which demanded that she did more than merely rehearse her position. The difference with the two consultations, which seemed to move the situation on, was the requirement for effortful involvement of the consultee during the first phase of problem exploration.

6.6.3 Stage III: Evaluation Criteria

This stage was noticeable by its absence. None of the recorded consultations touched on any serious aspects of evaluation, although this was mentioned as of significance by some consultants and consultees alike during interview.

The research on change suggests that the setting of evaluation criteria, which consider both outcomes and process issues is essential to any change process (Argyris, 1990), yet this area was lacking from this data. Interestingly a number of questionnaire returns pointed to the need for evaluation and yet in the field, when undertaking live consultations with all the surrounding pressures, this aspect seemed to disappear from all participants' consciousness. Evaluation just did not come up as an issue, not even through its being mentioned but then dismissed due to lack of time.

7 CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

This section will consider each of the research questions in light of the data analysis. Following that, the findings will be summarised into specific themes that have been identified. The penultimate section contains a suggested conceptual and practice model for consultation, which supports consistency for consultation between EPs and teaching staff. Finally, there is a section on evaluation issues followed by a summary of possible future enquiry.

7.1 The Key Questions Revisited

- *What are the aspects of consultation, which are considered key in consolidating change in a school?*

This question was felt to have significant differences according to the perspective taken. To the consultee, it was paramount that the consultant had a sympathetic manner and a good understanding of the structures and cultures of the school as well as a full understanding of what was realistic. The issue of needing a full understanding of how the school worked is a relevant addition to the current literature, building on that focused on management consultation.

The building of a relationship over time was significant, as was the ability to use good listening, reframing and summarising skills. The ability to form positive relationships between consultant and consultee was perceived as central to successful consultation. It seemed that the effectiveness of the relationship was evaluated through effective use of

interpersonal skills and through suggestions of interventions being perceived as sensitive to the plight of the consultee working in a school. From the consultees' perspective, it was important that they felt that the consultant treated them individually and was able to work for them and appear to be on their side. In other words, the consultees required a special personal relationship with the consultant.

To the consultants, a clear strategy for evaluation was felt to be important, as was the ability to offer a psychological framework to help problem solve. Although evaluation was seen as important, it did not appear in the actual consultations recorded. Therefore with respect to evaluation, there was significant discrepancy between espoused theory and theory in use. Also in most cases the integrity of the psychological framework being used was unclear.

Finally, it was important for the consultant to be able to present as having training and experience that ensured that he or she was able to offer advice based on practical experience and that had been seen working elsewhere. This seemed of great importance for credibility, although it may be that there needs to be a clearer agreed definition of the consultant's role and responsibilities in helping establish changes.

- *Are the key aspects of success the same for consultant and consultee?*

The simple answer to this question was 'No'. For the consultant it was most important to be taken seriously, but not to be put into the role of expert. For the consultee the ability of the consultant to offer expert advice and to be able to move cases on in relation to increasing resources was of greatest importance.

A second concern was to have the consultant '*work their psychology*' on the consultee, thereby making the consultee feel better.

The consultants all claimed empathy and equality of power with the consultee, however generally the consultees' felt, that the consultant had significantly more power and authority than the consultee. Consultees most frequently felt that the suggested interventions were not based on a real consideration of the consultee's experience. This led consultees to view the process of consultation as been based on an unequal relationship of power and even, on occasions, arrogance on the part of the consultant. At the same time, the consultants felt they lacked suitable power and authority and that, in their opinion, often the consultees would not enter into a real consultation where change could occur.

- *Do the essential aspects of consultation differ when the working relationship is considered positive as opposed to when the relationship does not help facilitate progress, as perceived by the educational psychologist?*

There were some noticeable differences, which were around the notion of trust. When the relationship was not successful, it seemed the consultant did not acknowledge the level of concern from the consultee. In addition, the suggested interventions tended to be too directed and not to take account of the whole context.

When the relationship was effective, the consultee felt looked after by the consultant at a level beyond the ordinary call of duty. Also the interpersonal aspects of the

relationship were of importance. Thus the same consultant could be effective in one situation but not in another.

It may be that this difference does relate to personality differences, but it could be that the notion of interpersonal difficulties is used to cover up other difficulties, which may be more possible to overcome. It would seem that in those consultations that were less successful the relationship was not always poor. Rather the constructs that surrounded the situation were significantly different for the consultant and the consultee. The consultees felt that their constructs were not taken seriously. The key difference may relate to issues around personal constructs. When these are similar for both parties, the consultation is successful, but when they are different and there is no work to acknowledge such differences, difficulties start to occur.

- *What is the relationship of experience between consultant and consultee?*

It was clear that consultees felt they had significant experience to offer. Their experience related to their years of teaching and in specific roles within school. Additionally, they felt they had detailed knowledge of the particular child under discussion and of the school within which they worked. Experience varied between consultees in their ability to manage parents and to manage interactions with other adults in the school.

Most consultees respected the psychologist for having had some additional training. Individuals varied as to how useful they felt the consultant's input was, although in general consultees thought that the greater width of experience held by consultants

through their visiting of many schools was very helpful. Consultants seemed very insecure about their particular skills and seemed to work at an intuitive level rather more than working consciously with regard to psychological theories.

A number of consultants felt they were able to use research to help resolve difficult issues. These tended to be issues of content rather than process. For example specific research on reading, behaviour management or speech and language might be referred to, when developing possible solutions to the presenting difficulty.

- *What are the similarities and differences among the consultant's description of what happens in a consultation, the consultee's description and the actual recording of a consultation?*

There were a number of differences here. The most extreme case was one in which the consultant explained how she was never directive, but both consultees said she was very directive: one found this helpful the other not. Further the live recording showed that directing was often not overt but resulted from the interactive process, involving pauses, the use of 'um's and a lot of 'you see' and 'research says ...'. Also there were times when the consultant would progress the consultation having assumed an agreement had been reached, when the progression had in fact been a jump for the consultee and had 'lost' him or her.

At times consultants seemed uncertain of what they could offer. The consultees were often more appreciative of the skills and saw the use of skills, which the consultant did not recognise or articulate. In live recording it was clear that consultants did show

effective listening and analysis skills. However, the tendency was for such consultants to gather information and then offer possible ways forward, rather than working as a process consultant and ensuring that the consultee was effortfully engaged.

- *What is the relationship between espoused theory and theory-in-use as described by the consultant, consultee and recorded description of a consultation?*

In some cases this relationship bore close resemblance to Argyris' (1990) description. In one particular case the espoused theory followed a classical textbook description of the process consultation model, whilst the related theory in use relied on dominance and directing. In other cases there were significant differences between espoused theory and theory in use. In these cases, frequently, the espoused theory was a-theoretical, relying on notions of friendship and intuitive practice. There was one notable exception, in which the consultant presented a very clear, almost textbook, theory of her practice of consultation. In actuality, this theory bore little resemblance to her practice.

The theory in use, when analysed, seemed to hold more substance. Nonetheless, it was most often based on defensive activity, rather than collaborative problem analysis and solution creating.

It was noticeable that much practice remained of limited effectiveness as a result of:

- not challenging the roles of consultant and consultee;
- relying on humour to oil the wheels;

- allowing the consultee to 'use' the consultant to gain his or her own ends of resources;
 - allowing the consultee to use the consultant to placate parents (twice).
-
- *How are the issues of power used in consultations and which aspects of power are helpful in forming a positive working relationship and in enabling change?*

The analysis of the 'live' consultations showed that all power stances were used in a variety of ways. Although everybody claimed never to use *coercive power*, there was clear evidence of its use. Two of the power stances were perceived to be the most useful:

- *referent power*, used both to help form a positive working relationship and to enable suggested interventions to be perceived as helpful;
- *informational power*, used to help with interventions and occasionally to add something to the problem analysis stage.

These two power stances have been shown to be the most effective in the literature (Erchul, 1997). Nonetheless, this research established that substantial use was also made of *reward power*, although it was not seen as such. It was used in relation to allocating additional visits, through sharing home telephone numbers and through offering additional support outside the consultation. Further, it was used in parallel with *referent power* and *coercive power*. In one case, there was a clear description of the use of a good relationship to achieve change through '*sneaky means*'. In this situation the less professional aspects of close interactions seemed to be being used. Both *reward* and

coercive power were put into practice so that the consultant achieved his or her end, unimpeded by the consultee's interests. Covey (1999) has called this creating a win-loose situation. He comments that this is ineffective over time.

Expert power was used through quoting research and through explaining the internal working of the LEA, which also related to the use of *legitimacy power*. It might be argued that quoting research and explaining the working of the LEA could be described as *informational power*. Notwithstanding in this research, such techniques were used to achieve certain actions or to stop certain actions occurring.

The most successful powers, in moving things forward did seem to be *reward power*, *referent power* and *informational power*, although at time *legitimate power* helped set boundaries within conversations. *Legitimate power* was reported as, at times, helpful by the consultee, since it helped some understand the wider context within which both the consultant and consultee were operating.

- *What importance is there in having an understanding of the dimensions for change: namely structure, power and cultural aspects of the organisation?*

This issue has been discussed above. All consultees felt that this was of great importance. Without this sort of understanding and involvement the consultant was treated with suspicion and consultees tended to hold the assumption that the suggested interventions would not work in their establishment. Notwithstanding, at times it seemed that the consultant's perception that he or she knew how the school operated was not necessarily shared by the consultee.

- *Are there particular dimensions of analysis, which could be used to group schools into those, which can work well with a particular consultation model and those which have different needs?*

The present research was not able to address this topic in detail. However schools did appreciate involvement over time, with a focus on collaborative and non-directive styles of working. Schools appreciated the use of referential, informational and reward power. Some less secure consultees appreciated the use of expert power, whilst the more secure seemed to want additional expert knowledge, but most preferred it to be delivered from an informational perspective. Nonetheless most consultees did seem to put effort into transferring at least some of the ownership for the problem and the agreed interventions to the consultant. This might in itself, undermine the effective implementation of a given intervention.

It must be recognised that the sample size was small and therefore no firm conclusions should be drawn. Two further points are made below, which may relate to requirements of consultation less frequently found in some schools.

It was important that all the appropriate people were involved in a consultation. A significant weakness pointed to by consultants and consultees was when the agent of change was not present, since things often went wrong between the consultation and transmitting the agreed actions to the actual agent of change.

It is of the utmost importance to show respect for the consultees' professionalism and to explore all the issues from his or her perspective. It seems that although, to enable change, a process consultative approach is most effective, many consultees expect a purchaser of information approach.

7.2 Summary of Themes Emerging from the Research

This research has identified eight specific themes, which are discussed below. It would be possible to identify a multitude of different themes, dependent to some extent on the values and beliefs of the researcher. In an attempt to reduce the potential for bias, the identified themes were discussed with two colleagues who had been privy to the results section and had read the paper to this point. In addition, the themes were shared with representative consultant participants (5, 63%). Nonetheless, it must be recognised that the themes identified are likely to be affected by the writer's interests. Salmon (2003) suggested that one of the important aspects of evaluation of qualitative research is that of the relevance of the research to future practice. Bearing Salmon's (2003) point in mind, the present research hoped to offer a model for consultation, which might move thinking on for British educational psychology. The themes identified from the research build towards such a model by articulating some of the present dilemmas and confusions, which were illuminated by this inquiry.

7.2.1 Understanding Consultation

The present research showed that neither consultants nor consultees had a clear or agreed understanding of consultation. Without such an understanding both within and

across each professional group, it is unlikely that consistency of practice will be possible. Further staff may become confused and resentful, since without an agreed understanding, participants will not be able to fulfil their expected role. Athanasiou et al.(2002) note that there may be a number of reasons for differences of understanding between consultants and consultees. For instance there may be a very different perspective on causal attributions (Weiner, 1979) resulting from a differing focus to training dependent on where and particularly when individuals were trained. In addition, it may be that the consultees have been working with a difficulty for a long time and therefore want an expert to resolve it. The consultants, on the other hand, may come to a situation feeling that there is probably more that could be achieved by the consultee, if only he or she would engage in the consultation process.

This research points to the need for further work on agreeing a useful model of consultation. This model needs to address the differences of perception and enable all participants to understand their role and therefore to be more effective.

7.2.2 Intuitive Working Practices

This research illuminated the fact that most consultants only follow a very loose structure. Two consultants particularly talked about using intuition and about using a number of psychological theories, but at a covert level and in no consistent manner. Although consultant psychologists have access to a number of theoretical and practical stances, these were not used consistently. Frequently the consultant seemed to be working from an intuitive rather than a conscious understanding.

Although this might be expected as a result of high levels of tacit knowledge, it is limiting to the consultation process, since the thinking cannot so readily be accessed. It will be recalled that Watkins (2000, 2002) asserted that many different definitions and approaches to consultation are being used across England. He suggested that it is necessary that the variety of approaches are brought to the conscious level for consultation to become a more clearly identified professional practice in the world of educational psychology.

This research showed that although many psychological theories are being used by consultants, this is from an a-theoretical standpoint. It may be that use of theoretical bases of practice could help identify which approaches may be more useful at different stages of the consultation. For example, personal construct theory could be of greatest use in trying to understand different participants' perspectives on a given problem. Other theoretical stances, such as learning theory may have more relevance to the solution phase of a consultation.

7.2.3 The Overt and Covert Use of Power and the Power Balance

This theme came out strongly in relation to the differences in perception between consultant and consultee. It is interesting to note that both consultants and consultees felt that they did not possess enough authority in many cases. This may relate to issues around concerns that Jones and Nisbett (1971) raised first: namely, that people tend to attribute causes in a manner that protects themselves. In this case, the responsibility for not finding an effective way forward through consultation seemed to be ascribed to the other party, which allowed the first party to save face since it was not his or her fault.

It seemed that consultants felt that there was a specific outcome to be achieved. This resulted in consultants tending to use power stances to achieve a particular end rather than to enable the consultees' thinking to move forward. As a result, power stances were used covertly and there was significant use of those power stances, which tend to lead to discordant relationships and poor outcomes.

To some extent, this difficulty seemed to relate to working in an LEA. Consultants seemed to feel that they were working to a particular agenda outside of their control. Equally consultees were to a large extent of the opinion that they had already tried everything sensible and therefore consultation was often really a process which had to be completed before moving to a resource based intervention, which would solve the problem through external means. It is concluded that both parties felt constrained by external agendas but for different reasons.

There were circumstances where the power relationship was more equal. These situations seemed to be driven by two necessary circumstances: there was an agreed understanding of the meaning and process of the consultation and the consultee really wanted to be engaged in a process to help him or her gain new ideas about how to resolve the presenting difficulty. It seemed that the use of appropriate power stances was much easier to achieve when the consultation was driven by the consultee. When considering personal development or change, there is a need to wait until the client is ready to accept change. The literature suggests that all that is achieved by rushing change is defence (Craib, 1994), which actually slows the process down.

It is suggested then that a full understanding of the power relationships and the use of particular power stances needs to be developed. This is both in terms of the individual consultant, and in relation to how one might set up the work of a consultation service, with respect to the training, the environment and the expectations.

7.2.4 Espoused Theory Versus Theory in Use

One of the most notable issues arising was that of the difference between espoused theory and theory in use. This research showed that there was little connection between the two. Argyris (1990), and Argyris and Schon (1996) have talked at length about the differences here and the reasons for such occurrences.

The issue needing to be addressed now is that of considering ways forward that might reduce the gap between espoused theory and theory in use. It is noticeable that within the working practice of the consultants involved in this study there was no supervision structure. It may be of relevance that consultants can only really reflect on their practice in an abstract sense, away from the consultation. Webster (2001) points to concerns that the appraisal of educational psychologists is so private that it may not actually offer the opportunity to reflect on practice at the level of delivery. This issue will be returned to when considering a possible outline model for consultation.

7.2.5 Working in an LEA and Practising Consultation

Despite having mentioned this issue above, it should be identified as a theme in its own right. Some consultants and consultees viewed their role as being constrained by LEA

and school agendas. This compromised the ability of staff to take up clear roles as consultant and consultee. From the perspective of the consultant, there was a need to 'sell' the LEA agenda, which affected the consultant's freedom to offer a pure process model and affected his or her use of power stances to achieve given ends. At the same time, the consultee was compromised, by knowing that there could be additional resources available if only he or she could persuade the consultant that everything possible had been tried. This issue seemed to undermine the consultative relationship and allow into centre stage other 'games', which affected the process. This was articulated by a number of consultants and consultees, at times reducing the consultative process to fulfilment of a requirement of the LEA prior to the release of additional resources.

7.2.6 Expert Versus Process Support

Consultees wanted answers and additional ideas from consultants whom they perceived to have additional expertise. This is not an original finding. Indeed Athanasiou et. al. (2002) note that consultees tend to feel that they have tried everything they can think of prior to accessing a consultant. It follows that the consultee will wish for additional expert knowledge of new and different ideas. The reality was that unless any new ideas were congruent with the consultee's values and beliefs, they were dismissed as impracticable, inappropriate or idealistic.

There is little qualitative research in this area. What there is suggests that school based consultees do require the consultant to be in a position to offer expertise at least at the level of having greater knowledge in the subject area. It is arguable that it has always

been the case that the consultant is expected to have greater subject knowledge of the problem in question. Notwithstanding, this knowledge cannot be transmitted through any processes other than those of engagement and relationship (Craib, 2001).

It follows that consultants do actually need to have expert knowledge but this is not just in relation to the product issues of suitable outcomes, but also about the process issues of how to engage the consultee in change and when to use what techniques. This may sound manipulative, but without a clear understanding of the process issues and how to intervene within those, coupled with research knowledge, no significant change will be achieved. It is the tenet of this paper that expertise and a full understanding of the process issues are of equal valence in the consultative process.

7.2.7 Indirect Versus Direct Work

Both consultants and consultees wanted the consultant to have worked directly with the pupil under discussion. For the consultee this was so that the difficulties were experienced by the consultant; for the consultant this was a way of ensuring that he or she understood fully the problem. It seems that direct work may be necessary as part of consultation. Wagner (2000) asserted that direct knowledge of the subject of any consultation is necessary. The process should start with an observation of the child prior to consultation and any subsequent work with the child results from the agreed actions of the consultation. It could be argued that this model puts the consultant in an expert role from the outset. Undoubtedly the *modus operandi* suggested by Wagner (2000) is acceptable to many since it can reduce the pressure on the consultant. Nonetheless, the

above way of working allows for expertise to become central stage and could suffer from not ensuring engagement of the consultee.

7.2.8 The Agent of Change

A number of consultants raised the concern that it is important to work directly with the person who is going to be carrying out the intervention. This is a complex theme, in that some felt that the important people were those with the power to promote action, whilst others felt that unless there was direct work with the agent of change nothing was likely to happen.

It is suggested that there is another issue underlying this, which is that of what, in an educational psychology service, is consultation trying to achieve? The service, from which the present research emanates, purports to help schools increase their capacity to meet the needs of an ever increasing number of pupils through supporting schools to become learning organisations that increasingly are able to resolve their own problems. If this is the case, it seems that the responsibility for identifying the agent of change should remain with the school. In fact, to consult with staff who are significant within the management structure seems to offer more hope to achieve the goals set by the LEA than does consultation directly with an individual teacher assistant who may be going to carry out the particular intervention on this occasion. Nonetheless this decision should remain within the responsibility of the consultee if he or she is taking responsibility for outcomes.

7.2.9 Evaluation

This was viewed as of central importance in the questionnaire responses and was of significant importance at the level of interview inquiry, yet was not mentioned in the transcribed 'live' consultations. Researchers have argued that without an evaluation structure, not only is it difficult to be sure of change and to see change through, but there is ordinarily little investment in enabling that change (Argyris, 1990).

8. CHAPTER 8: WAYS FORWARD.

8.1 A Practical Model of Consultation for Educational Psychologists

8.1.1 Consultants' Emotional Engagement and Supervision Needs

To outline a possible model for consultation, which builds on the present research and previous knowledge, it is necessary to return to some aspects of the relationship between consultant and consultee. Craib (1994) professed that all people have in life is links with others in '*all their dreadful complexities*' (preview). He was elucidating the need to consider the relationship between client and therapist, if one is to facilitate change. It was recognised that the professional relationship is complex and that account needs to be taken of the personal aspects of that relationship.

Effective consultation requires the full participation of the consultee, in which the consultant is most regarded when he or she is able to set the scene for the consultee to explore his or her concerns and clarify the difficulty. Only then is knowledge expertise of relevance and even then it needs to be couched in terms of offering possibilities and working together to translate how the research knowledge could be used within the consultee's environment.

Obholzer and Roberts (1994), asserted that at the heart of consultation is the search for a shared meaning of the situation, including that of the emotional significance. Safran (1996) reinforces this point from a cognitive-behavioural perspective, when stating that, although the cognition gives information about the environment in question, it is the

emotions that *'provide people with the conviction that a certain course of action is right for them and with the motivation to pursue that course of action.'* (p.124).

Also importance is the experience of the consultant in the process of consultation.

Baxter (2000) considers the experience of oneself as consultant and notes the importance of a temporary loss of self in the sense that objectivity and detachment is compromised. Successful consultation requires the consultant to become involved with the process and to recognise that personal emotional involvement will occur.

Consultation therefore requires a degree of self-reflection and supervision if the consultant is to be protected from inappropriate collusion, interjection and projection.

This is an area of work that has been highlighted for some time (Pomerantz, 1993), yet seems not to have become established across educational psychology consultancy. The experience of the participant consultants was that there was no formal supervision system, although individuals had made their own arrangements. It is suggested here that supervision needs to form part of a consultative approach to the work of educational psychologists. Without it, consultants remain vulnerable to becoming drawn into the consultees' difficulties in a manner that is likely to decrease consultant objectivity and efficacy (Wilson et. al., 2003).

8.1.2 Consultancy Skill Set

Ravenette (1997) states that *'the aim of these consultations will be to move the participants through problems and difficulties which are, ostensibly located within the child, but inevitably involve the constructions and the concerns of the adults in the situation* (p. 262). This implies that consultation will be particularly relevant in moving

the focus from the child having difficulties to a more complex understanding of the situation, which includes issues relating to the dynamic between the organisation, the particular adult, the consultant and the pupil in question. Hirschhorn (1988) asserted that a participative view of the organisation can be highly relevant in relation to some organisational issues, especially around how people interact, are managed and come to feel within the organisation. Stoker (2000) carries this theme further. He argues that any organisation is made up of individual perspectives and personal constructs. It follows that, if one is to learn how the organisation works, it is necessary to consider each person's constructs in order to build up an understanding of value and meaning within any given situation in a particular establishment.

Stratford (2000) points to educational psychologists' skills as significant strengths, which can be used to support work with schools at the organisational and the individual levels. He defines the particular consultational skills of the educational psychologist as:

- collaborative problem solving
- facilitation, active listening, reframing
- being a critical friend
- empowering staff
- using synectics
- assessing needs
- identifying gaps
- prioritising from school development plans
- target setting and monitoring
- setting manageable / constructive goals

interpersonal skills.

This list offers a summary of the skills that may be present in a consultation, although it should be noted that the list has no particular order and may lack specific critical focus. Notwithstanding, the list is appropriately balanced with equal weighting on the details of the interpersonal skills and on objective skills that are more external. It is only by using a healthy balance of the social and interpersonal skills, with those skills of expertise within the field of educational psychology that consultation can be maximally effective for all participants. It seems that the most successful outcomes are achieved when there is an appropriate environment to allow exploration and problem clarification. The appropriate environment will facilitate effortful and purposeful involvement in which the consultant may gently suggest ways of looking at the issues of concern, whilst drawing on his or her expert knowledge. Through this process, joint problem solving can be achieved with suitable levels of emotional involvement and commitment to maximise the potential for change.

8.2 The Model

It seems that the key skills for the consultant relate to using a problem-solving framework. The consultant needs to be able to take the consultee through a problem-solving framework, ensuring that the consultee is kept to task at each stage and that each stage is fully explored prior to moving on. This is likely to require the emotional and intellectual involvement of the consultant and consultee.

The first task for the consultant is to articulate the consultation model to the consultee so that the consultee fully understands his or her responsibilities in the consultation and the strengths and limitations of the method of working. The consultee needs to understand the possible outcomes of a consultation and how best use can be made of such a session. There follows a four-staged problem-solving process. This has been developed with cognisance of the literature and the results from the present research. It does not pretend to be wholly original, but it is felt that the model will add rigour to the present understanding of consultation and could, if adopted enable more consistent and effective consultation for educational psychologists.

This framework attempts to balance the requirements of consultation within the working practices of an LEA. Craib (2001) among others suggests that consultation should follow the client's lead, which means an imposed rigid structured process is likely to have limited use. Fonagy et. al. (2002) argue that very open systems are inefficient and often unfocused, leading to less effective outcomes and client dissatisfaction.

Additionally the work of consultancy within a LEA's processes serves a variety of functions, which presently include resource allocation and time limited involvement with each school. Whilst, these restrictions should not be perceived as primary drivers because changes in the working environment may occur, it would be foolish to present a model that had limited practical relevance. It is possible to conclude, that a problem solving framework is appropriate. The model presented here is described in four separate stages since this best represents the specific foci required and in itself may be helpful to the consultant and consultee in setting and returning to a reference framework.

8.2.1 Stage One: Problem Exploration

Within an effective consultation model there are key skills that the consultant needs to utilise during particular phases of the consultation. If one considers the basic four-part problem-solving framework, during the first part, that of problem exploration, a number of core psychological theories and related key skills should come into play. These include active listening skills, as well as summarising and re-framing skills. Maybe more important is the overt use of a number of psychological theoretical perspectives. The difficulties may benefit from being analysed from a variety of perspectives rather than from a single psychological dogma. At this stage in the problem analysis it is important to open up the difficulties and consider the presenting issues from the perspectives of personal construct theory, systems analysis theory, psycho-dynamic principles and learning theory. A full exploration of the presenting difficulties can occur through the conscious use of such psychological theories.

Watkins (2002) co-ordinated a day's training, the theme of which was to remind educational psychologists of some of the theoretical perspectives available for use during consultation. During the day there was no attempt to explore whether any particular perspectives were of particular use at specific times within a consultation. Although it is not clear from the present research, it seems that certain psychological perspectives may be more useful in the first phase of a consultation. At this point in the consultation process it is important to explore the consultee's perspective on the difficulty as well as the difficulty per se. Most important are the causal attributions and the values and beliefs that the consultee holds that surround the difficulty (Ravenette,

1997). Therefore, techniques from personal construct theory will be of great importance to help the consultant understand the consultee's view.

Further, the difficulty needs to be understood within the context of the structures, culture and power relationships in the school. Approaches from systems theory will be useful in order to understand how this particular issue has become a difficulty in this particular organisation and for this particular consultee.

Within this stage is the issue of power relationships, transference, projection and identification. To understand the power relationships and issues around identification, projection and transference, it is necessary to consider the psychoanalytic perspective. The consultant needs to be aware of the various personal and interpersonal processes within a consultation if he or she is going to be able to achieve both working at a level of equality and remaining separate from the consultee. If this process is not understood then the consultant is likely either to collude or remain aloof from the concerns of the consultee.

During this phase an understanding of learning theory, motivation theory and the theory of behaviour management and relationship building is also relevant. Although the consultant is primarily responsible for the management of the process, the present research does suggest that for a consultant to be perceived of as useful, he or she does need to be able to offer different possible solutions from those already tried. To do this effectively the consultant will require expert knowledge in the field of learning, in its widest sense. The use of learning theory will be strengthened through the next phase, but it will be required at this stage in order to enable an analysis of the actual practical

difficulty, which will ordinarily have some aspects of learning and or behaviour. It is therefore necessary for the consultant to understand the theory of cognition to a high level so that this can be shared with the consultee to help explore, identify and possibly reframe the presenting difficulty. However, cognition should be only a part of the analysis.

The present research showed that there was too much reliance on moving directly to problem analysis, without really making an analysis of the process issues through the use of other psychological theories as discussed above. All the expressed theoretical and practical stances need to be used in parallel and at a conscious level if a successful comprehensive model of consultation is to be achieved.

8.2.2 Stage Two: Hypothesis Setting

The second stage moves forward from the first by building possible conclusions to the analysis of the first stage. Whilst the first stage tries to open up the discussion, in order to cover all the contributing factors, this second stage is an attempt to come up with testable hypotheses, which can be agreed upon. This stage is based on a logical synthesis of the contributions to the first stage. It would be expected that a number of possible explanations might be established at this point. They will differ dependent on the strength of particular arguments put from the first stage.

During this stage the primary skills will be those of logical analysis and hypothesis setting as well as forming an understanding of how the particular hypotheses can be tested. The consultant needs to use skills relating to forming rational explanations and

an understanding of the scientific process of hypothesis testing. Further, the words used need to reflect the values and beliefs of the consultee. Athanasiou et. al. (2002) showed like the present research, that unless the intervention strategy fits with the values and beliefs held by the consultee, it will not be executed effectively.

Robinson and Halliday (1988) explored aspects of this stage. They, and more recently Bergen and Kratochwill (1990) showed that the sharing of reasoning, called 'accessible reasoning' tends to increase the detail of problem analysis and the effectiveness of written reports and therefore possible future actions. It is important that consultants openly share the thinking that leads to hypotheses in order that consultees can both critique the proposed hypotheses and understand the thinking behind them.

Recent research in fields such as Mathematics has suggested that, whilst there is coherent logic within each island of thought and experience, the connections between different thinking are often not clear (Land, 2003). Present mathematical analysis is showing that there is no logical connection, and therefore no step-by-step process, for moving from one coherent system of thought to another. From this thinking, it follows that it may be that the idea of a step-by-step move towards a solution may not be practicable or effective. Rather any likelihood of change may be based on a re-framing of the problem within a slightly different logic, which takes into account the presenting factors. Unless this reasoning is shared with the consultee, it will be impossible for the consultee to move from one coherent logic to a new presentation of the difficulty, which might offer a more hopeful way forward. It is therefore important that the thinking, which leads to a particular hypothesis is shared openly and criticism is encouraged. Such action encourages effortful engagement and the process ensures that the consultee

is offered the opportunity to understand possible different ways of thinking, which take account of the facts of the case.

In an attempt to encapsulate the thoughts articulated above, it may be that during this phase a solution-focused approach is useful. The use of scaling questions and questions aimed at finding the exceptions may help differentiate between those hypotheses that have some value and those that remain untenable to the consultee and his or her logically congruent possibilities.

The end of this stage is reached by agreeing strategies for testing the hypotheses. These first two stages help to increase the available accessible reasoning in order that different and shared understandings can be formed. Monsen and Frederickson (2002) have provided support for Robinson and Halliday's (1988) assertion that the use of accessible reasoning helps increase the teacher's understanding of a problem. The present research suggests that it is only through forming a shared understanding that a change in problem analysis can occur.

8.2.3 Stage Three: Hypothesis Testing

The third stage of the problem-solving framework works up an agenda for action. This stage should include a conscious framing of the problem in order to construct a complete and rational hypothesis around the difficulties within the contexts, which surround the problem. Possible routes forward may have presented from the first stage, but it is now that possible actions can be tested against the hypotheses, which have been worked up. Techniques from brief solution focused work will be helpful. Exploration of

exceptions to when the difficulties occur will help refine the hypotheses. Further, it is now that much of the expert psychological knowledge should be shared. Aspects of learning theory, behaviour theory, motivational theory, theory of cognition, dynamic assessment and specific research information should be brought to the table. The third stage should focus on an exploration of the hypotheses in order to agree a single rationale for the difficulty. Whilst the rationale should be single, this does not mean that it may not be complex. Some hypotheses will fall by the wayside as a result of testing. Others will remain valid and they need to be turned into a coherent agreed story so that the rationale can form the basis for action.

8.2.4 Stage Four: the Plan of Action

This stage is dedicated to how to provide a plan of action, which is practicable and feasible for the particular circumstances of the school. This stage should be relatively short since much of the way in which a plan might be formed will have been part of the analysis, hypothesis agreeing and testing stages.

The essential skills here are twofold, entailing the use of informational power in the main. Earlier phases, particularly stage one, relied on the use of referential power in the main with some use of informational power. In the present stage the role of the consultant is to facilitate a way forward given the agreed rationalisation of difficulties. The consultant would be expected to have the expertise to understand the difficulty in the light of the research base. The consultee would be expected to have expert knowledge of what would be possible for all of himself or herself, the agent of change and the organisation as a whole.

During this stage there is a need to address the significance of the actual agent of change. Often the consultant is trying to support the organisation to achieve changes at a number of levels at the same time. There is the issue of change in terms of skills, which seems to relate to the agent of change. There is also the issue of change in values and beliefs in order that the consultee may be able to countenance a wider variety of possible interventions in the present and in the future. Finally there is the issue of change at the organisational level in order to affect the structures and particularly the culture and power relationships so that more supportive practices can be established in the future. These three levels of intervention need to be considered in order to establish with whom the actions need to be agreed.

8.2.5 Evaluation

Finally, it is necessary to address the issue of evaluation. It could be argued that there should be an identified fifth stage of the consultation process, which is dedicated to evaluation details. However, it has been decided that evaluation should be viewed as an integral part of the whole process and therefore has not been separated out. Nonetheless, some comments about evaluation are required.

It is important that this part of the problem-solving framework is mapped out since many interventions do not happen because the aim of them and any evaluation strategy has got lost. Evaluation needs to be achieved at a number of levels. It is not enough to look only at outcomes. One must consider whether the process involved in reaching the desired outcomes has been successful. Thus all evaluation strategies should have at least

two arms. It is suggested here that a third should be added: namely that of reflecting on what has been learnt through the evaluation by both the consultant and the consultee. Through such an aspect of evaluation, the opportunity for learning and for enhancing the capacity of the consultee to resolve his or her own difficulties in the future is increased.

The first aspect of evaluation is easily understood through reflecting on the system of having an individual education plan. It will be clear at review whether the established changes have occurred.

With regard to the process involved, the evaluation of an agreed outcome needs to be considered from the twin aspects of whether the proposed interventions were carried out in the agreed manner and whether the goals were achieved (Argyris, 1990). This is a more complicated process, requiring a return to the issues around theoretically agreed actions and actual actions in practice. Questions need to be asked which can establish where and how a particular intervention went wrong, in order that more successful possible solutions can be achieved in the future. This type of questioning will entail a return to the types of analyses, which were used to establish an understanding of the difficulty in the first place.

The additional aspects of evaluation require a conversation between the consultant and consultee based around what has been learnt through the process and how the acquired knowledge can be used to help the consultee resolve his or her difficulties in the future, without recourse to consultation. It also involves an honest conversation about the actual process and how that can be improved for all the participants. Further, such

analyses of the work as deconstructing the process with the consultee, will start to give a basis for evaluation of input by helping to define the type of input and expected outcome from the beginning of any given piece of work: thus establishing a method of evaluation dependent on aspects of both process and content. Such evaluation will go a long way to establishing the efficacy of consultation and to defining the boundaries of its use.

Finally, the use of observation and supervision may enable the consultant to reflect better on his or her own practice. It has been established that consultants usually have a different theory of practice from that actually used. In order to try to resolve this difference, techniques such as peer observation, supervision, deconstructing the process with the consultee and taped review will be helpful. These should be undertaken on a regular basis.

8.3 Research Areas for Future Study

8.3.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Present Research

This work sought to understand what occurs within a consultation from all participants' perspectives. Although one research design was embarked upon, during the research it became clear that significant information would not be captured. For example, the original design was reliant on interviews and focus groups. It was realised that the research would be better informed through recording consultations, since it had proved difficult to get information about specific consultations.

This research could have been improved through interviewing participants about their experience immediately after the recorded consultation. Such work was not undertaken due to the practicalities and because this would have asked more of participants than had been clarified at the beginning. Notwithstanding, future research could concentrate on transcribing recorded consultations and interviewing the participants immediately afterwards.

Another improvement could have been to video record the consultations. This would have enabled reflection on non-verbal behaviour, which may be central to how the power play is conducted. This was not undertaken because it was considered too intrusive and therefore might have effected the consultation unless done over a number of occasions. Also, since an agreement had not been reached beforehand, it would have put additional pressure on the consulting dyad.

Finally, it could be argued that the size of the sample does not allow either for generalisations to be made or analysis of differences across groups. Whilst this is a valid criticism, it was agreed that this research would look at a small sample in one authority and analysis of the transcripts in depth found significant differences among the small number. Further research may wish to consider larger numbers and draw upon such data for a different analysis, which might clarify a number of different types of approaches to consultation.

8.3.2 Some Possible Future Research

It would be useful to develop a tool from which to consider how a particular school operates with respect to measures of culture and relational / power issues. This might best be based on the principles of sociogram analysis and personal construct theory. The overriding need is to develop a robust understanding of school integrity with respect to the three dimensions of structure, culture and power (Reynolds, 1995).

After a full analysis of the consultation skills used in different schools, it may be appropriate to conduct a different approach to research whereby particular working styles are assigned to particular schools in given cells. Measurements of changes in key data of both a soft and hard nature would be considered in order to evaluate the different approaches assigned. It would be important to detail qualitative information in relation to culture and relational aspects of change, as well as information relating to the integration or organic nature of the three dimensions required to enhance change ability.

The focus of this research study was on the styles of consultation, which seemed most helpful to schools. It would have been interesting to ask if the success of the consultation style is dependent on the perceived effectiveness of a school. An interesting hypothesis would be that more effective schools have in place most aspects of the three dimensions or characteristics discussed in the second section and therefore would be able to benefit more from support in which collaboration and the use of informational power are predominant.

Submission for Thesis at UCL.

It may be that failing schools do not have the necessary aspects of the dimensions in place. They may need a different style of support, involving particularly the use of all the bases of social power structures identified by French and Raven (1959), if they are to succeed in managing change and ultimately to survive.

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10. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix I: The Questionnaire

Dear Colleague,

As part of my doctorate studies, I am taking an in-depth look at the Educational Psychologist's consultation process which is undertaken between Eps, teachers and SENCOs.

I would be most grateful if you would take some time (most people found that it takes them approximately 30 minutes) to complete the enclosed confidential questionnaire.

The information will be used for mean group data and therefore no individual identification will be held. The data collected will serve to help me design the next phase of the research; namely semi-structured interviews with Eps and teachers.

Thank you in advance for your time and effort and I look forward to your response.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

An analysis of the E.P. – school staff consultation Process

For the purpose of this research consultation has a wide definition, which includes all interaction with teachers/SENCOs aimed at achieving change for a given pupil or pupils.

This could be at the individual, classroom or school level. However it relates to the dialogue with teacher/SENCO etc. rather than solely individual case work.

The essential aspect is that it is about the interaction between the adults. Of course prior information may or may not have been gathered which, if so, might have included:

- Individual work;
- Systemic analysis;
- Reading information etc.

Equally the consultation process may stand alone or may be carried out over a series of visits.

In your responses please do not use individual's names to ensure complete protection of confidentiality.

Questionnaire 're Educational Psychologists consultations

1. Please think of a recent consultation between yourself and an adult/adults in school which you thought had a successful outcome. Now please answer the following questions:
 - A. From your perspective what were the main phases or sequences of the consultation. (e.g. please tell the story)
 - B. Please identify and then describe particular themes, issues, occurrences which you feel led to the success of the consultation.
 - C. What, if any, improvements would you like to have made to the consultation from the perspectives of both process and outcome?
 - Process
 - Outcome
2. I would now like to turn to a consultation between yourself and an adult/adults in school which you considered unsuccessful. Please answer the following questions:

- A. from your perspective what were the main phases or sequences of the consultation (e.g. please tell the story).
 - B. Please identify and then describe the main themes, issues, occurrences which you feel led to the lack of a successful outcome.
 - C. What in your view, would have led to improved outcomes?
3. What, in your opinion, are the five most important elements to ensure successful consultation work within a school aimed at achieving change for a given pupil or pupils.
4. If asked, would you be happy to be involved in an in-depth confidential interview about consultation. This would involve a semi-structured questionnaire which would identify and consider a particular consultation. I will conduct this and follow up with a similar interview with the relevant school staff. After that there will be the opportunity for a second interview with yourself and the staff member from school in order to consider the key issues arising from the overall data and that relevant to the individual person's experience. (overall consultation will be made up of two one to one and a half hour interviews)

10.2 Appendix II: semi-structured interview questions

- i) How long have you been the in this school?**
- ii) Have you worked with any consultants in school?**
- iii) What do you understand by consultation?**
- iv) Has your EP ever used a consultative approach?**
- v) How do you work with your Educational Psychologist in a consultative manner?**
- vi) What have you seen as the advantages of a consultative approach?**
- vii) What have you seen as the disadvantages of a consultative approach?**
- viii) How long have you known your present EP?**

I would like you to cast your mind back to a consultation about

- i) Please describe the process from your point of view.**
- ii) What aspects of the consultation went well, how and why?**

- iii) **What aspects of the consultation didn't go well, how and why?**

- iv) **Were there any particular methods, which were used which you thought**
 - **helped the process**
 - **hindered the process**

- v) **How were the outcomes measured (if at all)**

The literature on consultation suggests a number of strands for successful consultations:

- 1. Were the roles and role responsibilities clear?**

- 2. Where, when and how was the consultation carried out?**

- 3. What preparations, if any, were undertaken before the consultation?**

- 4. Was the consultation singular or undertaken over time? Is this the usual pattern?**

- 5. What follow-up, if any, was there from the consultation?**

6. How well does the EP know the school from the basis of:

Structure;

Culture;

Power.

7. How did the consultant operate – was he/she collaborative or coercive?

Who led / followed, or was the participation equal?

8. What power stances were used?

(e.g. coercive power, reward power, legitimate power, expert power, referent power, informational power)

9. What percentage of time was spent exploring the issues and contextual circumstances, before moving to solution identification?

10. How was the way forward agreed?

11. Did the EP emphasise any particular methods / issues? How did you feel about these?

12. What sort of questions did the EP ask? How did you feel about these?

13. How engaged were you in the discourse and how was this achieved?

14. Do you feel the EP treated you with respect and understood your position and the possibilities within the school?

15. What problem solving approaches were used and how were these introduced?

(e.g. solution focused, psycho-dynamic, problem analysis, systems analysis)

16. What do you think of the relationship you have with the EP along the lines of:

- i) power**
- ii) honesty**
- iii) knowledge appreciation**
- iv) equality**
- v) respect**

17. What would need to happen to maintain / improve these relationship issues?



2808129798

Professional Practice **Assignments:**

By

Simon Claridge

Submission for Doctoral Thesis

With

University College, London

Professional Practice

Assignments:

Assignment I:

Team Functions Within an Organisation: a Description of Team Operations at Three Levels of Psychological Processing. **Page 2**

Assignment II:

Intervention Based Assessment and The Needs of the LEA. **Page 39**

Assignment III:

Stress Management Training: Educational Psychologists' work to support development in one LEA **Page 80**

Assignment IV:

The Loneliness of Leadership: Reflection on my Leadership Skills and Methods for Further Improvement **Page 117**

Assignment I:

Team Functions Within an Organisation: a Description of Team Operations at Three Levels of Psychological Processing.

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Contents

Introduction	Page 4
Focus of the Paper	Page 6
Levels of description of team functioning: a framework for analysis	Page 6
Definitions of three levels of operation	Page 7-8
Level I	Page 7
Level II	Page 7
Level III	Page 8
Developmental stages of teams	Page 8
Description of team functioning: level I: the objective task	Page 8-13
Size	Page 9
Learning styles	Page 9
Team roles	Page 10
Intervention possibilities	Page 11
Working Styles	Page 13
Description of team functioning: level II: the meaning of the team	Page 13-17
A possible definition	Page 13
Routines and rituals	Page 14
Functions of a team	Page 14
Groupthink	Page 15
Peck's model of team development	Page 16
The process of change	page 17
Description of team functioning: level III: universal needs	Page 18-22
A tentative definition	Page 18
Bion's basic assumptions	Page 18
Bringing the basic assumption to a conscious level	Page 19
An example	Page 19
Recognising the basic assumption	Page 20
Identification of which basic assumption is prevalent	Page 21
Timing interventions at level III	Page 22
Recognising the stage of a group's development	Page 22-24
Stage I – immaturity	Page 22
Stage II – developing	Page 23
Stage III – maturity	Page 23
Stages of development and local authority work	Page 23
Implications for the work of educational psychology	Page 24
Summary	Page 25
References	Page 26-28
Appendices (I – IV)	Page 29-38

Introduction

It is the position of this paper that there is an ever-increasing need to work in teams. A variety of factors have come together to cause this situation. These influences will be outlined below:

Firstly, nowadays we live in an environment of change, where new targets and ways of working are being set up almost daily. This necessitates that Local Education Authority (LEA) staff develop new protocols and ways of working. These tend to involve the need for teamwork.

Secondly, Goleman (1996), in quoting Druker's (1994) work, says that as we move towards the 'knowledge worker' the individual worker's expertise is ever increasingly specialised, thus leading to the need for teams. Druker (1994) states that as a result 'teams become the work unit rather than the individual himself' (p. 159). Professionals need to work as teams to ensure that all the appropriate expertise is available. Further, different roles can be neatly jigsawed together to enhance overall outcomes and achievements. It is also worthy of note that creative and innovative outputs have been found to be much higher when there is a rich diversity of personnel as found in teams (Mumford & Gustafson 1988; Borrill et.al. 2000).

Thirdly, within any organisation, the need for continuity both of message and of delivery is paramount. For example, within schools, the necessity for teachers to plan together to ensure consistency through the years and across classes is a prerequisite to successful outcomes.

Finally, from the perspective of those working for a LEA there is a need to minimise the inconsistencies of advice given to schools and to limit the overlap between different professionals. Evidence for this statement can be found in, for instance Essex LEA. Recently, all service units within Essex LEA were asked to state their individual specific contribution and to detail how they can fit with other service areas to enhance the overall effectiveness of the LEA. It can be argued that sufficient diversity to encourage suitably creative innovation will more usually be manifested in a team (West, 2000).

At present many teams appear to under-function or are not clear of their role. We have all sat in meetings, which have seemed a waste of time, or been involved with a group of people with whom we dread working. Yet there are teams which function with high levels of energy and success over considerable periods of time. These teams tend to be a joy to work in and with. Evidence for this can be found in a number of places; it suffices here to point the reader to Sir Richard Branson's autobiography 'Losing My Virginity' (Branson 2000). Within this book he talks about the issues of size, involvement, commitment, knowledge, fun and relationship in building successful, lasting, energetic teams.

With respect to education and the work of educational psychologists, a recent survey of cross directorate working groups within Essex local education authority (LEA) found there to be a multitude of teams which had different and often conflicting roles, very different levels of attendance and variable outcomes in terms of quantity, quality

and focus. The ensuing rationalisation of the work groups has helped to give focus and increased regularity of attendance has been noted.

Educational psychologists, themselves, have a number of different relationships to teams which means that how teams function is central to much of their work. These are outlined below:

Firstly educational psychologists work with schools which function to a large extent as teams. Although the individual class teacher may be a sole adult in the classroom he or she is part of a key stage team and curriculum area team and the whole school team. Further it is increasingly the case that class teachers work with a team of learning support assistants.

Secondly, when working with schools causing concern it is vital that the school is in a position to take forward the skills packages offered to them in relation to behaviour management, curriculum delivery and so forth. It has been noted in Essex that in order to do this the school staff need to be functioning as a team and there is a requirement to have developed suitable working relationships to enable forward movement.

Thirdly educational psychologists are involved with their own team and with developments in special educational needs within local authorities. This teamwork supports the development of educational psychology within the individual local educational authority context at a time of significant change. It is particularly necessary to work as teams at this time since there is so much change. The human capacity to manage this without undue anxiety and with the required degree of consistency across school patches means that teams become a central platform from which to develop new practices and by which to ensure that everybody is kept up to date.

Fourthly, educational psychologists tend to work across a number of disciplines in order to carry out their duties at the individual, the school and the LEA level. One of the suggestions from recent government department guidance is indeed that psychologists become more involved in cross agency work and development work in local educational authorities (Kelly & Gray 2000). It is therefore necessary for educational psychologists to understand the functioning of teams at a sophisticated level. They are central in helping move teams on to help solve problems at a variety of levels. This is so in both situations where the educational psychologist is part of the team and when the psychologist is in a more consultative role.

It is then the premise of this paper that teams or work groups are a central organisational format for the work of educational psychologists. We need a clear understanding of teams, how they work, how they develop and how we might get the best out of them. Walker (1998) in his interview of Rob Stoker, chair of the DECP quotes Stoker as saying 'A considerable part of the practice of educational psychology is in group settings ...' (p. 22). It is then of the utmost importance that they are as effective as possible.

Focus of the paper

In order to explore the issues above, this paper will view team function from a variety of levels, which will include functional levels as well as deeper psychological levels, including those involved with rituals and archetypes.

Amabile et. al. (1996) showed that unless trust, good communication, individual autonomy without personal antipathies and clear goals are present within a team, however creative, implementation will not occur. It is therefore most important to consider how these aspects of team-work can be enhanced so that learning and innovation will take place. This will occur when there is a group level belief that well-intentioned action will not lead to punishment or rejection by the team (Edmondson 1996, 1999). Further Walker (1998) quotes Stoker's point that, when considering team functioning an understanding of the key processes within a psycho-dynamic conceptualisation of the work of educational psychologists is most important:

‘and my own view is that whilst I would have reservations about much of the literal interpretations of psycho-dynamic theory, the key processes that are raised in the literature and theory I think have a lot to contribute to understanding processes that go on in our work’ (p. 22-23).

There will be no suggestion that any one level of description is more important than another. Rather the paper will explore the relevance of each level and how the interaction of the levels can be analysed. Woolgar (1999) has described this approach as that of a lotus wheel, since then ‘there is no need for any particular order of priority on the lotus wheel any more than there is a need for a fixed starting point’ (p. 117). Instead the interaction between levels can be thought of as a ‘symbolic resonance’ in which ‘the different aspects of the complex all share the same emotional quality’ (p. 120).

It will be shown how an analysis can be used to help solve difficulties, which the team may be experiencing with respect to processes and outcome achievements. The paper will discuss each level and consider the way that teams develop. Where appropriate the work will be illustrated with experiences from the work place.

Levels of description of team functioning: a framework for analysis

As mentioned above teams operate at a number of levels within which a variety of needs of the team member can be fulfilled. These include the following:

the objective considerations:

- The job description of the group.
- The size of the group.
- Individual learning styles.
- Team member functions.

the meaning of the team:

- Internal work reasons for being.

- Rituals of the organisation and the team and what the team values.
- Psychological fulfilment needs.
- Groupthink.

fulfilment of universal needs:

- Raison d'être or vision / mission in life (the ideal).
- Archetypes.

For ease of understanding, the above needs can be re-categorised into three distinct levels within which a number of the other facets operate. This conceptual framework occurred as a result of work on distinguishing different levels of functioning with respect to stress management (Claridge & Murphy, 1999). Here the conceptual framework has been developed to distinguish three levels of description, which can be considered separately. As mentioned above, it must be understood that these levels interact in 'real life' and thus cannot be so simply separated when considering the role of intervention. Each of these levels will be referred to as a particular framework or viewpoint in order to emphasise the conceptual totality or stand-alone framework of any given level. This is an important distinction, since it is often the case that only one level is considered to exist either externally to the team or within the team itself.

Definitions of the three levels of operation:

Level I

The levels can be defined as firstly **the level of the objective task**. This refers to the task as set from outside for the team to accomplish. Aspects relating to this level will include time, regularity of meetings, skills levels, clarity of goals, make-up and size of the team. Essentially this level operates at the external level of reality and can be seen and discussed by all, whether directly participant in the team or not. However it should be recognised that an individual's perspectives will vary slightly dependant on his or her interpretation(s) of the task at hand. Analysis at this level then might consider the skills of individual team members and whether the correct mix is available.

Level II

The second level can be referred to as the **framework of the meaning of the team**. At this level we might consider the internal working of the team at an interaction level. This level of analysis would include consideration of issues relating to routines and rituals, team values and reasons for and styles of being relating to internal work issues for the operations of the team. So for example one might analyse the relevance of how decisions are reached and what values are revered at this level. Also significant are issues around how new ideas are managed and how the agenda is set are significant at this level.

Level III

Then the third level refers to **universal needs and issues relating to archetypes**. This level relates to what is of value in the world, what at a deep level we hope the

organisation can achieve or more importantly should be achieving. Archetypes come into this in terms of the unconscious expectations of team members which drive their behaviour and energies as well as how they can and do relate to other team members. So for example, analysis at this level will include an understanding of what values the team members might be enabled to articulate as well as an analysis of how or whether the team is dependent on particular members or an outside agency; how the team can or cannot act or how members behave towards each other. At this level then, there could be a concern as to whether new ideas are managed in a similar fashion independent of their origins.

Developmental stages of teams

It is important to remember that the levels or frameworks for analysis described above, whilst possible to define in a discrete way interact together all the time, to create high energy high performing teams at one extreme through to exhausted, alienated, low functioning and disparate teams at the other extreme. Of course one can find teams at all the different stages of a continuum, including, for example, the team that seems to function well due to personal similarities, but does not have enough variance to be able to manage unexpected changes in a flexible and innovative way. Another type of team that can be seen as successful is one that relies on the strength and wisdom of the leader, however this type of team is always vulnerable to future changes. The leader may leave or the team may come up against a situation, which requires more than the leader's skills to work through. Burnes (1993) refers to well found research, which points to the fact that in organisations one leading style may be required at the inception of an organisation, but a very different style is needed when an organisation is established. Further, rarely are both sets of skills found in one person. Therefore reliance on a leader tends to be successful only in the short term. An example of this is the situation in a school causing concern where charismatic leadership is not successful in mustering the systems, which are necessary to the functioning of the whole organisation. Yet, that very charisma was required in order to help initiate work towards necessary changes due to external pressures. The twin approaches of enthusiasm and systems organisation were required to embed the necessary working practices.

Each level is of equal significance, although not necessarily equal relevance at a given time. Alongside the levels of operation it is important to consider the developmental position of a team. There are a number of theories that relate to developmental stages of a team and these will be considered in detail below. It suffices here to note that teams need to go through a number of developmental stages to become fully functional. Activities within the specific levels defined above will vary in significance according to the developmental stage of the team and indeed the function of the team.

Description of team functioning: level I: the objective task

This section will turn to an analysis of the team levels. The types of difficulties, which may occur at each particular level and how these can be recognised will be discussed. Firstly the level of the objective work of the team.

Size

Research completed in the 1980s and 1990s has suggested that it is important to consider the size of a team in relation to its ability to get the best out of its members. If the team is too small there is not enough variety and so the team becomes vulnerable to group think and/or stagnation. Equally if the group is too large, the functioning of the team becomes overly defined by structures and rules and thus it is not possible for the team members to make the most of their colleagues to enable the formation of a high functioning team where each member complements and learns off other team members. It has been suggested that the ideal team size is no more than an absolute maximum of twelve (Buchanan & Huczynski, 1985). However other researchers have suggested that in reality the best teams have a membership in single figures (West-Burnham, 1991) or even as small as five to seven (Handy, 1985). As teams get larger, satisfaction and ease in talking diminish proportionately (Buchanan & Huczynski, 1985) and thus an individual's influence not only decreases but has a tendency to become ever increasingly distorted (Handy, 1985), leading to dysfunctional teams. However, West (2000) has shown that any team needs a rich diversity of input if it is to be creative and suitable levels of focus and analytical power if it is to innovate ideas. It can be concluded then that the best size for a high functioning work team is around seven, but the members must be diverse in experience and skills if it is to be successful in achieving positive outcomes.

Learning styles

It is posited that member learning styles also affect the functioning of a team (Honey & Mumford, 1995) and therefore can influence the appropriate size for a given team, irrelevant of the actual team function per se. Honey & Mumford (1986) defined four different learning styles. These were articulated as **Activist**, **Reflector**, **Theorist** and **Pragmatist**. Specific details of these styles will be found in appendix 1. Here, it is necessary to recognise that the four styles complement each other to help build a team that can learn from all the various experiences which may be available to that team:

- Activists tend to become very involved in any new activity, but their enthusiasm may wane after a relatively short time.
- Pragmatists like to try out new ideas.
- Theorists tend to want to build what is happening into a cohesive theory.
- Reflectors tend to stand back and try to consider issues from a wide variety of perspectives.

The individual's learning style may change over time and be affected by the particular task in hand and the learning styles of others; however for many they are relatively fixed throughout their adult lives. It is important that within any team the whole range of learning styles is present since teams need to be able to accumulate knowledge from different sources at different times. It is equally important that all particular learning styles are facilitated and respected equally. There are many situations in which only certain learning styles are valued. This of course results in a dis-involvement of those in any given team who value different learning styles and at the same time by over-focussing on one or two particular styles limits the possibilities for learning of the team as a whole.

Team roles

Learning styles will be re-visited when considering the significance of routines and rituals in team behaviour and effectiveness. However this issue also links clearly to another significant influence at this first level; that of team roles. Team roles were first studied by Wallen (1963) who noted that all groups need membership roles which included a **logical thinker**, a **strong fighter** and a **friend and helper** if they are to function effectively. It was argued that without all three behavioural styles being available within the team, its ability to achieve useful outcomes was compromised:

- Logical thinking was necessary to inform analysis.
- Strong fighting to overcome resistant forces and
- A friend and helper so that the team was facilitative for its members and therefore able to share, discuss and build on ideas.

Building on this work, Belbin (1981, 1993) completed a very detailed set of studies that analysed the functions present in the most high performing business teams. He found there to be eight distinct roles which were present and balanced in the best performing teams with an additional ninth role of **expert** which needed to be available to the team (but not a permanent standing member) as and when necessary. The eight roles are those of:

- Co-ordinator.
- Implementer.
- Plant.
- Resource investigator.
- Team worker.
- Monitor-evaluator.
- Shaper and
- Finisher.

Full details of these roles will be found in appendix II. It is necessary here to discuss their relevance rather than the detail of each role. However, whilst most roles have names which help identify their function, that of plant was named because the experimental design was one of implanting a particular role into some teams and not into others. Thus this name has little to do with the role. In fact the plant is the role of creative thinker within a team. He or she is the vital spark of creativity offering uninhibited and radical thinking to a team. One issue that can be of great importance is that people who fill this role are frequently found to be emotionally vulnerable and are only able to work to their potential if and when nurtured by the group. Thus a team can become non-functional at this level due to lack of support and respect for particular roles.

A very important aspect of this level is to fully understand that each role is of equal value and that the whole team will not function to achieve the most successful results unless all the roles are present. Whilst some roles need to be separate, others can be amalgamated in the one person. Belbin (1981) considered there to be five mutually

exclusive dimensions. To be successful, the team requires a healthy degree of tension between the following aspects:

High intelligence	vs.	not too clever
Forcefulness / dominance	vs.	sensitivity to feelings
Dynamic	vs.	patient
Fluent communicators	vs.	good listeners
Decisiveness	vs.	reflection

When the appropriate tension is present, the team will be able to operate with a suitable balance between these aspects. For example, it will be protected from, at one extreme, action without enough thought (decisiveness) and, at the other extreme, too much reflection without any action: the central issue of Shakespeare's (1982) Troilus and Cressida.

The wide variety of roles, skills and abilities cannot be possessed by one individual, but they can be held within the whole team. Belbin (1981, 1993) analysed team functioning to show that the highest performing teams included all the roles mentioned above, along with a positive tension between the five dimensions mentioned above. Belbin (1993) hypothesised that the ability to hold a positive tension between the five dimensions enabled a team to function successfully when completing a variety of tasks which included a range of team skills including, solving complex tasks, communicating successfully and managing change with success and fluency.

It is interesting to note that Belbin's model includes elements of process as well as the necessary skill make-up. The process issues really form part of the description at the second level framework since this latter level involves issues about meaning and value within the team. The values of healthy tension between different operating styles is best considered within the framework of what meaning the team may have for the members.

When considering the makeup of a team it is important to consider not only what roles are present overall but also how these are fitted to the individual. For example it is inappropriate to have a chair or co-ordinator that also fills the role of plant. It is noted rather that the most successful teams are able to separate out these roles, since if the chair is too involved in the ideas then he or she is not able to maintain distance appropriately. It has also been noted that the really high intelligence should not sit with the chair, since the chair then tends to become overly involved with the process, rather than keeping a level headed overview.

Intervention possibilities

In analysing teams working at this level there are a number of indicators for action. Firstly, Belbin (1981) showed that when a team is bogged down and lacking in energy and initiative, the most important function becomes that of the plant. Belbin's (1981) research, showed that by placing plants into 'stuck' teams they could be re-activated relatively rapidly and then continue their new level of functioning over a significant period of time provided that the plant was welcomed into the team and nurtured appropriately (Belbin, 1993). In such situations the plant was placed in the team to

act as a catalyst by introducing new and often radical ideas and possible solutions to problems, thus driving teams from complacency and single, often no longer useful, methods of operation. The analogy here is of the piece of grit in the oyster.

Other aspects have also been examined. For example if a team is considered to be under-functioning, it is most important to consider whether the co-ordinator and finisher roles are being well delivered. Usually it will be found that either one or both of these roles are not being carried out effectively. Either there is no person in the team capable of carrying out these roles effectively or because people able to manage these roles through both skill and propensity are not enabled to function in that role within the team. This may be due to team values in that certain roles are not really appreciated or because the role or roles that an individual has adopted are in mutual conflict with another role or another aspect of the team member's post. For example the role of co-ordinator is often defined by position within the hierarchy rather than by functional skill. It may be that the person in a co-ordinator role is for instance naturally a shaper and thus the co-ordination role will be compromised. It also can be the case that mediocre performance results from a lack of clarity in the function of resource investigation, innovation or shaping and groups that seem to make a lot of errors need to enhance the role of evaluator and / or of organiser.

Belbin (1981, 1993) points out that there is a balance to be drawn between functions that are internal to the team or inward looking and the outward-looking roles. Implementer, monitor-evaluator, team worker, and finisher are all considered to be inward-looking roles, whereas the roles of plant, co-ordinator, shaper and resource investigator are seen to be external or outward-looking in their focus. In the main the difficulties faced by a team considered above relate to their output, but clearly there can be difficulties which relate to the internal functioning of the team. When conflict is evident in a team it is usually the case that there is a need for good team working or strengthening of the co-ordinator role.

It is clear from the above that there is no simple recipe for good team performance at this level. Firstly it is necessary to consider in what ways the team is considered to be under-functioning and then to analyse the effectiveness of particular roles within the team from the perspective of both the skills present and the team function. In terms of the team's functioning, it is also important to consider the team purpose and its role in relation to the external environment. It is suggested that a new team will need a strong bias towards shaping in the first instance and highly competitive situations need a bias towards an innovator of good ideas. Also teams that operate in high-risk areas need excellent evaluators and situations of very rapid change need high functioning and effective plants. However teams that operate in stable situations or organisations where maintenance is a high priority will need good team worker roles established.

An important facet of the above information is that it is reliant on an objective analysis of the team's functioning and the skills present within it. Many writers, including Belbin (1981, 1993) have pointed to the fact that this level of analysis will account for only some of a team's difficulties. A final aspect of analysis at this level relates to preferred psychological states. In a sense the following research links this first level with the next, since the information which follows relates to both to the individual's contribution and to his or her feelings of ease or anxiety.

Working styles

Briggs & Myers (1988) took a number of ideas first developed by Jung (1923). The fundamental concept, which Jung developed, was that of people having preferred psychological ways of being. He suggested that what can seem like random behaviour can in fact be codified into preferred psychological states. He found four scales as below:

- | | | |
|----------------|-----|--------------|
| • Extraversion | vs. | introversion |
| • Sensing | vs. | intuition |
| • Thinking | vs. | feeling |
| • Judgement | vs. | perception |

Briggs & Myers (1988) developed Jung's thoughts into an in-depth analysis of individuals' preferred working styles and how these will best fit into a team. Their scales detail differences among sixteen types of people and consider them along the lines of setting goals, gathering information, making contact and making decisions (details in appendix III). Clearly an analysis of how different functions can fit or exacerbate difficulties within a team is most important. However their research does not address the other pertinent issues such as motivation, values and culture. It does however point to the fact that preferred styles may conflict with each other and that this can lead to a degree of tension unless carefully managed. There has to be a respect for and an understanding of the various different styles and how they can best interact to give the team the highest potential. This needs to be brought to the conscious level as necessary to ensure that the team deals with difficulties overtly.

Description of team functioning: level II: the meaning of the team

A possible definition

It may be useful to clarify the cognitive difference between this level of working and the previous one. Fundamentally, this level relates to the meanings and values that the team members make of the team. This level is therefore about identity. It includes issues about how the identity is formed and maintained and contributes to why people like to be identified with the team. At this level of operation a team may be seen to develop a way of being which is additional to the work to be completed. This includes rituals, routines and ways of operating and developing the team identity. Thus it can be summarised as a cognitive level of functioning which strives to support the development and setting of the operating values and methods for the team. This in turn enables the team working styles to fulfil certain functions for the members beyond 'getting the work done'.

In many teams this level of analysis is kept at a minimal level of consciousness and therefore cannot be touched in any meaningful way with respect to an analysis of the team's functioning. It is the position of this paper that it is most important that this level of functioning is brought to the fore and made available to the team at a conscious level.

Routines and rituals

The potential effect of value biases with respect to roles and methods of functioning has been touched upon above. It is appropriate, now, to turn to the second level of functioning previously outlined. This relates to how the team makes sense of its being in relation to its internal reasons for being and ways of working. All organisations have particular ways of functioning which are legitimised and other ways that are effectively outlawed. A simple example of this is dress code. Many organisations establish certain ways of dressing which then have a meaning attached to them in themselves. In Britain it is expected that male staff working in a bank will wear a tie and jacket. However this is not the case in for instance Spain. It was said about the LEA that grey suits were the order of the day and that this infected the working methods of the establishment (Last, 1997). Recently there has been a drive to establish different dress codes and a more open set of working methods (e.g. 'dress down Fridays'). The overall point here is that there are a number of functions which need to be held on to within any given team which identify a team as different and separate to its outside world and gives it a focus and modus operandi. These factors are very important to a team at both the level of the whole team and at the individual level. If the rules, routines and rituals of the team are not in synchrony with the individual team members ways of operating, there will be a level of disharmony created which will manifest itself in a number of ways, relating particularly to issues of motivation, consistency and team harmony (Handy, 1995). These potential difficulties are frequently manifest at times of amalgamation or when new teams are made up with staff from across different parts of an organisation. If different styles and routines have been adopted previously it should not be assumed that these will be acceptable to new members. Therefore it is most important that a suitable amount of time is put aside to enable new teams to develop their own routines and rituals.

Teams develop their own rituals to attempt to overcome some of these potential difficulties and in order to establish specific ways of working which ground the team with an identity. Rituals are of course reductive and to this end can actually limit a team's ability to be creative. This in fact relates back to some of the reasons that Belbin's (1991) 'plants' are often seen as difficult members of a team. Their very creativity will threaten team routines and rituals, yet without their function one cannot manage in a time of change. Routines of course can change over time and through internal discourse.

Functions of a team

Firstly, there are many different types of teams that are suitable for different activities. Teams can fulfil many functions, including the following:

- provide support and help to their members;
- co-ordinate the activities of individuals;
- generate commitment;
- provide a place to be and thus meet basic human needs to belong;
- identify training and development needs;
- provide learning opportunities;
- enhance communication;
- provide a satisfying, stimulating, enjoyable work environment;

- provide a problem solving forum;
- provide a sense of identity.

It is most important to establish for what reasons a particular team exists and what it is there to achieve not only for the organisation but also for its members. Often this is not articulated and herein lies the start of mis-functioning at this level. Frequently teams are set up without any clearly articulated function or with an overt agenda alone. The time is not then taken to establish and review what internal sustenance and meaning is available for team members (Senge, 1990). Frequently, this aspect can be very different for individual team members for a whole gamut of reasons. Yet, if not considered in detail and brought to the surface as and when necessary, it will gradually eat away at the team and / or cause a situation whereby the team will never go through the necessary processes to become able to function at a high level.

Groupthink

Groupthink happens when a team develops such an internal identity that it starts to operate with a biased and individual view of the world.

Janis (1983) completed a detailed analysis of the phenomenon of **groupthink**. His studies started from concerns about the Bay of Pigs fiasco, but he studied more widely including looking at the functioning of a large number of management teams in organisations. Goleman (1997) considers how, for an individual, a team operates to fulfil similar functions as the family, with similar ‘games’ being carried out. Laing (1969) considered the trade off between anxiety and maintaining stability that occurs in the family. He particularly considered the way certain feelings become unmentionable because they create a situation in which there is potentially too much anxiety created. Therefore the unmentionable feeling is managed as if it did not exist at all. Janis (1983), in showing how all teams can be vulnerable to groupthink has built on this concept. As a team starts to operate within the groupthink paradigm a number of schemas starts to emerge. These are listed as follows and are explained below:

- The invulnerability illusion;
- The unanimity illusion;
- Suppressed personal doubts;
- Mindguards;
- Rationalisations;
- Ethical blinders;
- Stereotypes.

The analysis shows that any or all of the above can occur. The team can become filled with its own previous success or, in newly formed teams, with members’ reputations. This can easily lead to a feeling that the team must be invincible and therefore decisions and relevant information are not considered in appropriate detail.

Equally, as a result of the discomfort of disagreement the team members start to assume that their views are unanimously held. This goes along with the feelings of invulnerability, maintains cosiness within the team (thus reducing potential anxiety) and results in a lack of detailed analysis or questioning of each other. Personal doubts

are then suppressed because to voice them would increase the anxiety present in the team. In order to ensure the suppression is maintained, mindguards dismiss dissent by stating that for example that sort of attitude is defeatist or unwelcome or even just plain wrong and stupid. Mindguarding is often carried out quite brutally and personally, which serves to lead to an assurance of no re-occurrence because of the resultant hurt feelings. Equally, groupthink can in fact lead to feeling of impotency, which maintain a lack of ability to act at all. For example, when trying to gain consistency of responses from tribunals it was suggested that a LEA should meet with tribunal staff to raise the issues of concern. This was met with derisory comments from a particular member of the team, which put a full stop to any such explorations. Interestingly, however such a forum was set up the following year in which LEA representatives meet with members of the tribunal management team to discuss issues of how the tribunal is working from a LEA perspective.

Teams that are well within a groupthink mode tend to start to use obviously inappropriate rationalisations, consider themselves to have the moral high ground (ethical blindness) and to stereotype outside individuals and groups. These stereotypes invariably are simplistic generalisations and tend to revolve around misperceptions, a lack of critical analysis of the information available and an assumption of the type 'well she/they would say/do/think that wouldn't she/they'.

Groupthink is potentially very dangerous to a team's functioning, but Janis (1983) says it is present to some degree in all teams that he studied. Certainly the experience related above implies this to be true. Janis (1983) commented that an eye must be kept out for this type of functioning. If it is happening too often then it is most important to bring the analysis to consciousness. The team and particularly team leader need to work to foster a team spirit which maintains high ethical standards, ensures it has access to all potentially relevant information and discusses issues fully, encouraging dissent and difference of opinion prior to action. Peck's (1998) approach to team development, which is discussed below, is important in relation to building teams that are likely to be well protected from groupthink.

Peck's model of team development

There are a number of important and fairly distinct stages through which a team will go in its moves towards a state of full effective functioning. The traditional model is that of **forming, norming, storming** and **performing**. The suggestion from this model is that any team will first form itself and membership will be made clear (although this event does not always occur clearly). After the establishment in name there will be a time of *norming* in which the rules and routines of the team are agreed. Typically this stage will include deciding on how often the team needs to meet, any standing agenda items and the agreed functions of the team. After this stage has been completed, a degree of discordance will occur. It is only after any disagreement, alternative opinions, vying for power and personal individual assertions have been aired that the team can really start to use all its strengths to perform at a high functioning level.

Peck (1998) considered the processes of forming a high performance team from a slightly different perspective. He considered that teams start in a position of **pseudo-community**. This position can best be described as one in which members of the team

stick to the rules formally and continuously. As a team finds its feet the members will tend to stick to rules as they see them. This would suggest that at this point in a team's development it is important that there are clear rituals, rules and routines. Equally, however it will be most important that these rules and routines are not only clear, but are within the usual expectations of the members of the team. If unusual expectations are present at this stage then discordance may occur which may inhibit the process of the team forming a bedrock of behaviours.

Peck (1998) goes on to describe the next phase of team building as that of **chaos**. This is a stage of members vying for power and the right to disagree with the majority or the historically accepted position. Peck (1998) considers this to be the time when members will, as it were, flex their muscles. It is not a time of agreement or particularly of respect for others' opinion or views. Peck (1998) goes on to explain that, because of the discomfort which is engendered at this time, teams will frequently return to the comfort zone of pseudo-community. This results in the team never being able to do anything different, although it can seem a safe place to be for the team members; particularly if there have been significantly divergent views expressed in the forays into chaos.

Peck (1998) states very strongly that it is only by going into a third phase which he refers to as **emptiness** that the team is able to move towards a high functioning status. This phase is that of emptying oneself of one's own biases and prejudices through a process of recognition and understanding. If this stage is accomplished successfully each and every member of the team will have the opportunity to admit and understand his or her own and others' value systems and experiences. Peck (1998) explains how this leads to the team being able to operate at the level of **real community**. At this level there is a full recognition and respect for the diversity of experiences and skills within the team and the team thus becomes able to draw on all of the combined skills and experiences, values and beliefs to solve problems and manage a full and wide range of situations.

The process of change

A final important issue at this level refers to the process of change. For any change to occur there are four distinct processes that the individual will go through. These are **unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, and unconscious competence** (Clarkson and Gilbert (1991)). The issue at this level is that for any changes to be established in a team's working there are these four processes. Firstly the inappropriate or unsuccessful behaviour patterns need to come to a conscious level and then a change strategy needs to be agreed which is only embedded into unconscious or 'natural' ways of behaving over time and after a significant amount of consistent practice. This whole process can be very painful since it feels unnatural to the participant or participants. Thus frequently there is a tendency to fall back towards unconscious incompetence, unless real effort is made to maintain a focus bringing behaviour patterns and changes to a full level of consciousness.

Description of team functioning: level III: universal needs

As with the other two levels of team functioning, this level of team operation interacts with the other levels already discussed both to affect them and to be open to being affected by them. Again there is no consideration that this level is of greater or lesser importance than any other level, but it must be considered and valued as necessary if a clear analysis of a given team is to be established.

A tentative definition

This level is difficult to articulate partially because it is not often acknowledged at a conscious level. However it is noticeable that teams can become stuck due to the interplay of certain deep-seated needs which we all have. This has been described previously as related to the meaning of archetypes and one's individual overall values in life. For example, if considering educational psychology, it is interesting to ask the question as to why people joined the profession in the first place and how these values are now being fulfilled through the work of the team. This will of course relate to a set of values often found to be around caring for people and wanting to make the educational experience of young people a better and more useful one than may have been the case for some in the past. Much of this value set will get played out through relationships within the team setting. These relationships will carry a number of assumptions at the individual or group level which may at times have significant affects on the working of the team.

If this level is not considered then it can become difficult to understand why a given team never completes certain activities. It is important to consider whether there is congruence between the tasks of the team as set at the functional or objective level and the deep-seated values, beliefs and relationships within the team held by the team members.

Bion's basic assumptions

However much of the activity at this level manifests itself in an unconscious way. Bion (1985) describes the **basic assumptions**, which he has found to be present in all groups that he has worked with. His early research considered only therapeutic groups, where there were likely to be underlying psychodynamic issues at play. However in later works he considered these issues in relation to work teams and found the same three **basic assumptions** to be present always. Bion (1985) defines these three assumptions; those of **dependence, pairing and fight-flight**. Dependence refers to the basic instinctual level need that we all have to 'be sustained by a leader on whom we depend for nourishment, material and spiritual, and protection' (p. 235). Pairing refers to the idea that a team has been formed because of our need to form emotional alliances with others. Pairing is defined elsewhere (Bion, 1961) as the need for people to see a positive possibility for the future; namely that people can and do make positive affective alliances. Bion (1961) describes how this experience defends us from having to live with the conscious knowledge of the murkier sides of relationships when people vie for power and position. Finally, fight-flight is about the idea that the team has been formed 'to fight something or to run away from it' (page 235).

A fourth dimension, which Bion refers to, is that of the **work** of the team. His ideas are that the three processes defined above operate continuously within any group or team. This is obviously not at a conscious level but rather these processes underlie individual and group activity. At any one time a team will be operating with only one of the basic assumptions active although the team can shift from one to another at any time. Alongside the active basic assumption will be the more conscious level of the processes of the overt objective work to be achieved. The basic assumption that is active may help or hinder the work activity and certain groups or teams are more likely to suffer the interference of particular basic assumptions than others. For example army teams will tend to be underpinned by assumptions of fight-flight and ecclesiastical teams by the dependency assumption. The issue here of importance is really twofold:

1) Bringing the basic assumption to a conscious level

It is paramount to understand that the team will need to fulfil this level of need for the team members. As mentioned previously, Stoker (1998), in Walker (1998), alludes to the need to recognise the relevance of psycho-dynamic thinking to the workings of teams for educational psychologists. Bion (1985) and Edwards et. al. (2000) show that if the team always veers towards a particular basic assumption it will be important to bring this to the conscious level and consider what it is that the team is not able to fulfil for its members and how this is disrupting the achievement of the work to be completed.

An example

A school example may illustrate this point. The basic dynamics of the particular school were that the deputy and head did not get on well and the staff felt ill supported by senior management. At the same time the senior management team felt that the classroom staff would not take appropriate responsibility for behaviour and learning in their classroom. The head tended to be ineffectual and was very isolated from the staff group as a whole. The staff had been in the school for a considerable time. In fact the head who had been there for over ten years was the seconded newest staff member.

Whilst this situation is not unusual, it became clear that, from the staff point of view, they were not being supported. They felt a very high level of unfulfilled dependency, which frustrated them and led to bad working practices, low levels of achievement for the pupils and high levels of discord among staff members. It also became clear that external support was frowned upon and seen as over-critical. The head was at a loss as to what to do. Support staff carried out an analysis of the dynamics of the team and school functioning using Bion's model. It was agreed that an intervention relying on staff observations of each other with resultant action planning was an appropriate way forward. In order to achieve this there needed to be a cover schedule worked out which became the responsibility of the head. The head then organised the cover arrangements and carried out much of the cover himself. He also took the feedback session, although this was supported by an external consultant.

The pertinent issue was the unusually high levels of energy in the school on the day of the cover for staff to be able to observe each other and then feed back. The head was

energetic and focussed and seemed to serve the organisation's need for dependency. Equally other staff were energetic, focussed and smiling on that occasion.

The consultants for the school have gradually managed to ensure that the head does operate to lead the school. As a result, an ever-increasing fulfilment of the previously unmet need has occurred, which in turn has allowed the school to start to address its very real and urgent curriculum and behaviour management issues.

Intervention to support this change started with a clear analysis and description of the functioning using a framework, which recognised the significance of Bion's work. It was then necessary to ensure that all consultants working with the school understood and accepted the framework.

Finally, interventions in the school were focused on the consultant acting as information gatherer rather than as an expert. Then significance of the findings was then shared with the head and then the head was supported in whole staff feedback, but from a position which ensured deference to the head, rather than a stance of expert.

It might be said that what occurred was nothing other than creating a leader again and of course at one level such an analysis would be correct. However without the analysis at the deeper level, it had proved impossible over a number of years to effect any shifts in the school, which had been ineffective for a significant length of time. Previous interventions had included significant input at the levels of developing expertise in the school through in-service training, modelling and mentoring, but to no avail until the issues were addressed at a deeper level perspective.

In this particular example the interactions between the levels of team operation was such that the changes activated at the deeper level effected the operations at the surface level. This can equally work the other way around. Changes at the more objective, surface levels can have significant effects on the satisfaction of team members at other levels. The analysis of team operation is likely to be most successful when all levels of functioning are taken into account.

2) Recognising the basic assumption

The second important issue at this level is that of recognising what basic assumptions may be operating and serving to disrupt the flow of the work at any given time. Previously we were considering the issue of identification of unmet needs, but it is also the case that this level operates within teams because the issues identified here are so basic to us. Therefore, Bion (1985) points to the fact that one or other basic assumption is operating within a team at any given time. This is not wrong, but needs to be recognised if one is going to be able to harness the full potential energy of the team to positive and useful ends. In times of change and uncertainty the basic assumption of pairing may often play a significant part because of the need to find security through allegiances. However if the team becomes focussed on this issue it may well be to the detriment of the task in hand unless the issue can be made conscious and thus acknowledged and dealt with. Also, if change is being imposed from outside there is a tendency to spend considerable energies wrestling with dependency needs within a team. These often manifest in high levels of discordance

and a lack of energy to achieve outcomes. Rather others are blamed; particularly those perceived to be in authority.

Fight-flight basic assumption, whilst at times exciting and a focus for a team, will tend to limit its ability to relate appropriately to the outside world and thus reduce the ability of the team to function as an integral and moral part of the organisation as a whole.

Identification of which basic assumption is prevalent

An interesting aspect of this third level is that of how to identify what basic assumption is prevalent at any given time. Whilst there are clues from others' behaviour and comments, it is suggested by some that a major method of identification relates to one's own sensitivity (Bion, 1985; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994; Dallos & Draper, 2000; Woodhouse & Pengelly, 1991). If one is led to feel either in need of giving sustenance or in great need of sustenance oneself it is likely that the dependency assumption is active. Equally this will be so in relation to feelings of intrigue around pairings or if the prevalent feeling is one of enmity towards some group or groups outside of the team. By bringing these feelings, which are likely to be tenuous at the time, to the fore and by making them conscious, they can be discussed and the team can become better focussed on its work.

Edwards et.al. (2000) have complemented the subjective and very personally based method of analysis articulated in the former paragraph, with some more overt aspects of behaviour which may be encountered within team members. They point to recognising unfulfilled sustenance needs or feelings of dependency through seeing behaviours such as:

- group members having no ideas of their own
- members asking for information they already have or have received
- over dependence on guidance of how to complete a given task
- a distinct lack of initiative taking and
- a very high level of dependency on the leader for all action.

In order to try to move some of these blocks forward it is important to develop structures, which encourage and demand participation from all group members such that ideas are pooled and the recognition of difficulties relating to leadership and being led are shared.

Fight and flight can be recognised through behaviours, which blame external factors and / or show the group giving up or having overt rows and confrontations. Finally there may be a feeling of desperation to act now in order to be doing something, since any action can be seen as better than none.

These aspects of dysfunctional behaviour are usually best managed through acknowledgement of the prevalence of angry and / or fearful feelings and behaviours, along with a focus on the task in hand and reminders that the task is within the group and not external. The development of methods to express and to value different points of view is important here, reminiscent of Peck's view of 'real community'.

Finally, if team members often rely on someone or something else to come up with the answer, an over-emphasis on pairing behaviour may result, which can disrupt the work in hand. Also there may be a high level of comments about new ideas or approaches but without any resultant action and the team may start to split into sub-groups forming around particular answers to given tasks. Finally team members may start to invest trainers and leaders with unrealistic powers to create change.

Here it is suggested that the way forward lies in acknowledgement that too much emphasis on what *could be* is taking away from what *is*. It is important to be asking group members how their ideas could be enacted and to find methods for involving all the team members in discussing the prevalent ideas.

Timing intervention at level III

It is, however, important to consider the best time for reflection and making issues conscious. This is dependent on the situation and the specific people involved. In some situations it will be important to leave a time gap so that internal issues can be discussed in a suitably calm atmosphere. However, it is also important to consider how 'real' a retrospective discussion is likely to be.

Recognising the stage of a group's development

Whilst this model is very useful and acknowledges that teams operate at a number of levels, it is not clear yet how one might recognise the different stages and how one might encourage movement through the stages. A model of the maturation of teams and the sort of behaviours seen at each stage will be useful to help clarify some of these issues.

Stage 1 –immaturity

At the first stage the following behaviours are likely to occur and can be identified if looked for:

- Feelings, weaknesses, mistakes are covered up;
- People conform to an established line;
- There is little care of others' views;
- No shared understanding of what needs to be done.

If the team remains stuck at this level there will be a tendency towards increased bureaucracy and paperwork; people will tend to confine themselves to the defined job and authority will be maintained by an ever increasingly hierarchical methodology. Teams can and do function effectively at this level if the leader is wise and energetic and happy to take decisions relatively autonomously. However the team is not really functioning as a team and is relying on the abilities of the leader who will of course have his or her own limitations at least in the long run.

Stage II – developing

In the developing stage, different behaviour, as described below will start to emerge:

- more risky and personal issues are aired;
- group starts to look inward and reflect on what it is doing;
- more concern is shown for colleagues' views and difficulties;
- there is greater openness but a continuing lack of unified / economic action.

This second stage is a developing stage and thus gradually more open and systematic ways of operating will be achieved. Methodical systems for decision making, setting objectives, and co-operating with each other will become established and the team will start to develop its own routines, which suit its agreed modus operandi.

Stage III – maturity

In the final stage the team will be seen as operating along mature lines that will include the following behaviours and feelings:

- a high level of and respect for flexibility;
- leadership will be situation specific not down to protocol;
- team will develop a moral and social responsibility which places it in the wider organisation;
- trust, openness, co-operation and confrontation are common;
- the team is a happy place to be;
- people will respect and build upon differences to benefit problem analysis and decision making.

The key issues here relate to the openness, trust and flexibility that is achieved. This allows for work to occur at the level of real community with a focus and energy being brought to bear at the functional level. The team will consider its processes and there will be a regular agenda item that considers process issues and ensures that this level is kept at a conscious level. It is important not to overstate this issue since it is only one of the levels of working of a team. Nonetheless if it is not recognised the team is likely to founder and become unclear about its internal meaning and direction. The functional level considered first however is of equal importance, so this level should be visited as necessary and considered as appropriate: the team should not be allowed to degenerate into too much process work at the cost of the functional level, so a balance must be drawn and maintained.

Stages of development and local authority work

In the writer's experience, local authorities seem to be at a cusp. On the one hand it is becoming a requirement that professional staff operate with flexibility and autonomy to meet needs as found in the field. On the other hand, local authority work, due in part to government intervention, sets firm boundaries often described through bureaucratic change and operational protocols. These exist to ensure the organisation can manage its own anxiety and be seen to be accountable at all levels. However an inevitable consequence of reliance on rules is an increase in the feeling of persecution by staff (Obholtser & Roberts (1994). Therefore a result of this relatively rigid behaviour is to keep teams operating at a team developmental level akin to stage one. In order to encourage more mature development, staff need to feel secure enough to

disagree and interact at a deeper level, thus developing the value set that individual's behaviour can rely on trust without firm boundaries to the behaviour. Interestingly many schools and teachers find that the increase in their work levels, frequent changes to the national curriculum, OFSTED criteria and the changing role of the LEA is forcing them back down the stages of team development. The result is an increase in alienation, stress and paranoid feeling which leads to a fragmentation of team responsibility within schools and departments (Parnes 1998).

Implications for the work of educational psychology

This paper highlights a number of issues, which have significant implications for the work of psychologists as detailed below:

1. For any new team it is most important that the chair ensures the required time is allowed to define the purposes of the team and to outline the processes that the team needs to go through prior to becoming a high performing team.
2. It is important that the team agrees and builds up its own rituals and routines. This may include issues around the organisation of chair and scribes, ways of setting the agenda and issues relating to protocols of interaction in the group. It should be noted also that when teams meet they tend to start back in the pseudo-community phase each time. This phase can be moved through rapidly, but it is important that it is acknowledged. This can be helped by starting meetings with an agreed routine which aids the smooth transition through pseudo-community to real community as defined by Peck (1998).
3. It is very useful to allow a small amount of time for process issues at the end of each meeting of the team. This should usually be for about ten minutes. The aim of this time is to allow members to explore the workings of the team at all levels.
4. Problem analysis of the team may be initiated through the process time. However it is most important to ensure suitable timing when talking about difficulties within the team particularly at the second and third level. It is usually easier to open up issues at these levels if there has been a previous opportunity to explore the workings of a team. If difficulties are raised of which members have little or no understanding greater resistance can result, which does not facilitate ways forward. It is therefore necessary to be sensitive to this issue. If a first stab at opening out a difficult issue at the second or third level falls on deaf ears, or is criticised immediately, it is probably best to leave it at that time and return to the concern at the next meeting.
5. When working with schools and particularly schools causing concern, it is useful to share the elements of how teams work and use this information as a basis for discussion of ways forward. The team health is central to how and what interventions may work and how they may best be evaluated. A

clear and open discussion with the senior management team can therefore help ensure that intervention time is not wasted unnecessarily.

6. It is important to ensure that each team member is valued for the contribution that he or she can make. This can be achieved through ensuring, during the developing stages that there is a clear understanding of the importance of different contributions. This is best achieved by reference to the work of Belbin, Peck and Honey & Mumford, which is detailed above. Also, it will be important to ensure appropriate respect and time is paid to each member of the team.
7. Finally there should be consideration of the development of what may be termed the 'virtual team'. This concept refers to the idea that it is possible to foster mutual respect across disciplines by the mere fact of working together. Fuller (2000) refers to cross-directorate work undertaken to encourage primary school improvement. By working together with another discipline a better understanding of the differing pressures, values and expectations across disciplines was achieved. As a result, when starting to work with other staff across disciplines in more recently formed teams, the starting point was one of some mutual respect and understanding. It is suggested therefore that time spent with other disciplines will enhance the understanding that staff from different disciplines have of each other. This will result in altering the starting point for future working teams. In turn, the working relationships that can be achieved and relied upon when the psychologist is moving from one team situation to another will be more stable.

Summary

In summary then, this paper has tried to establish a logical argument and rationale for why it is important to consider all three levels at which a team operates, if enduring change is to be achieved. It is most important to recognise that each level is significant, but not to the exclusion of any other level. Also, whilst for academic purposes it is possible to separate out the levels, they all interact. In reality one has to consider all levels at the same time and recognise the interactional perspective of any analysis. Nonetheless it is possible to intervene to enable a team to function more effectively and above all it is argued that it is important to make each level conscious so that it is possible to discuss its influences as required. A number of implications for educational psychologists have been included. Finally I have attached a number of appendices, the fourth of which gives a list of useful questions to ask about a team in order to develop an understanding of its ways of functioning. This is a prerequisite for intervention; either from within the team, or from a consultative perspective in order to help enhance team functioning. Williams and Sternberg (1988) showed that the level of emotional intelligence in a team is a better predictor of its performance ability than the individual attributes of its constituent members. Thus it is argued that a conscious level of operation to enhance the available emotional intelligence is of the utmost importance.

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Appendix I

LEARNING STYLES – GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS

(Adapted from Honey and Mumford, 1986)

Activists

Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences. They enjoy the here and now and are happy to be dominated by immediate experiences. They are open-minded, not sceptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about anything new. Their philosophy is “I’ll try anything once”. They tend to act first and consider the consequences afterwards. Their days are filled with activity. They tackle problems by brainstorming. As soon as the excitement from one activity has died down they are busy looking for the next. They tend to thrive on the challenge of new experiences but are bored with implementation and longer term consolidation. They are gregarious people constantly involving themselves with others but, in doing so, they seek to centre all activities around themselves.

Reflectors

Reflectors like to stand back to ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data, both first hand and from others, and prefer to think about it thoroughly before coming to any conclusion. The thorough collection and analysis of data about experiences and events is what counts so they tend to postpone reaching definitive conclusions for as long as possible. Their philosophy is to be cautious. They are thoughtful people who like to consider all possible angles and implications before making a move. They prefer to take a back seat in meetings and discussions. They enjoy observing other people in action. They listen to others and get the drift of the discussion before making their own points. They tend to adopt a low profile and have a slightly distant, tolerant unruffled air about them. When they act it is part of a wide picture which includes the past as well as the present and others’ observations as well as their own.

Theorists

Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think problems through in a vertical, step by step logical way. They assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories. They tend to be perfectionists who won’t rest easy until things are tidy and fit into a rational scheme. They like to analyse and synthesise. They are keen on basic assumptions, principles, theories, models and systems thinking. Their philosophy prizes rationality and logic. “If it’s logical it’s good.” Questions they frequently ask are “Does it make sense?” “How does this fit with that?” “What are the basic assumptions?” They tend to be detached, analytical and dedicated to rational objectivity rather than anything subjective or ambiguous. Their approach to problems is consistently logical. This is their ‘mental set’ and they rigidly reject anything that does not fit with it. They prefer to maximise certainty and feel uncomfortable with subjective judgements, lateral thinking and anything flippant.

Pragmatists

Pragmatists are keen on trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They positively search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications. They are the sort of people who return from management courses brimming with new ideas that they want to try out in practice. They like to get on with things and act quickly and confidently on ideas that attract them. They tend to be impatient with ruminating and open-ended discussions. They are essentially practical, down to earth people who like making practical decisions and solving problems. They respond to problems and opportunities “as a challenge”. Their philosophy is “There is always a better way” and “If it works it’s good”.

Appendix II

TEAM ROLES – GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS

(Adapted from Belbin, 1981, 1993)

The roles, together with their characteristics, behaviours and team roles, are described in detail below:

Plant

Characteristics: Dominant, very high I.Q., introvert. Can be prickly. Very original and creative thinker, the vital spark creativity in a team. Thrusting and uninhibited, radical thinking.

Behaviours: Has brilliant ideas, but can cause offence if criticised. May sulk if ideas are dissected or rejected. Needs to be handled carefully and even flattered to give his/her best. Very concerned with major issues, and may miss out on details, making careless mistakes.

Team Roles: The source of original ideas, suggestions and proposals. Others have ideas, but the plants are original and radical. Is the one who is most likely to start searching for completely new answers if the team gets bogged down.

Resource Investigator

Characteristics: Stable, dominant, extrovert, relaxed, sociable and gregarious. Interest easily aroused. Positive and enthusiastic, quick to see the relevance of new ideas, although rarely initiates them.

Behaviours: Makes friends easily, having masses of outside contacts. Loves to explore new possibilities in the wide world outside. When not in contact with others, can easily become bored, demoralised and ineffective. Enthusiasms are sometimes short-lived.

Team Roles: The one that goes outside the group and brings ideas, information and developments back to it. The team's sales person, diplomat, liaison officer and explorer. Encourages innovation in others, improvises and is active under pressure. Can over-relax when pressure eases or waste time on interesting irrelevancies.

Co-ordinator

- Characteristics:** Stable, dominant, extrovert, at least normally intelligent but not brilliant. Has 'character'. Is not original.
- Behaviours:** Preoccupied with objectives. Exerts personal authority and self-discipline. Is dominant, but not domineering. Has an instinct for trusting people. Through seeing people's strengths and weaknesses is able to focus people on what they do best. Communicates (including listening) well.
- Team Roles:** Clarifies group objectives and sets its agenda. Establishes priorities and selects problems for consideration, but does not dominate the discussion. Tends to ask questions rather than assert or propose. Listens, sums up and articulates. Is decisive but lets everyone have their say.

Shaper

- Characteristics:** Anxious, dominant, extrovert, outgoing and emotional, impulsive and impatient, easily frustrated. The most prone to paranoia of the whole team. Wants action, and wants it now. Personally competitive and intolerant of woolliness, vagueness and muddled thinking.
- Behaviours:** Quick to challenge and quick to respond to challenge. Often has rows, but does not harbour grudges. Exudes self-confidence, but only results can give reassurance.
- Team Roles:** To give 'shaper' to the application of the team effort often supplying a heavy personal input. Looks for a pattern in discussion and practical considerations as regards single feasible project. Can 'steamroller' the team, but gets results.

Monitor – Evaluator

- Characteristics:** High I.Q., stable, introvert. A bit of a cold fish. Serious and not very exciting. Not noted for enthusiasm and euphoria, therefore free of ego-involvement. Highly objective mind. Not tactful or ambitious but fair and open to change. Judgement is rarely wrong.
- Behaviours:** Objective but unequivocal critic. Slow to make up his/her mind, and does not like to be rushed. Skilled at assimilating and interpreting complex written material, the ME can also analyse problems and judge and assess the contributions of others. Sometimes tactless and

disparaging and has no sense of timing or delivery in discussion. Solid and dependable, but lacking in jollity and warmth. Can compete, often with co-ordinator or plant.

Team Roles: Contributions lie in measured and dispassionate analysis and an ability, through objectivity, to stop the team from committing itself to a misguided task.

Team Worker

Characteristics: Stable, extrovert, low in dominance. The most sensitive in the team. Aware of individuals' needs and worries, and perceptive to emotional under-currents in the group. Sympathetic, understanding and loyal. Uncompetitive.

Behaviours: Builds on the ideas of others, a good and willing listener and communicator, encouraging others to do likewise. A promoter of unity and harmony, counter-balancing and discord of others. Dislikes personal confrontation, avoiding it and 'cooling down' others.

Team Roles: A force operating against division and disruption in the team. Likeable, popular and unassertive, the 'cement' of the team, loyal to the team as a unit. Although the TW's value may not be immediately visible, its absence is very noticeable in times of stress and pressure.

Implementer

Characteristics: Stable and controlled. Strength of character and a disciplined approach. Needs stability and stable structures. Efficient, systematic and methodical. High sincerity, integrity and trust.

Behaviours: Not easily deflated or discouraged but sudden changes of plan are likely to upset the implementation. Always tries to build stable structures. A little inflexible and intolerant of imprecise ideas.

Team Roles: Turns decisions and strategies into defined and manageable tasks. Sorts out objectives and pursues them logically. Willing to trim and adapt personal schedules to fit into agreed plans and systems. If you don't know what is being decided or what you are supposed to be doing, go to the implementer to find out.

Completer Finisher

Characteristics: Anxious, introvert. Worries about what might go wrong. Maintains a sense of urgency. Self-control and strength of character.

Behaviours: Compulsive to meet deadlines and fulfil schedules. Never at ease until every detail has been personally checked, everything has been done and nothing overlooked.

Team Roles: Not an assertive member of the team, but maintains a permanent sense of urgency. Can be intolerant of more casual team members. The finisher can annoy and depress, get bogged down in detail, but the relentless follow-through is a great asset.

Specialist

Characteristics: Professional, self-starting, dedicated. Command support because of in-depth experience. Contribute only on a narrow front.

Behaviours: Show great pride in their work and in acquiring their specialist knowledge. Priorities are to maintain professional standards and advance their own subject. Single minded and dedicated. Usually lack interest in other peoples' work.

Team Roles: Provide knowledge and technical skills in rare supply. Will be called upon to make decisions based on their in-depth experience.

Appendix III

SHORT DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SIXTEEN TYPES OF PERSON CHARACTERISTICS AND ELECTED WORKING STYLES

Adapted from Briggs and Myers (1988)

ISTJ		ISFJ		INFJ		INTJ	
dependable exacting factual logical organised practical	realistic reliable reserved sensible steadfast thorough	accommodating detailed devoted loyal meticulous organised	patient practical protective quiet responsible traditional	compassionate conceptual creative deep determined idealistic	intense intimate loyal methodical reflective sensitive	analytical autonomous determined firm global independent	organised original private systems- minded theoretical visionary
ISTP		ISFP		INFP		INTP	
adaptable adventurous applied expedient factual independent	logical practical realistic resourceful self- determined spontaneous	adaptable caring co-operative gentle harmonious loyal	modest observant sensitive spontaneous trusting understanding	adaptable committed curious deep devoted empathetic	gentle idealistic imaginative intimate loyal reticent	autonomous cognitive detached independent logical original	precise self- determined sceptical speculative spontaneous theoretical
ESTP		ESFP		ENFP		ENTP	
activity- orientated adaptable adventurous alert easy-going energetic	outgoing persuasive pragmatic quick spontaneous versatile	adaptable casual co-operative easy-going enthusiastic friendly	outgoing playful practical sociable talkative tolerant	creative curious energetic enthusiastic expressive friendly	imaginative independent original restless spontaneous versatile	adaptive analytical challenging clever enterprising independent	original outspoken questioning resourceful strategic theoretical
ESTJ		ESFJ		ENFJ		ENTJ	
decisive direct efficient gregarious logical objective	organised practical responsible structured systematic task-focused	conscientious co-operative harmonious loyal personable plan-oriented	responsible responsive sociable sympathetic tactful traditional	appreciative congenial diplomatic energetic enthusiastic expressive	idealistic loyal organised personable responsible supportive	challenging controlled decisive energetic logical methodical	objective opinionated plan-oriented straight- forward strategic tough- minded

Appendix IV

QUESTIONS WHICH AID CLARIFICATION OF CONCERNS IN TEAM WORKING PRACTICE

Are we clear on what are the team's objectives? Involves the team in asking:

- What business are we in?
- Who are we in business for?
- Is it the right business?
- What are our priorities?
- With whom do we compete/co-operate?

Have roles within the team been clarified? Involves the team in asking:

- Are there overlaps/duplication of effort?
- Is there a mismatch of expectations between team members about who does what?

How is team leadership exercised? Involves the team in asking:

- Who leads?
- Who should lead?
- What style of leadership is best suited to the team and its objectives?
- What expectations does the team have of the leader?
- What expectations does the leader have of team members?

How does the team measure success? Involves the team in asking:

- Do we have criteria for success?
- If we do, are they realistic, do they relate to our fundamental purpose objectives?
- From where and who do we get feedback on our performance?
- The customer, client, user?
- How often is performance reviewed? By whom?

How do we relate to the rest of the authority department? Involves the team asking:

- How are we seen? What is our image?
- What image do we want to create?
- How do we see others?
- How do you communicate with the organisation?
- Who markets the team, its purpose and role?

How do we relate to each other? Involves the team in asking:

- Are we comfortable with each other?
- Are we too comfortable?
- Do we value each other's contributions? Do we listen to each other?
- Is honesty/trust the norm?
- Can we/do we handle conflict?
- Do we know what others think/feel?
- Do we care?

What are the team's resources? Involves the team in asking:

- What skills, knowledge, experience do we have within the team? What is missing?
- How do we ensure they are used effectively?
- How do we increase/enhance what we have got?
- Who outside the team can help?
- How can we develop the skills and knowledge we need?

How effective is our problem solving decision making? Involves the team in asking:

- **How do we make decisions?**
- **Who makes decisions?**
- **Do we make decisions?**
- **Do all team members need to be involved in decision making?**
- **How much of our decision making is purely short term expedient?**
- **What problems do we have to solve?**
- **Are we the right people to solve them?**
- **Do we anticipate problems?**
- **Do we explore and evaluate all the options?**

The future? Involves the team in asking:

- **What's our future direction/vision?**
- **What steps do we need to take to get there?**
- **What major changes are likely to affect our direction/way of operating?**
- **How will we manage these changes?**
- **Is this the right team to manage them?**
- **Do we need to be a team?**

Assignment II:

Intervention Based Assessment and The Needs of the LEA.

Intervention Based Assessment and The Needs of the LEA.

Contents:

The Context Today	Page 41
Focus of the Paper	Page 42
The Problem Defined	Page 43
Roles of Educational Psychologists that Relate to the Paper	Page 43
Influences of Recent Guidance and legislation	Page 43
Needs of the Local Education Authority (LEA)	Page 45
Limits to Norm Referenced Testing	Page 46
Criteria for Acceptability of Other Methods of Assessment	Page 49
Towards a New Model of Assessment	Page 50
The Assessment Details	Page 53
Assessment Validity	Page 59
Conclusions	Page 61
References	Page 63-67
Appendix I	Page 68
Appendix II	Page 70
Appendix III	Page 73
Appendix IV	Page 74
Appendix V	Page 77

The context today

Handy (1995) makes the argument that there are significant changes occurring in the organisation of work and the future of business. He reviews evidence that all work organisations are moving towards a position in which core businesses will be much smaller. Any firm's full time employees will number only a few central people who will set strategy and commission the work, which they require. Many more people who presently make up the work force of professional and skilled labour will work from outside of the organisation. They will tend to have a portfolio of skills, which they will sell to a variety of buyers. Handy envisions such changes as having a profound effect not only within the private sector, but also within public sector organisations. Indeed recent government initiatives across both major parties in England have called for private sector working practices in the public sector and private, public sector partnership (labour election manifesto 2001).

In turn, these changes, Handy (1995) suggests, will require significant changes to the organisation of education and the educational sector:

- Firstly, he talks about the need for 'portfolio education', in which individuals study at a number of different levels, working to achieve a variety of outcomes, which help them develop their individual portfolio of skills. His talk about skills is interesting, since presently much of our education is based around generic development, which is then graded at particular ages. In the main, mainstream education is organised in a manner that does not consider individual achievements outside of the context of age. For example, with very few exceptions, all pupils sit standard assessment tests (SATs) and GCSE exams at the same age. Also the National Literacy Strategy and Numeracy Strategy advocate whole group teaching, through a curriculum which is organised in age-based classes. However, there is an increasing need to consider life-long learning within the context of developing and updating skills. With the rate of change in technology being witnessed across the globe today, it is clear that knowledge and skills have a limited shelf life unless continuously updated and built upon.
- Secondly, the actual organisation of resources is changing in a number of ways. Although some monies are retained by the Local Educational Authority (LEA) the vast majority of money and thus primary responsibility for curriculum organisation for all pupils is now delegated to schools directly. Present delegation to schools lies at around 87 per cent of LEA resources and there is now talk of this increasing to 90 per cent or higher. As a result, the power and influence of the LEA are more limited. Whilst some financial resources remain in the gift of the LEA, this influence is decreasing, dependent on the impositions for delegation designed by the central government offices, mentioned above. As a result decisions on resourcing individual pupils must be tighter and clearer to ensure appropriate allocation.
- Thirdly, it may become the case that psychologists are funded from outside the LEA. There are already examples of LEAs in which significant educational psychology time is being delegated to schools or the

educational psychology service is being expected to bring in a certain amount of its overall salary budget by selling services (e.g., Lambeth, Southwark). Further LEAs are being joined with other departments to form Children's Services (e.g. Surrey) which may affect the focus of the work of educational psychology.

- Finally, as in the case of Southwark, private commercially orientated companies are now coming into the field of running Educational Psychology services.

Focus of the paper

It will be argued in this paper that the changes that people such as Handy (1995) foresee will require radically different work arrangements than those usually found today. This paper will concentrate on the implications for educational psychologists, particularly with respect to assessment methods, which may be required in the future.

One area, which may be affected to a considerable degree, is that of assessment methods used to 'help' individual pupils. This will have significant effects on all pupils including those with special educational needs. Therefore, it is important that educational psychologists take a close look at their assessment methods and ensure that they are relevant and fit for the purposes to which they must be put in the future.

Although Handy (1995) includes education in his argument, he has outlined present changes within the world of work, which could be seen as at some degree of distance from the world of school education. This issue has been mentioned above, but will be expanded upon here. A number of points will be made:

- It is noticeable that over the last few years schools have gained in autonomy with a much higher proportion of resources being allocated directly to schools.
- Central monitoring systems have been developed such as OFSTED inspection teams, but the responsibility and the buying power lie increasingly with schools.
- Many LEA services are being sold to the client rather than maintained centrally as a result of the government push for private partnership. Whilst, to date this has not had much direct effect on educational psychology, Essex LEA, amongst others such as Kent and Surrey, is focussing increasingly on developing a strategy to sell some services in the future.
- There is a significant shift in the educational psychology population towards part-time working patterns, along with a rise in independently working Psychologists being bought in by schools and, in some cases, LEAs. For example the establishment in Essex is a full time equivalent number of psychologists of 34 which is made up of 57 people. Also some Essex schools are beginning to employ a number of independent professionals, including psychologists, to aid them in meeting the needs of pupils which they have on their school roll.

- A further aspect of these changes is the knock on effect on LEA flexibility. The financial state of LEAs is becoming increasingly limited due to delegation direct to schools.

It is noticeable that the areas of influence are being re-defined by LEAs in response to central government guidelines. The major areas of involvement which the LEA have maintained are related to working with schools causing concern, negotiating places and exclusion procedures as well as the assessment and the meeting of special educational needs of pupils. The roles in these areas have become increasingly tightly defined as monies and responsibilities have been further delegated to the school level. This, in turn, means that the LEA must be increasingly careful about how the limited SEN (retained) budget is allocated.

The problem defined

The problem that is explored in this paper is that of how best to develop assessment procedures which will enable educational psychologists to carry out their assessment role usefully within the confines of working for a LEA.

In order to complete this task it will be necessary to outline the role of assessment for the educational psychologist in relation to this paper. Lauchlan (2001) makes the point that understanding the reason for assessment is a pre-requisite to the details and nature of the assessment. In order to define this role the paper will consider the functions which are carried out by an educational psychologist and what therefore needs to be achieved by assessment.

Since the vast majority of educational psychology work is carried out in order to support the functions of LEA work, there will follow discussion of possible methods of carrying out the role to the greatest efficiency for the LEA with an eye to resource allocation and its relationship to intervention.

Roles of educational psychologists that relate to the paper

Kelly and Gray (2000) detail the present and possible future roles of educational psychologists and outline many aspects of good practice. For the purposes of this paper, the significant aspects of the role of the educational psychologist are:

- To advise the LEA in relation to resourcing individual pupils;
- To advise face workers, such as teachers and teaching assistants about how best to meet the needs of individual pupils;
- To help direct workers to record progress for individual pupils.

Influences of recent guidance and legislation

These issues will be explored in greater detail below. However, the section, which follows will consider the changing context of the National Curriculum guidance. This is of direct relevance since recent guidance will add to the need to focus assessment for particular outcomes.

For example, the most recent changes to The National Curriculum have put an increased emphasis on developing thinking skills. (DFEE, 1999). This is a departure from the previous direction of measuring only outcome criteria 'by recording progress against statements of attainment' (Boxer et.al. 1991, p.30).

Other recent documentation from the DfES (previously DFEE) has started to emphasise the processes of development and learning. For example the Foundation Curriculum emphasises play and non-directed learning and recent health education documentation points towards the need for a classroom environment, which is conducive to learning. It starts from considering the process of learning from the learner's point of view:

'Pupils learn about themselves as developing individuals and as members of their communities, building on their own experiences and on the early learning goals for personal, social and emotional development.' (DFEE; QCA; 1999, p.137).

Additionally, the Disability Act (2001) and the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001) call for an increase of mainstream opportunities for all pupils. These acts require increased levels of differentiation within the classroom in order to ensure that the needs of an increasingly wider variety of pupils can be met within mainstream.

In much of the recent documentation updating the National Curriculum, objectives for learning are allocated equal importance as the processes of learning. (National Curriculum Guidance, 2000). This is a departure from previous National Curriculum guidance.

All of this movement points towards a requirement for a wider base to learning than may have been articulated previously. This, in turn, suggests that assessment methods may need to be developed to ensure that the full learning experience is taken into account. It will be necessary to consider the requirements of the various stakeholders in order to develop a complete assessment system, which will help ensure that pupils with special educational needs have a full opportunity to develop their potential from our educational system. Educational psychology is in a position to support pupil progress to the highest level, but will need to ensure that the appropriate assessment methods are fully embedded in their practice.

Further it will be important that educational psychologists have a consistent approach to assessment. Whilst professional autonomy should remain, this needs to be within firm guidelines agreed at the level of the Association of Educational Psychologists and the British Psychological Society (BPS), in order that the client, whoever she or he may be, knows what to expect and why. There is suitable precedent for such an approach in the work undertaken by Reason et.al. (1999), in relation to Dyslexia and the national approach to be adopted by both the British Psychological Society and the Association of Educational Psychologists. This paper summarises recent research relating to dyslexia, offers a working definition and makes recommendations in relation to valid assessment procedures. It has proved helpful and significant in clarifying the position and resultant assessment methods, which should be adopted by educational psychologists in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Needs of the local education authority (LEA)

An issue that remains central to LEA administrative systems relates to how they can distribute resources appropriately to the 'correct' pupils. Presently a number of LEAs have two part systems of allocation. The majority of resources are allocated to schools on the basis of a formula. Whilst these funds are usually allocated with particular objectives in mind such as meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs, due to the delegation rules, it is not possible for the LEA to dictate precisely how these must be used. The role here is often referred to as a gate-keeping role, which attempts to ensure that the required resources go to the most needy situations.

Usually a small proportion of money is maintained by the LEA, in order to ensure that the needs of the pupils with the greatest difficulties are funded directly. This is so that their needs are met in the manner described by the LEA in a statement for his or her special educational needs (SEN). However a few authorities are now delegating all resources to schools and keeping nothing back for allocation to individual exceptionally needy pupils. In Essex LEA a mixed economy prevails in which significant amounts of the budget for pupils with statements of SEN are delegated, but a small amount for the exceptionally high need categories of pupils is allocated with the actual statement.

In this climate of delegation, it becomes particularly important to ensure that there are clear and fair systems for identification of the most needy pupils and for apportioning appropriate educational provision to them. At the present time many authorities are seeing an increase in the litigation surrounding the identification and allocation procedures in place. Government statistics show that there is an increase in the number of tribunals being attended in relation to LEA refusal to assess pupils with a view to awarding a statement of SEN. Alongside this increase, is a general increase in the level of statements being produced by LEAs. All this is happening in a climate of greater delegation, a drive towards inclusion, and a call from central government for LEAs to hold a line on the level of statements of SEN at around 2 per cent. Whilst the situation is fluid, government statistics show that the present average level of statements being produced by different LEAs is around 3.1 per cent, with a variation between 1.7 per cent and 4.8 per cent.

In this climate it is fundamental for LEAs to develop robust systems to try to ensure that limited resources are appropriately allocated to the pupils with the greatest needs. Most authorities then have developed criteria for starting a statutory assessment which rely on there being a certain level of deficit despite appropriate intervention work having been undertaken by the school within their delegated resources. This is, in the present author's view, entirely appropriate. However, as is often the case, 'the devil is in the detail'. Many LEAs have found it hard to assess the relevance and detail of interventions tried within schools. This is due to a number of factors, which might include:

- School reporting procedures frequently do not make clear the detail of intervention and relative success or failure which may have occurred;
- The different and often inconsistent criteria which tribunals seem to use;

- The fact that despite the detail of an intervention, it is not possible to ensure how it has been carried out. Frequently, whether an intervention is successful or not will rely on a number of social and interpersonal factors, which are difficult to record or assess;
- The detail of advice given and how it was followed is often difficult to ascertain. The detail is not always reported in externally based reports and it is not always clear precisely how this has been translated into practice for the pupil concerned.

Due to the difficulties with assessing intervention success a number of LEAs have gone down the route of demanding norm-referenced assessments as part of the initiation criteria, so that an apparently objective cut off point for initiating a statutory assessment can be reached. It is argued that such practice adds rigour to the criteria and ensures greater objectivity to LEA practices. However there are a number of arguments against this position. In this paper, it will be shown that this is a simplistic response to the situation.

It will be argued that it is most important to take into account the full context of the pupil's life. This includes the context within which the pupil is being educated and his or her rate of progress, given appropriate teaching and learning situations and suitable interventions based on best evidence based practice. It includes an analysis of educational experience to date; the cultural values around education for that pupil and an analysis of his or her own approaches to learning. The above information needs consideration within the context of the present educational experience and an analysis of the full resources available to support the pupil's learning.

It will be shown that, to make a more valid assessment, it is most important that a full account of the limitations of norm referenced testing is made. An assessment framework, which takes full account of the salient factors relating to intervention design and resourcing, will be offered. This will draw upon research information from Vygotskyian approaches, dynamic assessment, motivation theory, meta-cognition, situated learning theory and instrumental enrichment. It will also consider details of methods, which have been undertaken, in one particular authority.

Limits to norm referenced testing

Miller (1991) points to the growing understanding that much assessment work undertaken by educational psychologists does not help with determining the most suitable intervention to support a given pupil's development. Much assessment work is carried out under the auspices of norm referencing and psychometric testing. Increasingly scepticism has developed towards the use of intelligence testing and norm referencing for a number of reasons:

1. There are questions about the statistical certainty of the scores obtained. All statistically based work relies on the principles of probability. In fact when the reliability factors are calculated an IQ score can vary significantly. The Wechsler series of norm-referenced tests are accurate only to within some 10 – 15 points depending on the age of the pupil and the specific test. (See WOLD, WORD, WOND, 1997). It can be seen that a high degree of variance can be present without it actually showing any relevant significant difference. This questions the

weight that can be put onto a particular score and therefore questions the validity of basing resource allocation on such a method of assessment. Of course, a range of scores at a certain confidence level can be calculated. However, such statistical methods lead to a wide bracket of possible scores, which then make the calculation with respect to resource allocation less precise.

2. Any one session of testing which bases itself on a comparison between a norm and the individual is open to the effects of single testing. The young person may not be feeling well; may be 'lucky' or may be affected positively or negatively by the environmental factors present during testing. These factors may relate to the noise levels, temperature and comfort. Whilst these should be controlled for and do form part of the variance factors in any test, the reality is that educational psychologists frequently cannot control for such factors.
3. Whilst learning will occur throughout the day, in ordinary circumstances formal learning occurs mainly within a classroom. Therefore assessment away from the classroom may not be directly valid for informing on classroom practice or strategies for a particular pupil. Millar (1991) found that in many circumstances, whilst teachers may want details of psychometric scores for a given pupil, these were not considered helpful in determining appropriate intervention strategies.
4. It may be the case that there is a relationship effect between the assessor and the client. Whilst all norm referenced tests have a set script to be followed, there are still effects on the recipient of the test which relate to, for example, their natural demeanour, dress, accent, ethnicity and gender which may affect the subject's motivation and aptitude levels. Also, it may be that the client affects the tester to the extent that interpretations of ambiguous answers are given either in favour of or against the client, thus affecting the overall score.
5. Intelligence tests and other norm-referenced tests tend to offer results that show where a given pupil is compared with others of the same age. Standardised scores; percentile rankings and age equivalence are the language of psychometric testing. This does not lead to intervention at the classroom level. At best, IQ tests may help to develop a profile of underlying skills, which may be important in relation to problem solving. Yet teaching these skills to a higher degree does not in fact help to develop the curriculum skills, which we are trying to teach in the classroom or school. (Sternberg, 2002).
6. Categorisation by norm referenced assessment can label pupils inappropriately. This issue can relate to potential difficulties in relation to informing on pupil potential and with pupils feeling labelled. It could be argued that pupils do not need to know their results. However the implications of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001) is that there should be full involvement of pupils. Further labelling effects relate to all recipients of the information. Although uncorroborated, Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968), through their influential work, showed that if a teacher was expecting certain outcomes, then these were likely to happen. Pupils considered intelligent would be 'pushed' further by teachers and pupils who were considered of lesser ability would have lower achievement levels accepted by teachers and themselves. It can be seen then that assessment results may limit potential rather than necessarily helping to unlock it. This experiment

has not been replicated. It is therefore important not to put too much emphasis on this result alone. However, more recently, Burnett (1996) has considered this issue in relation to self-talk and self-belief systems. He showed that pupil self talk has a very significant effect on achievement and that teachers can have a significant effect on pupil self-talk. It follows therefore that if pupils and teachers have a certain opinion, possibly due to assessment results, these will be likely to become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

7. It is not immediately clear how many norm-referenced tests map onto the learning situation. It has been argued that the underlying skills assessed within IQ tests not only do not map onto the curriculum, but also are significantly out of date with respect to present models of cognitive development. Naglieri (2000) points out that traditional but widely used assessment materials such as the WISC III-R, are based on cognitive theory from the 1920's. No significant account has been taken of, for example, Gardener's (1995) concept of multiple intelligences, or the relevance of environmental factors. Some new norm-referenced based assessment tools are being developed presently, but it is interesting that educational psychologists and recipients of their assessments have in the main remained 'happy' with the use of such tests as the WISC III-R. The implication is that even with a new generation of norm-based assessment materials, unless the profession is careful, the traditionally used materials will remain in currency to the detriment of useful and pertinent assessment information.
8. Traditionally, the instructions in all norm-referenced tests require the tester to follow specific rules and routines in order that the test should not be tailored to the individual. This method has been established to reduce the variance between testers and thus increase the apparent rigour of the testing situation. However, Vygotsky was able to show, in the 1930s, that a better predictor of later achievement was attained through assessing pupils twice. Between the two assessments there was an individualised tutoring session, which concentrated on the very skills to be tested, through going over the actual questions and helping the young person to understand the methods to attack the relevant task. The actual method was to test pupils on the Stanford Binet intelligence test; to immediately have a tutoring session and then to move into a second test situation. The difference between the two scores was calculated and this was known as The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD was a much better predictor of future educational achievement than either of the actual test results on their own (Shayer, 2001). It might be argued that the difference here is not in the objectivity of assessment, but in the fact that it was given twice. However the tutoring sessions did not follow any prescribed structure. In fact Vygotsky's major point related to the need for the tutoring session to be tailored to the individual so that all relevant cultural aspects of their learning could be taken into account (Vygotsky, 1978). The significance of cultural aspects of experience will be developed further on in this paper.
9. It is generally recognised that there are significant biases related to ethnic and class issues in most intelligence tests. When faced with the development of Israel, Feuerstein was able to show the utter irrelevance of assessment of norm based attainments to potential achievement. He worked with a wide variety of ethnic groups when Israel was developed. These ranged from those significantly

traumatised by the holocaust to others entering Israel, particularly from the developing world, who had often had very different cultural histories to the West. These people were not able to take advantage of what was on offer due to either previous trauma or as a result of the vast cultural gap between the Westernised State of Israel and previous cultural experience of learning (Sharron 1994). However, those coming from a solidly intact culture tended to fare better than those, who had suffered a deconstructed cultural experience.

10. During a recent assessment it was made clear to the author that many psychometrically based assessment materials do not have room for answers which might be based on a lateral interpretation of the question. The meaning of words is not necessarily the same for all, yet there is only a single interpretation allowable within the standard intelligence tests. DeBono (1993) argues that different laterally based answers often offer greater opportunities for new learning than the traditionally accepted answer.

Clearly it is much easier to apportion scarce resources on a quasi-objective model such as that of norm-referenced assessment. However, as described above, this is not necessarily as accurate as it may seem at first sight. Many educational psychologists are not happy with psychometric based assessment methodologies for the reasons outlined above. The following sections will outline possible alternatives, which may overcome some of the pitfalls of psychometrically and norm reference based assessment.

Criteria for acceptability of other methods of assessment

In consideration of the critique above, it would be useful if we could build a different methodology, which would enable LEAs to fulfil their responsibilities without recourse to psychometrics as the central part of the process. If a new methodology is to be useful to LEAs, it would need to be robust enough to inform at a number of levels:

1. It would be necessary to show that the system was able to inform interventions, which might be appropriate to help move the young person forward in their education. A central role of assessment must be to help inform what to do next. Without such a role, assessment merely describes or categorises. Both have a role, but in the present climate, where inclusion is being promoted, assessment has to accomplish more. It needs to help plan actions for the future in order to enable the pupil to learn successfully within an inclusive situation. This requires intervention information. Resources should then be attached as required to enable the intervention to be carried out.
2. Schools would require an understanding of the usefulness of assessments and how they logically led to more successful support of the child within the school. Miller (1991) considered teachers' perceptions about different assessment methods. At the time Curriculum based assessments were seen as useful and there was a degree of wariness about dynamic assessment. Teachers said that they wanted intelligence testing, however it was recognised that this type of assessment did not help with strategies for intervention. Dynamic assessment was thought to be

useful for intervention planning, but due to limited experience of such assessment techniques, many teachers were not convinced of its usefulness.

3. The LEA would need to be convinced that the methods were helpful in determining how to apportion limited and scarce resources fairly and equitably.
4. Parents would need to recognise the usefulness of such assessment methods as a tool to decide how best to support their youngster.
5. Pupils would need to be able to participate in and understand the assessment methods being introduced.
6. The methods of assessment would need to stand up at tribunals. They would need to be shown to be fair, clear and accessible to the intelligent lay reader.
7. Pressure groups would need to see that the methods were relevant to specific difficulties in which they might be interested.
8. The methods would need to remain relevant and robust in the light of present research findings and theoretical paradigms.
9. The methods used would need to be adaptable and versatile enough to remain appropriate for different ages, different types of need and different types of settings.
10. Finally any methods adopted would have to work in practice, given time limitations and the facilities and cultures of the assessment venue. Methods need to fit into the practical working limitations for an educational psychologist.

The search for other possible methods has led the author into the work of Feurstein, Vygotsky, Shayer, Burden and Stringer in particular. It has proved a fascinating route to follow; the results will form the remainder of this paper. There will be a number of questions left for future research and development. However it is considered that the position that will be outlined has significance for the future of psychological assessments and interventions within the educational field. Indeed many of the concepts will have relevance for work-based assessments, interview techniques and teacher training beyond the direct remit of educational psychologists.

Towards a new model of assessment

Sutton (1993) stated that

‘...assessment is a human process, conducted by and with human beings, and subject inevitably to the frailties of human judgement. However crisp and objective we might try to make it, and however neatly quantifiable may be our ‘results’, assessment is closer to an art than a science. It is, after all, an exercise in human communication. (in McCarthy, 1993, page 1)

It is therefore possible to understand assessment from a very different starting point than that of psychometric or norm referenced assessment. One can imagine a system

of assessment based on a direct assessment of the tools necessary to learn, which considers how a given pupil is able both to access such tools and to use them in their learning. These tools can be assessed through a framework, which tests out not only the ability of a pupil to acquire learning skills, but also how the pupil actually makes use of the product and process skills he or she has acquired. The norm referenced basis of assessment inevitably only tests those skills already acquired and of course, remains limited with respect to prediction of either required intervention for future learning or the actual ability to learn different skills from those already achieved.

Grigorenko (2000) points to there being six stages of learning. It is possible then to assess at which stage a given pupil is in order to ascertain what steps are necessary next and indeed the level of differentiation required to involve the pupil in the learning of the class. These have been articulated by Haenen (1996) as;

- the motivational stage,
- the orienting stage,
- the materialised stage,
- the stage of overt speech,
- the stage of covert speech,
- the mental stage.

This model takes one through the possible levels of requirement for any given task or area of the curriculum. The model closely follows Vygotsky's assumption that the learning description of the process of problem solution is central to all learning. Although Grigorenko (2000) has developed her model to describe a teaching package it is equally relevant to assessment.

The possibility of assessing pupil attainment within given areas of the curriculum along the stages mentioned above is explored further below. A short analysis of Haenen's (1996) stages will follow.

The **motivational** stage relates to attention and focusing skills, which often vary from task to task within a school curriculum. This may well be best assessed by consideration of attention to tasks and will feed into the next stage of **orientation** towards a given task.

This second level would be highly interactive and would be assessed through consideration of the approaches, which a pupil was able to adopt towards a problem or task within a particular area of the curriculum, be it within basic skills or some other area. Clearly some aspects of orientation remain the responsibility of the person setting the task. However it is also important to know how the pupil approaches the task; what skills he or she possesses and how these will be used. This in itself has two aspects: the meta-learning perspective and the pupil's schema or frames of reference are used. Also of significance is how and to what extent the approaches adopted involve others and how the pupil acquires and uses support.

The third stage (**materialised**) refers to the time when a pupil requires concrete materials to develop his or her understanding and skills. This stage will evolve into a fourth stage (**overt speech**) in which the pupil will use language out loud to direct his or her actions and only after this do learners move to a fifth stage (**covert speech**) of

internalising their language. At this point the language usage is still central to the successful completion of activities. Rehearsal at this point will lead to the final stage (**mental stage**) of developing internalised structures, which enable the learner to develop relatively automatic steps necessary to perform the relevant action(s).

Prior to Haenen's (1996) work, McCarthy (1993) developed a Framework of Assessment based on five areas of skills and development, which are central to academic development. Although no links have been made to date there are useful connections, which can be made. It seems that Haenen (1996) offers a developmental staged model of learning, which can be used for assessment purposes within the framework outlined by McCarthy (1993). The elements of McCarthy's (1993) framework were articulated as:

- Confidence and independence;
- Experience;
- Strategies;
- Knowledge and understanding;
- Reflectiveness.

In turn these areas have been broken down into their constituent parts to inform the detail of assessment. However, prior to considering the detail, it is important to consider the framework as a whole. A potential difficulty with such a framework is to ensure that, whilst immediately appealing, it has real value beyond that of face value. In order to carry out such a judgement it is necessary to return to the list of *criteria for acceptability of other methods of assessment* detailed on page 9. The points on page 9 fall into three distinct groupings:

- The level of appeal / validity to the receiver of the assessment information;
- The ability of the assessment information to inform interventions;
- The practicability of using such methods.

Prior to developing such methods in practice the questions raised here are difficult to answer. For the purposes of this paper, these concerns will be returned to in the final section after the detail of proposed assessment methods have been outlined.

However, it is interesting to note that recent debate about assessment of Dyslexia led to a definition of Dyslexia, which does not rely on discrepancies or norm based assessment materials, but rather defines Dyslexia as

'evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the word level and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis for a staged process of assessment through teaching' (British Psychological Society (BPS), 1999, page 18).

The above quote points to the requirement for assessment through teaching over time as well as forming the basis of definition in criteria of achievement rather than based in difference from the norm alone. Thus, it can be argued that the BPS and the AEP endorse the approach being suggested within the methodology for assessment being put forward by McCarthy (1993).

The concern, which remains, is that of how robust can such assessment methods be. A different assessment method must be able to pass tests of validity and reliability. Thus any methods introduced will need to achieve similar results independent of the assessor and produce a similar pattern of results for similar pupils over time. This requires precise detail in relation to what may be considered under each of the headings outlined by McCarthy (1993). In the next section, this paper will consider the vexed question of detail and reliability, drawing on up to date research and approaches being developed across the globe. However, prior to that it is necessary to outline details of assessment work, which might be undertaken as an alternative to psychometrically based norm-referenced assessment.

The assessment details

a) Confidence and independence

This area is seen as central to all learning and revolves around issues relating to motivation, how confidence is instilled into the child from the lesson plans and school effectiveness. It is therefore dependent on both the social and the learning context and will be significantly affected by the young person's previous experience. This area of assessment will involve making judgements about the pupil's feelings and attitudes and relating these to those that are general around the school. Jelly et. al. (2000) have shown that pupil questionnaire information is probably the single most significant and stable factor in measuring school improvement during a primary school improvement programme run in Essex. Moreover this approach is gaining kudos within the new developments in inspection guidelines; for example the 2001 OFSTED training package to promote inclusion requires direct attainment of pupils' views.

Motivational factors are difficult to measure in a consistent manner. However such researchers as Gipps (1996) and Reynolds & Farrell (1996) have argued that a belief that effort can enable achievement is central to motivational factors. Pupils who believe that attainment is fundamentally based on innate ability will tend to be less motivated to work and therefore will not achieve so highly (Stevenson & Stigler (1992). More recently Elliott (2002) has alluded to the notion that the surrounding culture is significant with respect to motivational factors. He has shown that the experience of education in Russia is such that effort to learn is an expectation of all. In contrast the Western culture does not support such motivational factors. This aspect of motivation can be located in the ecological model of influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bee, 2000) on learning, which purports that there are influences at a variety of levels on the learner, including the immediate vicinity and the wider culture of the society. Bee (2000) summarises Bronfenbrenner's (1979) original statement that the macro level framework, or influences from the general culture, has direct relevance to educational psychologists problem formulation and assessment. Elliott (2002) has shown how motivational differences across cultures relate not only to factors around

attributing effort to outcome, but also to factors which relate to the pupil's perceptions of cultural expectations and values. If the surrounding world values learning, the individual's motivation is likely to be enhanced. It is therefore not only important to assess the value which a pupil places on effort, but also to assess the pupil perception of cultural expectations and norms on a wider base than family alone.

It is highly relevant in this area to ensure that assessment does not take on a general aspect but rather homes in on specific curriculum areas in relation to the relevance of effort over that of perceived innate ability. A perception of innate ability will of course help a pupil to work in a curriculum area, but the central point is that of how effort will produce rewards for the pupil.

A further central issue is that of authenticity. Yair (2000) has developed a number of curriculum programmes that emphasise the relevance of the curriculum to student's lives. Elliott et. al. (2000) have commented that the issue of authenticity can be defined as students being able to find autonomy, competence and relatedness in the curriculum (Passe, 1996; Deci, 1992).

In order to assess these issues the educational psychologist would be required to design a set of questions which enable students to articulate their thoughts on their autonomy, authenticity and the relevance of their own effort in comparison to their perceived innate ability. Such a set of questions does not exist in a published format. However the present author has designed his own set which form appendix I. This set of questions is only an outline and clearly, when delivered needs to be varied according to the age of the pupil(s) and the circumstances of the interview. A further consideration, which should be made, is that of the context of the whole school or classroom. The motivation of the pupil will depend to a degree on present environmental factors. Therefore the societal culture / school / classroom / curriculum area context must all be taken into account. This is often best achieved by interview of a sample set of pupils from the same classroom. When undertaking such work it is important of course to have a cross-section of the class in order to help define relevant referent points. Therefore the teacher should be asked for relevant representatives both considered similar to and different from the client pupil.

b) Experience

This area of assessment relates particularly to the experience that the pupil has of learning in the classroom. The findings under this heading build on to the pupil's general experience, which relates to motivational factors covered above. Here the focus is on what pedagogic opportunities are facilitated for the young person. McKenna & Phelps (1993) have outlined a number of useful questions to consider (Appendix II), which can be built upon by the practitioner. Whilst such an approach will lead to a wealth of information, the information gathered will be difficult to evaluate according to the criteria agreed above. A more rigorous approach is required if the information is to pass the test of reliability and validity. In order to accomplish this, agreed outcomes of the questions to be asked must be reached. Clearly, the learning experiences that a pupil has had relate to the way he or she will be able to approach learning situations. If this is the case then it is necessary to agree a

framework from which experience can be evaluated. Therefore the relevance of available experiences need to fit into up to date learning theory.

Shayer (2001) suggests that much of Vygotsky's work is reflected in Piaget's work and Piaget's in Vygotsky. It is therefore not necessarily the learning approaches, which are so different, but the interpretations, which have occurred in the classroom. This theoretical concept has been built on by a number of people; for example, Adhami & Shayer's (2001) mathematics, science and English programmes for early secondary pupils and latterly late key stage 2 pupils – CASE and CAME. The single most relevant aspect of the approaches adopted by Adhami & Shayer (2001) is that of ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to work in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and thus to extend their own development. In practice this means that the questions asked by the pupil is at a level which ensures that there is exploration of the task and the opportunity to develop new insights. Questions then in this area relate to:

- how the group work is set up?
- how autonomy is allowed for exploration?
- how the task is defined to enable exploration?
- what feedback is expected to be given at the end?
- what the product might be expected to look like?
- is the experience significantly different with respect to learning opportunities dependent on the curriculum area?
- do lessons build upon one another to enable spiralling and scaffolded learning?
- how the pupil and pupils will know what has been achieved?

This area of enquiry or assessment particularly encapsulates what the experience of the subject matter is for the pupil and how she or he is enabled to make sense of the subject. As such, it relates significantly to the curriculum and learning arrangements in the classroom. Shayer (2001) along with others has suggested that teachers are very good at knowing the difference between 'a soap opera and a Brecht play', but they are not good at understanding the cognitive steps which need to be achieved in order to move from one to the other. Fundamental to continued success are meta-cognitive approaches to learning, which emphasise understanding one's own learning through a questioning approach, with a central tenet of returning to review what has been learnt, how it has been learnt and what helped and hindered the learning process. Watkins et. al. (1998) and Marton & Booth (1997) both promote the need for a full awareness of the learning process for pupils to succeed. These issues therefore must form a significant aspect of educational psychologists' assessment procedures if we are to help enhance learning outcomes for failing pupils.

Rudduck et. al. (1995) sum up the issue here particularly well in their title phrase 'it's not that I haven't learnt much. It's just that I don't understand what I'm doing.' The issue here then is one of the degree of awareness and understanding that the pupil has of what he or she is doing in order to interact with the learning process. Some possible questions around this are outlined in appendix III.

c) Strategies

Clearly there is a strong connection between experience and strategies. The experience is that which is in the realm of the instructor's responsibility, whilst 'strategies' refer to the learning approaches adopted by the pupil. In order to assess strategies successfully it is suggested that one should turn to dynamic assessment, aspects of meta-cognition, social experiences of learning, and the use and availability of adult and peer support.

Here, we need to consider the manner in which pupils relate to tasks given them. What approaches do they take from the onset to orientate themselves to set about the task in hand? This will relate to motivational factors as well as strategic issues, but here we are only interested in the latter concerns. Questions will relate to the level of passivity versus active orientation and self-organisation. Is the task broken down into constituent parts? Is a plan developed which will help the student through the task? If help is required, how does the student go around getting this? Are the pupil's questions specific or very general and how does this relate to engendered passivity.

These questions have been well researched in the field of meta-cognition (Watkins et. al., 1998) and accelerated learning (Smith, 2000), from which further details can be found. De Bono (1993) developed a number of questions, which can be asked by pupils of their work in order to structure their thinking in relation to ways of investigating given questions or problems. Structured problems can be developed, which make use of the specific strategies that de Bono (1993) outlines. This approach would give measurable information about the exact strategies which pupils were able to use. De Bono's work is of particular use here because he has written extensively on the skills which can be used in a wide variety of situations to enhance problem solving skills (e.g. de Bono, 1993, 1986, 1999). However in developing a list of areas to look at the author has turned to Stringer (2001) who developed a cognitive map based on the cognitive tools required to problem solve. A version of these will be found in appendix IV. They can easily be explored by observation and interaction with a pupil having given them a novel task to complete.

Within this area of assessment, there should be consideration of the approach adopted by pupils towards support. Vincett et.al. (2001), building on work by Farrell et.al. (1999) have shown that the misuse of classroom assistance can lead to pupils having a greater dependency on support. Although this work has concentrated on teacher assistant ways of working, it is clear that the use of such support staff also depends on the use made by the pupils, which can be either facilitative of their educational growth, or debilitating. They have outlined the type of support that is helpful to promoting independence of learning. For example, the pupil who is reliant on a learning support assistant for all of his or her organisation, will not be able to self-direct towards a problem solution. The significance of this piece of work to assessment is that a central part of the requirements of learning is about the usage made of possible help and support. Further, the level of independence, difficulty and orientation strategies, which a given pupil may have, will define the usage, which should be made of any future additional support.

d) Knowledge, skills and understanding

This area of assessment relates to that which has traditionally formed the central tenet of educational psychologists' assessment and indeed tends to be that which is most heavily relied upon by resource allocation panels. However, in reality it is of far greater importance to consider the requirements necessary for learning, rather than the actual skill levels per se. Solity et.al. (2000) made the point that it is only with the appropriate teaching that pupils will have the best opportunities to develop their skills. In fact his results show that after one year of appropriate teaching not only were average reading ages increased to a level some ten months above chronological age, but also the 'tail' was significantly reduced such that only those who were not able to access the teaching still 'failed'. Maybe even more important is the idea of considering how a given pupil may learn and what knowledge he or she may bring to bear when asked to solve a problem. The central tenet of dynamic assessment is to consider the detail of how a pupil might go about solving an unknown problem.

Sharron (1994) along with others points to the central significance of previous cultural experience. The notion that knowledge cannot be considered outside of its cultural relevance is expressed in force. Learning is a cumulative exercise, in which new learning is integrated into learning, which has already taken place. This issue has two points of relevance. It has to be possible to add new learning to previous knowledge in both an incremental and an organisational manner. It is therefore important to consider aspects of present knowledge in relation to the cultural cohesiveness of that knowledge. This is a complex concept to get hold of. It refers to the need for an understanding of the relevance and integration of knowledge. Sharron (1994) showed that young people from chaotic backgrounds tend to find it more difficult to receive new knowledge. It was also true that young people from vastly different cultures from that which is being purported by the educational establishment had greater difficulties. However if they had had coherent cultural experiences they were, in time able to map new knowledge successfully.

Sharron (1994) also pointed to there being some difficulties resulting from cultural mismatch. When people are put into an environment with cultural assumptions, which do not match their own cultural experiences, a number of difficulties can result. These difficulties relate to differences in interpretation of language, behaviour and expectation. The resultant situations in turn can effect the ability to make full advantage of learning opportunities. It is therefore important to have a measure of cultural mismatch between the values purported in the school and the pupil.

The measures needs two dimensions; those of difference and of co-herece if the two issues are to be covered. In order to establish such a measure it is necessary to turn to the work of Greenberg (2000), who has completed detailed research on **Long-term Goals, Building Blocks of Thinking and Tools of Learning** (appendix V). This information, which is set out in detail in Greenberg (2000-a) can be used to analyse a given students ability to integrate new knowledge across the main aspects of cultural inheritance, which relate to:

- approaching the learning experience;
- making meaning of the learning experience;

confirming the learning experience;
understanding feelings within the learning experience;
motivating behaviour within the learning experience.

The assessment list has been added to in order to develop a framework of useful questions, which can elicit knowledge about a pupil's perceptions of cultural mismatch and cultural cohesiveness. Short et. al. (1996) have developed a curriculum based on inquiry which aims to enable pupils to develop their understanding of language at four different levels: those of skills (reading and writing), language as a linguistic or aesthetic tool (how did the language make me feel as I did), learning through language (language use to enable learning through questions and descriptions) and using language as critique (how does the language I use and hear position me in the world). This curriculum takes the linguistic experiences of given pupils along with their spheres of interest as a starting point. The curriculum is developed through making overt connections to previous experience and inviting investigation from that point. For example a pupil might have a particular interest in boxing in their local town. This topic will then be taken and built into an investigation. The investigation will cover a number of areas, which relate to developing understanding of the process of investigation. There will be particular consideration of how language can be used to enhance the pupils investigation by for example question formation, how things are said and consideration of the effects of language on the recipient. This inquiry can then develop the pupils understanding towards a re-envisioning of their experiences and thus to a different representation of their learning than beforehand. To capture this issue within an analysis of a pupils' strengths and weaknesses, will help to describe the cultural difficulties or strengths which may be present (see appendix V.).

Actual levels of knowledge and skills are of course also of significance and can be assessed in traditional ways. However an important aspect relates to the requirements for support which may be necessary to integrate the present knowledge into the classroom experience. This of course relegates the actual skills assessment to a relatively minor aspect of the relevant information required. An approach, which considers learning potential by completion of possible tasks, is of greater importance than discrete levels of attainment. Traditional methods of assessment can only comment on what has been achieved to date; for the classroom, of greater relevance, is how might new learning best be achieved by the particular pupil. Thus an approach which adopts the ideas of Feuerstein is likely to reap useful rewards.

Stringer (2001) adapted the work of Adey & Shayer (1994) to develop a list of cognitive functions (appendix IV), which are required to be able to solve problems and complete learning, tasks. These form a universal list of the skills required to 'attack' any particular task. They can be divided into two areas: those of gathering all the necessary information and using the information gathered. The pertinent issue to the work of educational psychologists is to assess the functioning of these cognitive skills in any given individual in order that an analysis of the presence of the specific cognitive skills can be made. This function can then inform the requirements of intervention. The issue of level of knowledge is in itself not helpful to formulate intervention. Flanagan et. al. (1997) showed the assessment of knowledge outside of the processes of learning merely forms to comment on the product and does not inform how to intervene with the process of learning. More important is to form an

understanding of the cognitive functions, which are well formed in the pupil, which are emergent and which are presently beyond the pupil. Those which are emergent are those which can be mediated in order to enable the pupil to develop skills. This approach necessitates an analysis of the cognitive functions of a given task and those, which are required to advance the learning potential of the pupil. This is best achieved through following the work of Adey & Shayer (1994), who have considered the cognitive requirements of tasks in a wide variety of curriculum areas and like Feurstein et. al. (1979) beforehand developed a list of the universal cognitive skills, which are required in varying degrees across all learning.

e) Reflectiveness

This area of assessment is important in relation to the previous area and indeed in relation to the development of independence and to help develop an understanding of the affective relationship, which the pupil may have to the curriculum. Lidz (1991) has pointed to the importance of the affective approach to a task. If the pupil expects to fail, or does not understand how to approach the task, the first response may be to approach the task from a negative self-defeating standpoint. This in itself will create failure from the outset. Through a process of reflective thinking with the pupil this area can be explored, as can the issues of learning approaches which are successful for the pupil. It is through the process of reflection that one can start to define the zone of proximal development, or those areas of learning which are just out of reach for the pupil without support (Brown & Ferrara, 1985). It is necessary to form a view on how the pupil considers which strategies are required for tasks according to their difficulty and / or area of the curriculum. Information from reflection will help the assessor and the pupil understand how existing skills can be generalised and built upon and which skills still need to be developed.

This aspect of the assessment relies on the use of both open ended questions in order to elicit the pupil's present understanding and more structured or scaffolded questions in order to explore what is within the grasp of the pupil with support. A number of suggestions for relevant questions will be found in the final appendix, V. In developing these the author has relied particularly on Watkin et. al. (1998), Stringer (2001) and a workshop session with Harste (2002).

Assessment validity

It was noted above that there was a requirement to ensure that the assessment suggestions made here are valid. The main areas of importance for validity relate to:

- intervention formation;
- appeal to the various users;
- practicability of usage.

A full exploration of these criteria can only be achieved through piloting the suggested methods of assessment. Although a pilot is beyond the remit of this paper, it is important to address these issue of validity at a theoretical level.

i) relevance to intervention

With respect to intervention formation, the methods suggested above inform directly in relation to learning. Much of the assessment methods are derived from issues related to dynamic assessment and meta-cognition. Millar (1991) found that information derived from dynamic assessment was helpful to inform interventions.

Hammers et. al. (1997) amongst others have noted that the learning process can be split into the three distinct parts of input, elaboration and output. The methods of assessment outlined here attempt to consider these aspects of learning in order to inform directly on the sort of help and interventions which would be suitable.

Tools of learning as summarised by Klein (2000), namely: focusing, affecting, encouraging, expanding and regulation, and behaviour are also addressed in this paper. The required mediation to help develop these skills is identified within the suggested assessment techniques. For example support to aid development of focusing (intentionality and reciprocity), affecting (mediation of meaning), expanding (transcendence) and rewarding (mediated feelings of competence) will result in appropriate intervention.

The assessment details outlined in this paper should be used within an ethological and process based framework. Boxer et.al. (1991), building on Cameron (1981) and Barrs et.al. (1990), developed the outlines of a framework for assessment, which considered both the context of assessment and the processes of learning for the pupil. The context aspects included:

- Whole school issues;
- The learning context;
- Child focused dimensions of learning;
- Community;
- LEA policy.

The dimensions of learning were primarily based on a behavioural understanding of skills learning outlined by Haring et.al. (1978), which followed the process of:

- Acquisition;
- Fluency;
- Generalisation;
- Adaptation.

With the use of the framework outlined above along with judicious use of the information in the appendices, intervention can be described at a number of levels, which should ensure that change is undertaken at the appropriate level dependent on the situation.

ii) practicality

The practicality of assessment in this method remains uncertain. It could only be tested properly by pilot. However it is important to remember that a criticism of psychometric assessment is its lack of classroom context. Much of the methods

suggested here rely on classroom based evidence and can be collected over time. The psychologist would work with the Senco, classroom teachers and assistants to collect the relevant information, thus ensuring its practicality and significance to intervention. It has been pointed out that assessment over time based on assessment of the effects of suitable teaching and interventions is necessary (e.g. Solity et. al., 2000; British Psychological Society, 1999). It seems therefore that the methods suggested could pass the test of practicality.

iii) appeal to users

The methods suggested here are an extension of much of the work being undertaken by educational psychologists. In some circumstances the prospective client may find the suggestions difficult to understand. However the more different methods are used the more they will appeal through the process of familiarity. That is if they have a practical relevance, which has been argued to be the case above. The fundamental question arising here is whether the methods suggested can help answer the required question. Further clarification of the reasons for assessment will be found in the conclusion. The major issues facing the clients of educational psychology relate to resource allocation, diagnosis and intervention development. The intervention issue has been considered above. Diagnosis is not seen as central to psychology other than in how it helps to inform intervention. The significant aspect of diagnosis relates to profiling present skills and the required future learning opportunities. It has been argued that the methods of assessment outlined in this paper will be most useful within that context.

The question of resource allocation is often vexed. However it seems important that there is a fuller understanding of what interventions are required and what resources are therefore necessary. It is argued that the suggested methods of assessment address this concern and therefore are of central practical use when considering resource allocation

Conclusions

This paper has tried to show that certain assessment methods are more pertinent than others to the work of an educational psychologist. The paper has attempted to outline and detail aspects of assessment that can benefit educational psychology for the future.

When considering any type of assessment, the first question to ask is that of purpose. It must be clear what the purpose of any given assessment may be in order to pick the most appropriate approach. Burden (1996) has outlined a variety of possible purposes of assessment as below:

- classification
- diagnosis
- intervention
- evaluation
- empowerment.

The history of educational psychology started with classification. Sir Cyril Burt had a post, which was based on allocating pupils to particular schooling dependent on

classification. This structure was replicated across areas of the country and is still relevant in for example Northern Ireland, where the resource allocation system is completely based on psychometric scores. Yet interestingly, in Northern Ireland in a recent informal survey carried out by Stringer (2001) during a training session all the practising psychologists admitted to using standardised tests in an informal way. No-one followed the standardised procedures. The questions were re-framed to help the client and testers frequently showed significant interest in the way particular problems were approached and would explore such issues with the client. Of course, such work invalidates the standardisation and thus undermines the whole basis of the assessments. The main point here however is that norm referenced tests are in fact only useful for classification purposes and sometimes as part of diagnosis.

However the major areas of work for educational psychologists relate to assessment for the purposes of advising on interventions and evaluating progress in relation to the learning environment. Delegation requirements have led to Local Education Authority (LEA) monies being very tight, which in turn means that there needs to be a clarity of focus on where additional money should be directed. When this relates to individual needs the general criteria for additional funding rest on the principle of proof of lack of progress despite appropriate interventions within the resource 'gift' of the school. It can be concluded then that the LEA interest in assessment results is based largely on intervention and evaluation rather than classification or diagnosis.

Recent work, which is emphasised in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001) relates to pupil involvement and therefore by implication empowerment of the client. The latter three purposes of assessment (intervention, evaluation and empowerment) form the central work of educational psychologists in most circumstances outside those of some research. If one is considering assessment from the pupil or parental perspective, it is necessary to inform in a manner that will help alleviate the difficulties being faced by the pupil. From the school perspective the requirement relates to advice on suitable interventions and from the LEA perspective largely the interest is in how successful appropriate interventions have been. In the same vein the government perspective as seen at tribunal bases the requirement for statutory assessment on the wish to understand how the pupil has progressed with the appropriate use of the monies delegated to schools to meet needs within pre-statutory based interventions.

It is the position of this paper that the purposes of the vast majority of educational psychology assessments are best served by use of a framework of assessment similar to that outlined in this paper.

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Appendix I: Questions to elicit pupil perceptions of their autonomy, authenticity and relevance of effort.

Confidence, Independence and Interests

(Confidence in learning as well as social confidence i.e. with parents, teachers, friends, strangers, etc.)

How does the child participate in tasks? (e.g. with confidence? With interest? Is there a difference between tasks?)

Is he or she able to continue working by herself/himself? When? (First thing in the morning? After a lot of explanations? etc.)

Does he or she ask questions (of teachers/peers) when difficulties arise?

Does he or she take part in discussions – volunteer information/opinions, listen to and question other people, etc?

- in small groups?
- in large group/class situation?

Is there any difference in the child's confidence, independence or interest in pairs/small groups/in the playground etc.?

Is the child mainly active/passive? Under what conditions?

What about the child's concentration and perseverance – how and when are these demonstrated?

Does the child have any specific interests in and/or out of school?

To what does the child attribute success, failure? (their effort, others help, luck, natural intelligence, teaching, ...)

How interesting, exciting, relevant does the child find the work?

Which aspects of the curriculum does the child find relevant and which not?

What does the child expect to learn from the curriculum and how does he or she think this will be helpful?

Reflectiveness

Does the child talk about what he/she reads/does? In what way? (Statements of fact? Predictions? etc.). With whom does the child talk in this way – peers? adults? Does the child relate what he/she reads/hears to his/her own experience?

Does he/she learn from previous experiences? (Social/educational.)

Does he/she comment on the feelings and thoughts of other people or of characters?

How does the child respond to views/ideas/which are different to his/her own?

Can he/she identify personal strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes? What does the child do with this information?

Does the child take responsibility for his/her own learning? (e.g. think about and organise own resources, keep to deadlines, plan his/her own work in terms of time-scales etc., indicate what the next steps could be).

What are the child's feelings/attitudes/views of herself/himself as a learner/as a person?

Appendix II: Useful questions to ask to help elicit pupil experience information & information on pupil knowledge and skills: Mckenna & Phelps (1993).

**COLLECTING INFORMATION: EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR TO
NOTE/QUESTIONS TO INVESTIGATE
(developed from Mckenna & Phelps, 1993)**

All assessments (which include observation) are context specific. It arises from and is affected by the curriculum in use and the social context in which it takes place. There is no such thing as a standard of competence, which a child possesses independently of the circumstances in which he or she has shown that competence. The dimensions of learning framework offers a means of collecting evidence about a pupil in terms of his/her all-round development within the context of the classroom, school, and wider environment. It offers a richer and more meaningful approach to assessment than the mere statement of a child's attainment or levels of attainment in various curricular areas, and it can offer insight and provide valuable information on which decisions about a child's educational needs can be based.

Information can be gathered through observation and questioning. The following are suggestions, which could help this process at home, in school and in other contexts.

Experience

Within the school/class:

- what is the classroom/school ethos? (Supportive atmosphere? Collaborative? Trusting? Positive and encouraging?)
- what sort(s) of teacher-pupil interaction exist?
- does the teacher have a range of alternative approaches, methods, strategies, and resources to offer for meeting differing needs?
- do pupils get differentiated tasks/work/time depending on skills/needs?
- do they have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways (e.g. oral, written, representational)?
- how appropriate are the resources?
- is the physical organisation of the classroom conducive to learning?
- is the classroom exciting and stimulating?
- do the pupils get opportunities to:
 - work together
 - do practical work

share resources
 help other children
 work individually (maybe on identical tasks)
 present/display their work
 recount their experiences
 discuss/share opinions/feelings
 appreciate each others' strengths and weaknesses
 read aloud
 browse, read, discuss
 have stories etc., read to them (by teacher, other children, etc.)
 listen to or read along with texts?
 compose own books
 dictate to the teacher/other pupils
 interview people (for project work etc.)
 use first language
 act out/dramatise stories/situations
 play

- when working together, is each child given the necessary help to know and understand what he or she is expected to do? Are their experiences of working together discussed afterwards? Are the advantages of group work explained by the teacher? Are positive strategies identified and rewarded? Are the children allowed to choose with whom they work? How is group work organised? Are the tasks chosen suitable to group work?
- if children are grouped, how? How do they respond to this situation?
- what support arrangements are there in the school? Has the child received any? (When? How long? How successful? Criteria of success?) What opportunities were there for joint planning with support teachers, parents, child etc.? Are any other agencies involved? How has this been incorporated in the differentiated work plan for the child?
- is the activity content relevant to the child's own experience? (The child's views should be sought here.)
- is the child given opportunities to consolidate what he/she has learnt?
- does the child have a special friend in the class? Does he or she work with this person?
- are there positive expectations of the children? How do you know?
- does the child have opportunities to experience success? (In what areas?)
- at home: How many family members? Relationships? Does the child speak more than one language? Do family members take an interest in the child's education? Are parents invited to school? What does the child enjoy doing in the evening?

in the community: Characteristics of the community/culture? Is there a strong community spirit/allegiance/identify? How involved is the child in the community, e.g. does he or she belong to any clubs, library, community school etc.?

Knowledge, Skills and Understanding

Look at educational achievement/progress relevant to the child's age. This information is obtained through classroom observation, observation of work, discussion with teachers, parents and students etc.

Reference can be made to the teacher's records regarding National Curriculum attainment targets/levels, and records of achievements.

Results from diagnostic/norm-referenced tests, if used, could be inserted here, stating who conducted them and when.

Information about the child's demonstration of social skills with peers, adults, family, in familiar/unfamiliar situations could be inserted under this heading as well.

Appendix III: Questions to help elicit pupil awareness and understanding of the learning process and strategies to adopt.

Strategies – both social and learning

- what does the child do to make his or her learning easier?
- does the child do anything which you think is deliberate to stop himself/herself learning?
- how are the child's social skills? (Turn taking etc.)
- how does the child respond if ...?

For example: when undertaking a learning task: does the child formulate hypotheses? Does he or she try to understand the underlying concepts before applying a rule or formula? Does he or she rush to complete the task irrespective of whether it is fully understood? Does he or she (or can he or she) rote learn? Can the child sit still and listen? What strategy does he or she have when 'stuck'? Does he/she develop his/her own mnemonics when learning?

When reading: Does the child read for meaning? Does he/she read too quickly? Does he/she read word for word? Does the child use context/picture cues? What strategies does the child have when he/she does not know a word? Even if incorrect, does what the child reads make sense? Does the child self-correct? etc.

When working/playing with other children:

Does the child collaborate/compete/dominate/remain silent/support others' opinions/build on what others say/refute what others say/cause conflict, etc.?

- in school
- at home
- in other contexts?

How does the child approach a new learning situation?

Can the child describe how he or she would set about a given problem? Examine in different areas of the curriculum.

Can the child reflect on the strategies adopted and describe successful and unsuccessful strategies? Can he or she use the experience to redirect their efforts / learning strategies.

Appendix IV: Questions / observations to help elicit the pupil's cognitive map:(from Stringer, (2001) & Lidz (1991).

- 1. Self Regulation: Regulates and/or inhibits impulsive responding**
Maintains attention and refrains from impulsive interaction with materials
Attention and impulse control require mild intervention from assessor
Attention and impulse control require significant intervention from assessor
- 2. Persistence: Persists to task completion. (Relates to length of task)**
Completes task without seeking or attempting to terminate
Complains about length of task, but completes task with encouragement
Quits or terminates task and cannot be re-engaged
- 3. Frustration Tolerance: Continues work if frustrated due to task difficulty**
When upset from frustration, is readily (easily) calmed and redirected
Shows inconsistent response to assessor's attempts to calm and redirect
Is not able to be calmed or redirected to task
- 4. Flexibility: Tries alternative solutions or self corrects while solving tasks**
Does not get stuck or perseverate, develops alternative approaches/ solutions
Attempts alternative thinking or strategy, but is similar to original attempt
Perseverates, fails to make significant changes or adaptations
- 5. Motivation: Affective response/reaction or interest in task or materials**
Shows enthusiastic reaction to the materials and task
Shows neutral reaction to materials and task, but proceeds without protest
Shows little interest, may state does not like the task

6. Interactivity: Shows reciprocal social interaction

Engages in turn-taking and conversation exchanges with a degree of elaboration

Engages in turn-taking exchanges, but with minimal responses

Engages in no turn-taking or conversation

7. Receptivity: Responsive (is open) to intervention by mediator

Is a willing learner: successfully uses new strategies

Is a willing learner: attempts to use new strategies with minimal application

Resistant to learning from assessor. Continues to apply previous strategy.

Useful Questions / Strategies for Mediation

1. Processing Questioning

This helps a student focus attention on their own thinking processes.

- Yes – but how did you know?
- How else could you do that?
- What must you do first and how can you find out what to do next?

2. Bridging (or Generalising)

The activity by which cognitive concepts, principles and strategies are applied to familiar contexts. Through bridging, concepts are learned and made secure. Bridging cognitive functions is more important than content bridging.

Bridges should be elicited from students, not told to them.

Bridges should be to events and circumstances that are familiar to the student.

Bridging examples should be simple and logically straightforward.

Bridging examples should be elicited in several domains of experience:

- e.g.
- other school (learning) contexts
 - home situations
 - peer group interaction
 - work contexts
 - how did you do this so well?
 - what helped you to be an effective learner?

can you think of other situations in which this new learning can be used/helpful?
what do you want to focus on to be a more effective learner?

3. Challenging – or requiring justification

This helps a student focus on their own competence as a learner and promotes their sense of responsibility for their learning. Challenging a correct answer helps students to understand that a challenge does not always mean that their answer is wrong.

- Challenge correct and incorrect responses
- Accept as much of the response as possible (..... yes but)
- “Yes – you are right, it could be that way. You could also look at it another way and maybe find an even better answer”
- “Yes, that’s right, how did you know?”
- “Why is it better than this one?”
- “What could be wrong with this one?”
- “Can you show/tell me how you thought about that and found the right answer?”

4. Teaching about Rules

This is a very important aspect of generalising learning. Once one can make an applicable rule – one will know what to do in future similar situations.

- “Tell me what you see here?”
- “Tell me what you think you have got to do?”
- “Can we make a rule about this kind of problem?”
- “Would it help us to have a rule here? How?”

5. Emphasise order, predictability, problem solving sequences and strategies

- “What do you need to do next?”
- “Tell me, how did you do that?”
- “What do you think would happen if?”
- “When have you done something like this before?”
- “How do you feel if?”
- “Yes, that’s right, how do you know it’s right?”
- “When’s another time that you need to?”
- “Stop and look carefully” (useful for pupils with EBD)
- “What do you think the problem is?”
- “Can you think of another way we could do that?”
- “Why is that one better than that one?”
- “What have you done before that helped you?”
- “Let’s make a plan so we don’t miss anything”
- “How can you find out?”
- “How is different from?”

Appendix V: Details, which relate to long-term goals, building blocks of thinking and tools of learning: (from Greenberg, 2000).

(These details can be used to help formulate questions and observations to inform assessment.)

Cognitive Enrichment Advantage – Long-term Goals

- To create a laboratory for learning a reflective and collaborative atmosphere that enhances independent and interdependent learning and accommodates the social-cultural background of every learner.
- To apply Feuerstein’s theory of mediated learning experience and enhance learning through an explicit understanding of how to ensure the highest quality learning experience.
- To use Building Blocks of Thinking and Tools of Independent Learning to develop a shared vocabulary among educators, family members and students that allows all learners to build their own cognitive, affective and motivational strategies as needed in all learning situations anywhere.
- To employ cognitive enrichment advantage as a comprehensive teaching method that enriches best practices for the given school and community based on cultural, family and individual needs.
- To create an international, supportive and expanding network that enables family members, educators, and others to provide and receive mutual support as they seek to maximise learning potential for all students.

Cognitive Enrichment Advantage - Building Blocks of Thinking

Building Blocks for Approaching the Learning Experience

Exploration	to search systematically for information needed in the learning experience
Planning	to prepare a detailed method for approaching the learning experience
Expression	to communicate thoughts and actions carefully in the learning experience

Building Blocks for Making Meaning of the Learning Experience

Working Memory	to use memory processes effectively
Making Comparisons	to discover similarities and differences spontaneously among some parts of the learning experience

Getting the Main Idea to identify spontaneously the basic thought that holds ideas together

Thought Integration to combine pieces of information into a complete thought and hold onto them while needed

Connecting Events to find relationships spontaneously between past, present, and future learning experiences

Building Blocks for Confirming the Learning Experience

Precision and Accuracy to know there is a need to understand and use words and concepts correctly and to communicate thoughts and actions spontaneously when the need arises

Space and Time Concepts to understand how things relate in size, shape and distance, how events occur in time and order, and how to use this information effectively in the learning experience

Selective Attention to choose between relevant and irrelevant information and to focus on the information needed in the learning experience

Problem Identification to experience a sense of imbalance spontaneously and define its cause when inconsistencies occur in the learning experience.

Cognitive Enrichment Advantage – Tools of Learning

Tools for Understanding Feelings within the Learning Experience

Inner Meaning to seek deep, personal value in learning experiences that energises thinking and behaviour and leads to greater commitment and success

Feeling of Challenge to energise learning effectively in new and complex experiences

Awareness of Self Change to recognise and understand feelings about personal growth and to learn to expect and welcome change and development

Feeling of Competence to energise feelings, thoughts and behaviours by developing beliefs about being capable of learning and doing something effectively

Tools for Motivating Behaviour within the Learning Experience

Self Regulation	to reflect on thoughts and actions as they occur to energise, sustain and direct behaviour toward successful learning and doing
Goal Orientation	to taking purposeful action in consistently setting, seeking and reaching personal objectives
Self Development	to value personal qualities and to enhance personal potential
Sharing Behaviour	to become inter-dependent by sharing thoughts and actions effectively, by enhancing collaborative learning and by participating actively as learner and peer-mediator.

Assignment III:

Stress Management Training:
Educational Psychologists' work
to support development in one
LEA

Stress Management Training: Educational Psychologists' work to support development in one LEA

Contents:

Introduction	Page 82
Structure of the Paper	Page 82
Background	Page 82-86
The Legal Position	Page 82
The Prevalence of Stress	Page 82
Stress in Education	Page 83
Overview of Related Work in Essex	Page 86-88
Table 1: chronology of work in Essex	Page 88
The Context	Page 88
Towards a Definition	Page 89
Distinction Between Personal and Occupational Stress	Page 90
Design and Objectives of the Training Seminars	Page 90
Stress Information Gathering Within The LEA	Page 92
Designing a Personal Stress Management Seminar: the next steps	Page 93
Training Requests	Page 95
Evaluation	Page 96-97
Category A – the usefulness of the seminars	Page 96
Category B – improvement suggestions	Page 97
Long Term Evaluation	Page 97
Success of the Seminars	Page 98
Occupational Stress Management	Page 99
The Organisational Stress Management Course	Page 101-105
Stress Audit	Page 102
The Awkwardness in Change	Page 103
Teamwork	Page 103
Finding New Solutions: Relaxation and Focussing	Page 104
Manager Dilemmas	Page 105
Present Developments	Page 105-108
Levels of Intervention	Page 106-107
Annual Stress Audit	Page 106
Use of Questionnaires	Page 106
Using Audit Information	Page 107
Level Three Intervention	Page 107
Seminars	Page 108
A Wellbeing Focus	Page 108
Summary and Conclusions	Page 109
References	Page 111-116

Introduction

This paper will outline work undertaken within one local education authority (LEA) over a period of seven years. The work presented started with an LEA response to personal stress in teachers. It has progressed to consideration of organisational stress management. More recently the work has begun investigating how best to support developments, which might enable schools to create the most appropriate climate to minimise the negative affects of stress on staff in the school and to enhance the wellbeing of school employees and pupils. This paper represents a substantial re-write of Murphy and Claridge's paper (2000), by reporting upon work undertaken since and currently in progress.

Structure of the paper

There will be a description of the work to date, which will be critiqued in the light of research. Relevant implications will be drawn from the literature and future directions for the work outlined and evaluated to date. This work revolves around the development and delivery of stress management seminars and training packages.

The content of the seminars was based upon two courses; one relating to personal stress management (Claridge & Murphy, 1997a) and latterly one on organisational stress management (Claridge & Murphy, 1997b). These have been published internally to Essex LEA only. Most recently work has been undertaken to develop a survey and questionnaire pack to support schools in completing an audit and subsequently an action plan to aid the development of wellbeing in the workplace (Claridge, 2003).

Background

The legal position

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), employers have general duties which include a need to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, employees' mental health, in addition to their physical health and safety and their welfare (HSC 1999, p6). The Health and Safety Commission also state that the risk assessment required by regulations must cover risks to mental health as well as physical health and safety. Lately, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have been charged with developing a wellbeing strategy to enhance the physical and emotional health of staff and pupils, on the assumption that staff who are physically and emotionally more healthy will be better able to enhance learning opportunities for students (DfES, 1999).

The 1994 High Court ruling (Walker vs. Northumberland County Council, 1994) and subsequent out of court settlement was seen as a landmark ruling. This was the first nationally recognised ruling relating to stress. A social worker was able to show that his employer was responsible for his stress at work. Since then, there have been further judgements, particularly against public sector employers, and these have involved teachers in successful court cases relating to stress. The judgements have ranged, but in the main have related to the employer not taking appropriate action to support workers returning to work after a period of illness (Walker vs. Northumberland County Council, 1994) and situations in which appropriate training

has not been offered when work has changed (Times, 1999). Recently a ruling has clarified the requirement for the employee to notify the employer of their levels of stress, but then the employer has the responsibility of taking appropriate action.

The prevalence of stress

The Health and Safety Commission (HSC, 1999, p.11) provided a summary of surveys about stress at work, covering the period from 1995 to 1998. The survey covered a wide range of industries and sampled both managerial staff and union bodies. Amongst the findings reported were that:

- 72% of respondents thought that stress levels were worse than the previous year (1997);
- managing stress was predicted to be the fastest growing area of work for health at work teams over the following two years (1998);
- an estimated 279,000 people in Great Britain believed that they were suffering from work related stress, anxiety or depression; and
- a further 254,000 people suffered from an illness which they believed to have resulted from work related stress (1995).

Cooper (1997, 1998) conducted stress evaluations of 104 jobs during the period between 1985 and 1997, showing a clear picture of increase in stress. The first six jobs showing the major increases in stress were: armed forces, social work, linguistics, teaching, ambulance service, local government. The top ten most stressful professions (1997) are listed as: prison service, police, social worker, teaching, ambulance service, nursing, doctor, fire brigade, dentistry, mining. Smith et al. (2000) carried out a survey, which found that 42% of teachers reported being 'highly stressed', which was the largest proportion of reported stress of all occupations surveyed.

Stress in education

The Education Service Advisory Committee (ESAC, 1990, p.7) noted that, in organisations generally, stress can have serious implications, including: an increased and unpredictable rate of sickness absence; early retirement; high turnover of staff. These factors in turn can create stress amongst staff who have to cover for absent colleagues and make up for the inefficiencies of stress impaired colleagues.

ESAC (1998, p.5) acknowledged that it is difficult to estimate how many people in the education sector suffer ill health due to stress. ESAC (1995) reported on a survey of self-reported, work-related illness. This suggested that approximately 37,000 teachers or former teachers, suffered from stress, anxiety or depression caused by their work. A further 26,000 suffered from some physical illness they believed to be due to stress at work. The numbers represented approximately 4% of teachers in Great Britain, currently or recently working at the time of the survey.

Smithers and Robinson (2001) have carried out a survey for the National Union of Teachers, which has highlighted a concern about recruitment and retention. The survey showed that over 30% of teachers coming out of training are lost to teaching before ever reaching the classroom and nearly 60% of teachers leaving training have

left teaching within three years. Whilst the retention issue cannot necessarily be laid at the door of teacher stress, Cooper (1998) reported on surveys undertaken on teacher stress in 1985 and 1997. He showed a significant increase in the reported levels of stress between these dates. In addition, recent surveys at both national and local (Essex) level have shown teacher stress to be the fourth highest reason for time off work (Bowers and McIver, 2000; Mohammed and Moore, 2002). The top three relate to care issues such as looking after young and old relatives, relationships at work including bullying behaviour and social/domestic commitments. Bowers and McIver (2000) have estimated that all ill-health absence costs £370 million per year solely in salaries paid to absent staff.

The research findings were based on self-report and therefore relate only to a subjective experience and understanding of stress. The results could be affected by cultural aspects, which might create over or under reporting. Cains and Brown (1998) complicate the picture further by pointing to the fact that there is a lack of clear definition, which makes it hard to make useful comparisons between studies and over time.

Teachers report that they experience high levels of stress and these perceptions need to be taken seriously. In line with the findings, an assumption made was that staff attending stress management seminars would be experiencing some negative affect, and that a well designed stress management seminar would be associated with a reduction in negative and an increase in positive affect. A primary design aim therefore was to construct seminars in which positive affect would be imparted and revealed by high scores in post seminar evaluations.

ESAC (1995, 1998) concluded that reducing stress is cost effective, leading to lower sickness absence, improved performance and less staff turnover, with consequently reduced recruitment and induction costs for replacement staff. It is also noted that other indirect costs such as reduced quality of education and increased demand on health service resources, need to be added to the equation, despite difficulties in their measurement.

Kelly (1992) found that 70% of teachers in a sample, a proportion far higher than expected, reported their own stress at work to be within the range; 'extremely stressful-very stressful-cause for concern'. 92% of the sample described their stress levels as higher, or very much higher, than three years previously. More recently, the Teachers Benevolent website (2001) stated that the Health and Safety executive reports 41% of teachers experiencing high levels of stress as compared with reports of 21% in 1978 (Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1978). In 2000 Smith et al. found 42% of teachers reporting that they were highly stressed, compared to an average of 20% across all professions.

The advent of the OFSTED school inspection arrangements led to teachers reporting themselves as highly stressed in the run up period to the OFSTED inspection, and exhausted for an extended period of time afterwards (Scanlon, 1999). The move towards inclusion (DfEE, 1997) has increased the perceived stress for individual teachers who face persistent demands to differentiate the curriculum for an ever widening pupil population, within the constraints of increased drives towards whole class teaching (Rogers, 1996). Now there is the SEN and Disability Act (2001) about

to come into force (September 2002), which is reported to have wide ranging implications and may increase the effects of stress on staff in schools.

Boyle et al. (1995), along with Pithers and Fogarty (1995), have highlighted workload, role confusion and conflict, lack of recognition, lack of control, poor communication, emotional demands of teaching, limited resources, student behaviour and poor colleague relations as the main causes of stress. Cains and Brown (1998) found a similar pattern of issues for newly qualified teachers.

Cooper and Kelly (1993) reported particular stress issues for some categories of teachers. For example, headteachers were found to suffer specifically from work overload and handling relationships with staff. Male headteachers tended to have less positive personal stress management techniques, but did report lower levels of stress in secondary schools. Recently the Cooper and Kelly (1993) findings have been replicated in Essex. Mohammed and Moore (2002) found similar concerns as Cooper and Kelly (1993) for headteachers. For teachers though, there was significant stress resulting from bullying by managers and absence cover, and for non-teaching staff, management style was the primary cause of stress.

Stress has become such a major concern within the teaching profession that the NASUWT commissioned a national study to assess the extent and sources of teacher stress throughout the UK (Travers and Cooper, 1996). The study traces the background of changes in education, dating from the period between 1955 and 1975, when education was described as the fastest growing service in the public or private sectors. Cuts in public expenditure and the Education Reform Act (1988) were a major source of wide ranging changes to curriculum, financial management of schools and the powers of governing bodies.

The 1996 study also noted other changes relating to teachers' pay and conditions of service. Travers and Cooper (1996) assert that these changes have led to extra pressures upon teachers, with greater levels of uncertainty, job insecurity and the restructuring of teaching itself. Societal changes are also noted, including increasing contradictions in the role of the teacher, changes in the attitude of society towards the teacher and uncertainty about the objectives of the education system. (pp.4-7).

These concerns are not confined to the UK and indeed teacher stress is reported to occur internationally according to a review carried out by Kyriacou (1987). Rogers (1996), writing primarily on the Australian context, listed teachers' stresses as:

- pressure and pace of bureaucratic change;
- poor promotional prospects;
- role demands – teaching, administration, curriculum, discipline, pastoral;
- social demands of relating to a significant number of pupils;
- perception of the public;
- classroom management demands and managing 'harder' pupils;
- perception of self – competence, self-esteem, resources;
- school climate;
- demands of mixed-ability teaching;

- academically geared curriculum, which may not always easily meet pupil requirements, especially at key stage 4.

Overview of related work in Essex

Essex LEA began providing stress management for its staff during 1994, when it set up a Teachers' Stress Working Group to address teacher stress. Membership of this group included representatives from teacher trade unions, LEA officers and an educational psychologist. The group has been meeting regularly since its inception and continues to meet in order to review work and suggest new initiatives. This group established several resources to help manage stress within the LEA, such as:

- an in service training course for teachers;
- an externally employed counsellor available to all LEA employees;
- a stress information poster regularly issued to schools;
- a peer counselling scheme.

Stress management already had considerable momentum within the LEA at the time of developing the training seminars.

In April 1998 the Learning Services Directorate (the LEA) issued its Code of Practice, Managing Occupational Stress, in order to comply with Essex County Council's policy on stress management. The present author was consulted in the writing of this "Stress Code" and was part of the development working party. As part of the launch of the Stress Management Code of Practice a training programme was developed to help school managers and other staff in its implementation. The programme formed the basis of a response to occupational stress management. The present author delivered the seminars with another educational psychologist. The County Health and Safety Officer also helped deliver this programme. His remit was to provide an overview of the employer's legal obligations to provide occupational stress management.

At first, there was a high demand for the in-service training course mentioned above, which consisted of five half-day sessions delivered over a term. The initial high demand for the in-service training course for teachers did not continue. Amongst the reasons contributing to this were changes in the financing arrangements for in-service training of teachers. General delegation of funding from the LEA level to the school level meant that, if schools wanted any in-service training at all, they would have to "pay for it themselves". There has continued to be a trickle of schools wanting personal stress management courses. However, the majority of new work relates to organisational stress management. Schools are requesting support to develop their responses to stress auditing and to maintain a healthy response to the management of stress at the organisational level.

During 2001, a working party was formed, which involved LEA staff with responsibility to promote wellbeing in schools, the County occupational health doctor and members of personnel and educational psychology sections. There was headteacher and class teacher representation as well. This group had started to meet separately to the stress management working party. However it became apparent that similar issues were being discussed. It was agreed therefore that the two groups

should amalgamate due to the level of overlap and to ensure consistency of approaches throughout Essex.

This group has developed an approach to wellbeing, which includes a pack of materials to enable schools to self-review both wellbeing and stressors at work at a number of levels (Claridge, 2003). This work was compiled and developed by the present author after consideration of the relevant literature and reflection on the present working relationship of the LEA with schools. Essentially, school independence is encouraged, with the LEA acting in a supporting and consultative role. Therefore materials, which enable self-review were developed and offered to schools for their usage, either independently or as part of a consultancy package.

To aid the reader when reading this paper, a chronology, which outlines the most significant work undertaken over the years from 1994 to the present day follows. The present author has taken a central role in all the work presented.

Table 1: Chronology of stress management and development of wellbeing work undertaken in Essex.

1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher / Officer stress working party set up. • confidential counselling service for teachers • peer counselling service initiated • termly information poster for all schools. • long stress management course developed (5 x half-day)
1995-1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working party 'commissioned' design of half-day personal stress management course for teachers
1996 (and on-going)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course delivered at central venues and to individual schools / staff groups
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pilot survey of stressors and stress interventions in schools undertaken. • Development of initial course in occupational stress management
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning services issue stress management Code of Practice for managers. (April) • Seminars delivered across Essex to launch the stress code of practice. Course based on principles of managing occupational stress. • Occupational stress management course redrafted to focus on Schools Causing Concern. • Presentation delivered at national conference for Transpersonal section of British Psychological Society (BPS).
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper written and published in Transpersonal Psychology section of BPS (Claridge & Murphy, 1999) • Presentation delivered at national conference for Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP).
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper published in Division of Child and Educational Psychology (Murphy & Claridge, 2000). • Presentation at national conference for division of child and educational psychology. • Preparation and delivery of Stress management pamphlet for all schools in Essex. (Claridge & Murphy, 2000).
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy schools initiative promotes wellbeing as a response to stress management. • Cross county group set up, including health, personnel, healthy schools staff, educational psychology and schools.
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and organisational stress management seminars form central part of training for healthy schools project. • County employ external investigation into absenteeism, wellbeing and stress management in schools. • Pilot project launched with 12 schools to evaluate materials developed to enable schools to carry out their own wellbeing / stress audit and to set and evaluate resultant action plan.

The context

Despite teachers ceasing to take up the offer of training in stress, Mohammed and Moore (2002) found that 87% of teachers and 85% of head teachers reported feeling stressed or highly stressed. It was becoming increasingly apparent that the LEA, as an employer, needed to consider how to implement stress management strategies. All LEA staff needed to receive some sort of stress management training. The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) contained the necessary experience and information to help in areas of occupational and personal stress management. However, the climate was such that approaches focussing on the alleviation and

management of occupational stress from the perspective of the employer were of the utmost concern. The healthy schools initiative was prevalent and legislation pointed towards the responsibility of the school management to minimise occupational stress. Therefore the primary focus should not be on the individual, but should focus on promoting wellbeing in staff.

In considering these significant, continuing stress issues, it was decided that previous in-service training courses for teachers (and other LEA staff) would be re-designed and offered again. The paper goes on to describe and critique the re-designing.

Towards a definition

One of the issues when trying to establish the prevalence of stress is in the difficulty of agreeing a robust and discrete definition. Rumsby et al. (2002) comment that it is important for teachers to come to their own definition, since for each person the acceptable level of pressure will vary. Further, participants in stress management training courses looking at personal or managerial issues have not requested that stress be defined. Notwithstanding the point above, in preparing courses, it was important to agree a framework within which to work. Therefore a definition was required which was not too restrictive, but would meet with general agreement. The definition used for guidance was that stated by ESAC (1998): "Stress is the reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them. It arises out of worry that they can't cope."

This lack of insistence on a definition of stress may be one indication of how teachers' (and other LEA staff's) perceptions of stress have evolved over the last decade. Bamford et al. (1990) publicised their stress management course for teachers using a written resume in which the wording was, ".....deliberately ambiguous; its aim being to describe frankly what was on offer yet allow potential participants to apply without necessarily electing that they personally had an acute stress management problem."(p.91).

Nearly ten years later, teachers and other LEA staff are quite explicit about their high stress levels and their need for stress management training. From informal discussion between educational psychologists and headteachers it was apparent that staff attending stress management seminars were doing so following staff consensus within a school or department that they wished to receive such training. It was also apparent that staff were readily expressing their need for stress management to their line managers, who were then seeking suitable training seminars.

It is acknowledged that line managers might reasonably have concluded that the fact that staff believe themselves to be stressed, or report themselves as stressed, does not necessarily mean that they are experiencing stress. Similarly, line managers who provide stress management on request might be better engaged in looking at other management issues such as communication systems or induction procedures.

It is recognised that the focus on stress may limit the impact of management interventions. Rumsby et al. (2002) and Mohammed and Moore (2002) have indicated that the way forward is for stress management to be embedded in the context of enhancing wellbeing in the workplace. The wellbeing focus has taken a central

position when developing self-review materials for schools to use for auditing and subsequent action planning.

Distinctions between personal and occupational stress

The term “occupational stress” is used to refer to stress at work. This definition has been extended and clarified by Essex County Council (1998) who refer to the management of occupational stress as the responsibility of the employer. The term “personal stress” is used to refer to stress resulting from personal factors whether they occur inside or outside the work situation. That use of the term personal stress is extended and clarified by referring to the management of personal stress as the responsibility of the individual. It is clear that there is significant overlap here. Through confidential feedback from the counsellor employed by Essex LEA, it is noteworthy that no individual has referred themselves to the stress management counselling service who manifests stress issues only at work or only at home. However, a premise of the training work has been that there are a number of management strategies that can be developed which will help protect organisations from the demands caused by stress. These aspects would come under the heading of organisational stress management. The Mental Health Foundation (2001) has shown that, whilst there have been few effective interventions at the organisational level, there are organisations, which manage the potential effects of stress better than others. This will be expanded upon below.

Design and objectives of the training seminars

Initially (1996) work was undertaken to design personal (rather than occupational) stress management seminars. From informal discussions with headteachers and other line managers, it appeared that staff who were likely to attend seminars would do so willingly and usually at the individual’s own instigation.

It was a design aim to construct seminars, which would be well organised, well presented and enjoyable, in addition to being relevant and informative. Seminar content and process was sought that would be seen as interesting, motivating, even intriguing to the participants. These seminars were to be an introduction to stress management. They were designed to give participants a clearer understanding of stress, to offer practical support and to alleviate the anxiety, which was often present. An aim was to ensure that people who perceived themselves as already stressed were not additionally burdened.

Although stress can be considered from a number of perspectives ranging from the psycho-therapeutic (Bennett-Goleman, 2001) to the organisational (Binner, 2002) the model developed in Essex was based on cognitive behaviour principles. The reasons lying behind this decision included the following factors:

- an analysis of the perspective taken by followers of psycho-therapy shows remarkably close links to cognitive behavioural ideas, when it comes to intervention. The theory suggests that stress is based on deeply held expectations due to previous similar experiences. The stress occurs as a result of the personal interpretation of the situation, which in turn results from one’s previous life experiences. Therefore the significant part of the resolution relates to a re-

definition of the situation by bringing more hopeful perspectives to bear. This fits with cognitive behavioural theory.

- the organisational position adopted by Binner (2002) suggests that changes in how things are accomplished in a given organisation will alleviate the stress. However, individuals experience stress and stress levels very differently, which suggests that this position is simplistic. The implications of this position are detailed elsewhere in this essay, when considering the wellbeing literature.
- in a therapeutic setting it has been widely acknowledged that cognitive behavioural interventions to manage stress tend to have the best results. A cost benefit analysis suggests that relief from symptoms occurs after fewer sessions and the effects last over time (Kelly, 1997). Although seminars were not aimed at therapeutic relief, it seemed appropriate to follow the same theoretical perspective.
- the perspective fitted with the predominant view of the educational psychology service in Essex and therefore was acceptable to the established value set of teachers and interventionists alike.
- the basis of stress relates to the bodily reactions to situations of perceived threat, following from in-built survival mechanisms which date back to fight and flight reactions to physical threat in the environment (Arroba & James, 1987).

It follows from these points that a cognitive behavioural representation would maintain a suitable logic and would be appropriate for delegates to follow and understand.

The objectives of the training seminars were:

- participants would learn basic information about the nature of stress, its physical and mental effects;
- participants would learn basic information on the signs of stress in themselves and others;
- participants would learn that individuals differ in their proneness to stress;
- participants would have the opportunity to assess their own susceptibility to stress;
- participants would learn a brief and simple technique for the management of personal stress;
- the material presented would not overburden delegates with information or remedial actions.

The seminar content and process were devised during extended conversations between the presenters, incorporating professional and personal life experiences. The rationale here was that since stress is strongly related to perception, personal experiences are as important as professional ones. Discussion led to the conclusion

that memory and the effects of previous experience were central to the management of stress. This thinking was derived from consideration of some of the currently popular self-improvement literature (e.g. Peck, 1978; Redfield, 1997, 1998; Goleman, 1997; Bennett-Goleman, 2001). Bennett-Goleman (2001) particularly describes a framework for understanding based on the concept of 'schema' built up from experiences. In the case of a stress schema attack, this would be based on perceiving something in the environment as stressful due to previous experiences, which were perceived as somehow similar. In order to respond differently, it is first necessary to be mindful of the experience and then to act differently at a conscious level. This cognitive behavioural approach formed the bedrock of the seminars.

An evaluation sheet was distributed immediately to each participant after each seminar. The sheet contained opportunities for both quantitative and qualitative responses. From examination of this it appears that the seminars were very well received. For example, over 90% of the quantitative responses scored at the highest or second highest point on a six-point scale. These covered, presentation skills, enjoyment, usefulness and relevance. These also were usually positive, although some pointed to a wish for less detail on overheads and a longer course to enable more discussion.

Stress information gathering within the local education authority

Ideas about seminar content and process also needed to be informed by examination of the nature of the stressors experienced in schools. A survey was carried out using a number of volunteer schools in one area of the county, which seemed to have particularly high concerns about stress. The survey included (1) a stress risk assessment in these schools (2) a stress management presentation (3) discussion of a possible long term sequence of events to manage stress in those schools in the future. The main conclusions, as described by Kelly (1997) were:

- OFSTED was the single biggest source of stress;
- there was considerable variation in perceived stress from one school to another;
- job satisfaction and stress related absence each varied noticeably from one school to another within the sample, despite similarities in catchment area;
- part-time teachers were nearly as stressed as full-time teachers;
- stress was much the same irrespective of the age of the teacher;
- stress was much the same irrespective of the gender of the teacher;
- stress was much the same for headteachers as for other teachers.

Mohammed and Moore (2002) found similar patterns to Kelly (1997), although the source of stress differed for headteachers, teachers and non-teaching staff. (e.g. Headteachers found paperwork the highest stressor, but teachers found it to be the pace of change and non-teaching staff management styles). Also female headteachers reported more active use of positive stress management strategies than their male counterparts.

Although there are some differences from the literature findings quoted above, it was thought important to have a local perspective. This gave face validity to the audience and fitted closely with the main literature findings to date. Kelly (1997) noted that, within a hierarchy of stress, more stressors had been acquired in teaching – such as

OFSTED and form filling – but the other stressors, such as pupil behaviour, had not decreased. These findings may elucidate Cooper's (1997) findings that teacher reported stress had increased significantly.

Whilst this survey was being carried out, it appeared from discussion between the author and headteachers that:

- occupational stress management could only be implemented in a school with the enthusiastic support of the headteacher/senior management team;
- some headteachers tended to think of stress only in terms of personal stress, and indicated that the organisation and management of a school did not contribute significantly to stress in teaching staff;
- the attitudes of headteachers towards occupational stress varied considerably between individuals; one headteacher had already made substantial organisational changes within his existing budget in order to reduce stress; other headteachers talked about occupational stress management largely in terms of a perceived need for additional funding; still others viewed stress as an issue for the individual alone;
- a stress risk assessment in a school, plus initial training in management of occupational stress, was likely to take at least a full day with all teaching and non-teaching staff present.

Designing a personal stress management seminar: the next step

In order to develop seminars on the ideas, which had emerged, discussions about seminar content and process were combined with the data gathered above. The information distilled below was based on the work of Kelly (1997), conversations had during that work and information gathered from regular attendance at LEA officer, headteacher and teacher union working party meetings. It was clear that:

- teachers need basic information about what stress is, and how stress presents itself;
- teachers need guidance in recognising stress in themselves
- headteachers, and others with line management responsibility, need guidance in recognising stress in others and which parts of the organisation may be particularly vulnerable to stress;
- teachers are interested in whether there is a measure of individual susceptibility to stress;
- teachers are interested in information on any detrimental effects of prolonged exposure to stress;

- teachers need to be taught simple personal stress management strategies which can be easily used in everyday life, in a manner, which is minimally time consuming and requires minimal effort;
- teachers are likely to be able to spare only half a day in order to attend a stress management seminar.

The above factors were distilled into content and process. The structure of the seminars followed the familiar format of information imparted using overhead transparency (OHT) and discussion. Full details of the OHTs are available in Claridge and Murphy (1996b). OHT content is drawn from sources such as: Bailey and Sproston (1987), Nash and Williams (1996) and Open University (1992) and follows a cognitive behavioural framework as outlined above.

It was thought that process factors were at least as important as content if the message was to be delivered successfully. Reasoning here was based on experience of seminar presentation and work by Fox et al. (1988). Presentations in other subject areas had been reported as of being of greater interest when positive presenter interaction occurred. Therefore courses are delivered by two presenters, who have their parts, but also interact as fully as possible with the participants and each other during the OHT sequence.

When delivering the personal stress management course the OHT sequence is followed by a group relaxation exercise, involving problem solving techniques imparted with the aid of guided imagery. Arroba & James (1987) and Bennett-Goleman (2001) suggest that if a different set of thoughts can replace a stress reaction, then the automatic fight or flight response can be arrested and a more soothing response can occur. Guided imagery can be used to aid this process, by redressing the anxiety.

The details of the guided imagery have evolved over a number of years. Participants are invited to proceed through a four step process, starting with the often used visualisation of a pleasant scene such as a landscape or a seascape, proceeding to other imagery, derived from Maslow (1968), utilising a transpersonal framework. An assumption is, that if stress management stops at the level of visualisation, it will not have a lasting effect. It is then assumed that inviting participants to proceed into transpersonal imagery will assist them to (re)discover their belief system(s). It is further assumed that participants may thereby activate broad problem solving strategies, (e.g. "My belief inspires me, gives me energy and helps put everyday stresses into perspective"). More detail is available in Claridge and Murphy (1999).

Although relaxation techniques have been criticised in the literature, Winzelberg and Luskin (1999) have shown teaching of meditation to be successful in enhancing stress reduction. Medical research has found that regular meditation and relaxation with the use of imagery can lead to reductions in blood pressure and can increase energy levels and the feeling of wellbeing (Meanly, 1999). The relaxation techniques used here are based on offering delegates an experience, which they can then take away and practise.

Initially the presentation contained the OHT session, followed by the group relaxation session, as two distinct elements. As the presenters evolved their style of presentation, the two initially distinct elements became interwoven, so that some of the relaxation elements were interspersed with the OHT information. This style promoted fluidity between the presenters as recommended by Fox et al. (1988).

There are similarities to the course designed by Bamford et al. (1990) in Kirklees. Similarities include:

- the experiential component;
- imparting of relaxation and problem solving skills;
- opportunity for talking out problems and allowing for mutual support;
- the aim of making the seminars fun for participants;
- use of non-threatening activities;
- helping participants towards being as autonomous as possible in their future stress management.

Training requests

Within Essex LEA, educational psychologists were amongst the first professional groups to request training. Subsequently, over a four year period, a total of 87 seminars were delivered, 53 to groups of teachers and 34 to groups of “others” (non teaching). The groups of “others” included LEA administration staff; Essex primary headteachers’ residential courses; residential courses for the Essex Behaviour Support Team; various departments within the LEA, including personnel, treasurers, educational welfare officers and statutory administrative services.

The number of participants in a training group has varied from typically ten to more than one hundred people on one occasion. Only one secondary school and two special schools to date have requested training. Requests for presentations are continuing at a similar rate.

Beyond Essex LEA itself, Essex’s staff training department, which provides a wide range of training throughout the council, asked for stress management training within a residential course for senior managers, and within a series of courses offered to help staff deal with the stresses following from Local Government Review. Subsequently training was requested for specific departments and teams within (the new) Essex County Council.

Training has also been provided outside Essex, including a LEA in North-East England, a university course for the professional training of EPs, a large American biotech company and an independent therapeutic community. More recently the local advisory and inspection service has requested support for schools causing concern following OFSTED inspection and Essex libraries service managers have requested training for all their managers in the management of occupational stress. Essex records office and the education awards section have requested (and received) a full consultancy package including stress management seminars, stress audit and action planning. A number of seminars were arranged across Essex as training related to the Essex Stress Code of Practice for schools and other parts of learning services. The most recent work is relating to the Essex Healthy Schools Project, in which stress

management seminars considering organisational aspects of stress management are taking central stage at two county-wide conferences planned for 2002.

Finally a pilot project is under way to support schools in their own auditing and action planning for stress management under the auspices of enhancing staff wellbeing. This was a recommendation of Mohammed and Moore (2002) as a result of their review of staff absenteeism in Essex schools.

Evaluation

Quantitative evaluations are carried out immediately after each seminar. There was an additional, qualitative evaluation, and some comments from participants are included here. The comments are the responses to five separate questions on the evaluation form asking: (a) whether the seminar was useful; (b) what improvements are suggested; (c) what additional training needs the seminar brings to mind; (d) how the seminar will assist participants at work; (e) further comments.

A sample of comments is shown below. These comments re-enforce the view that the balance between experiential learning and information imparting was achieved. Delegates reported gains in creativity, sensitivity and awareness. However there is room for improvement with respect to OHTs and the appropriateness of venue.

Category A – The usefulness of the seminars

Comments on **relaxation** included:

useful relaxation; it will enable me to feel more relaxed, less challenged and driven; hugely enjoyable and relaxing session; I will take time to relax and unwind; relaxation was so practical; it will make me calmer at work;

Comments on **action planning** included:

highlighted my need to action plan; action needs to be taken on stress; I will consider solutions to stress rather than just moan; I must prioritise; I will concentrate on communication; made me think about ways I can reduce stress in my own life; I will say "No" and slow down.

Comments on **sharing** included:

helped to share ideas; good to know we all feel stressed at times; useful to talk amongst the group; it helped to learn that my symptoms are common; people's feedback; highlighted the need for openness about stress; highlights need to support others.

Comments on **factual information** included:

useful factual info; I knew it before, but it is so valuable to have it reinforced; useful to see how things fitted in with what I do at present.

Comments on **awareness** included:

highlighted awareness; gave me food for thought; highlighted the difficulties we place on admin. staff; session will make me more understanding, listening and calm; promoting thinking about stress management; I will panic less about performance deadlines etc; self evaluation was useful; helped to identify factors in my own stress, past and present; creative ideas came up.

Comments of a **general** nature included:

very worthwhile; the whole presentation was useful; no improvements to suggest; best course ever; sorry, I'm not on the same plane; found it difficult to relax and not think about the activity itself; I feel I have gained skills that I can use in all areas of my life, for all of my life.

Category B – Improvement suggestions

more cartoons; more grounding in real world of working day; more time needed; clearer OHTs needed; larger room needed; lie on floor for relaxation; use comfy chairs; don't have the session at the end of a day's work; choose a neutral, comfortable venue; less paper; more dialogue and discussion needed; began to sound manipulative.

Long term evaluation

It is acknowledged that there is a need for long-term evaluation to assess whether the immediate benefits of the seminars are sustained over a period of time. It has been suggested that most seminars operate at the single-loop learning level (Argyris and Schon, 1996). Argyris (1990) defines this as learning at a level that does not challenge one's governing beliefs and values and therefore does not usually lead to significant change over time. INSET tends to be useful in raising awareness but usually fails to offer ways of challenging delegates' view of the world. As a result of the lack of in depth reflection, the effects of the INSET are at the surface level only; usually, behaviour will change temporarily before returning to type. With respect to the present work, it would suggest that immediate feedback would be good, although the likelihood of sustained changes to behaviour at the individual or organisational level would be harder to achieve.

Some preliminary work has been completed by Ashton-Jones (1997). Following a whole day occupational stress management seminar carried out in a primary school with 400 pupils on roll, Ashton-Jones (1997) visited the school seven days later and interviewed members of staff. Each of the participants interviewed had used the relaxation technique at least once since the seminar. Comments revealed that participants had implemented one of the main teaching points of the seminar, by acknowledging the existence of stress and recognising that it is not an indication of weakness or incompetence.

Informal evaluation can be claimed through the fact that the course, whilst evolving is still being requested. However the interpretation of the meaning of this is more difficult. It may be that the course is helpful, but equally it could be that the course is

only having a short-term effect. Extrapolating from Argyris (1990), it could be argued that the learning is limited and that people are looking for a 'top-up' of the short-term effects rather than taking on the requirement for change. It is commonly recognised that stress management courses often make a difference in the short term, but typically delegates will return to old habits which may hinder successful management of stressful situations over time. This is in part due to the difficulties with taking on new behaviours (Bennett-Goleman, 2001) and in part due to pressure typically pushing the individual to return to old habits (Clarkson and Gilbert, 1991).

It has been argued that presentation based interventions are helpful to raise awareness, but not for ensuring long-term change. (Zarnik and Bernstein, 1982). A different approach may therefore be required, which relies on auditing the present situation and evaluating change over time. In order to support such work the educational psychologist needs to move into a consultancy role and away from the role of INSET delivery. For this reason much of the work being undertaken now tries to assume a consultancy role, which may include training as part of an intervention programme.

There has been an attempt to build some protective aspects into the course, by making the pertinent issues overt. For example the cycle of unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence is discussed (Clarkson and Gilbert, 1991). Also the significance of team strength is recognised, together with the need to maintain and develop it, within an understanding that teams tend to return temporarily towards starting points, especially when there has been an absence such as a holiday or weekend (Peck, 1998). Clearly rigorous long-term evaluation is still required.

Success of the seminars

Some of the factors, which may have contributed to the reported success of the programme, are listed below:

- the training has a simple format involving essential information imparted with the aid of overhead transparencies, plus a group relaxation session, which includes guided imagery. This sequence is designed to assist participants in discovering and evolving their own problem solving strategies;
- the training involves minimal active effort from participants. They do not need to make notes as they are provided with all the information in a course booklet at the conclusion of the course. The presenters repeat important points during the course to reduce load on memory;
- the presenters have effectively condensed the usual concepts imparted in stress management training into a tangible and digestible format which is minimally time consuming for participants to implement after the training is completed;
- the presenters have spent a considerable amount of time observing other presenters, studying material on presentation skills, discussing presentation style and incorporating elements from these models;
- the peer supervision between the presenters has allowed the build up of a relationship. An interplay is established which is evident during the seminars. This

invites the assumption that a type of role modelling takes place, illustrating the peer support, which can be established in a team. Peer supervision also allows for discussion of, and hopefully development of, presentation skills and the refining of seminar content;

- Both presenters have a long-standing interest in stress management extending, for example, to both of them undertaking hypnosis training several years ago. This commitment may be transmitted to participants and give some additional validity to the presentation;
- Both presenters' previous experience includes extensive work in the private sector, and although this is not a pre-requisite, it has been useful to draw on a wide range of experience from both public and private sectors;
- Interviews carried out with 36 educational psychologists indicated that they believe in stress management strategies which promote personal development and introspection (Devereau, 1997). The presentations use relaxation with guided imagery, which is similar to that approach.

Occupational stress management

Demand for stress management training at the occupational level has increased following the publication of Essex County Council's policy. This code of practice requires each employee and manager to take preventative action firstly to audit and then respond to occupational stress. The LEA has drawn up its Health and Safety at Work Code of Practice, Managing Occupational Stress (April 1998).

The development of this work has followed a similar pattern to that developed for personal stress management. In the first instance, it was thought that the effects of stress within an organisation would be minimised with good management techniques. It was argued that with good systems in place stress would be minimised due to the effectiveness of the organisation (for example, see Spence, 2002). Reference was made to sources such as Black (1993), Oakland (1993), Harvey-Jones (1994) and Drucker (1995), along with the literature orientated towards teachers, such as Travers and Cooper (1996) and Rogers (1996). A first course on occupational stress management was developed. This emphasised the need for clear management, good communication systems, positive personnel management, including induction systems, appraisal and training opportunities, better time management, detailed change procedures and a health-inducing physical environment. This list correlates well with the list devised by Briner (2002) and reported at the 2002 Annual Conference for the Occupational Psychology Division of the BPS (Spence, 2002). The details of teacher stressors were shared as well as the notion that managers are facilitators rather than solvers in the sense that managers themselves may not be in the best position to resolve some aspects of staff stress. Travers and Cooper (1996) showed that teachers usually find colleagues of greater help. It follows therefore that managers need to set up systems to enable colleague support rather than just running for example an open door policy.

The first few of these seminars received high levels of positive feedback similar to those previously experienced. However, the tenor of the audience was more critical.

The view formed was that whilst the seminars did focus on important aspects of stress management and outlined how to complete a stress risk assessment, they were not based on a satisfactory theoretical background. Rather they purported good management systems, which managers had already come across and indeed had to varying degrees already implemented. Spence (2002) suggests that much of stress management at the occupational level may well be little more than ensuring good management practices are established. However, these often do not remain active when a whole organisation is struggling to achieve. Presently there is debate around what is effective stress management at the organisational level. One group claims that strong encouragement through a management standards approach would suffice, whilst the other camp maintain that such an approach would fall on deaf ears. It is generally agreed that the highlighted standards for management are already well known. Therefore it is a reasonable conclusion that there must be other reasons why they are not manifestly effective in the management of stress.

For the continuation of this work, it seemed important that there was a consistency of approach between the personal stress management package and the organisational one. This required a similar theoretical perspective and a clarification of exactly what it was that the organisational stress management course was trying to achieve. It was thought that if future seminars were able to point directly towards some of the psychological processes active in an organisation, then the seminar could be illuminating and helpful. However, it was important to take account of the point made by Spence (2002); that many stress audit approaches relying solely on anonymous questionnaires often fell into the trap of being too general.

Cooper and Cartwright (1997) suggested that there are three levels of stress management intervention as outlined below:

i) Primary

This referred to the removal or reduction of stress through organisational change. This was and is considered to be particularly resource heavy, time consuming and difficult to achieve. Cooper and Cartwright (1997) considered that it cannot be achieved without recourse to co-operative change at government and LEA levels as well as at school level. This perception is corroborated by the feedback from courses launching the Essex Learning Services Stress Code of Practice (1994) as well as Cockburn's (1996) finding that 92 % of teachers felt that others such as the government should take responsibility for stress reduction for teachers. Interestingly they did also cite senior managers and school governors as having significant responsibility. This area is usually considered from the basis of how the job can be better organised. For example The Mental Health Foundation (2001) suggested that the following areas should be addressed:

- work content and scheduling;
- physical working conditions;
- terms of employment and expectations of different employees;
- working relationships;
- systems for communications and reporting.

The Health and Safety Executive (2001) have defined seven areas to address when carrying out a stress audit. The areas of potential concern are defined as:

- culture;
- demands;
- control;
- relationships;
- change;
- role;
- support and training.

All these areas, to a significant extent, can be affected by management intervention.

ii) Secondary

This level referred to that of developing self-awareness and highlighting personal strategies, such as relaxation, time management, cognitive strategies, social support and bio-feedback to reduce stress. It was considered that this level had been explored in work at the personal level and should not therefore form a central theme within the organisational stress management seminar. However, the use of relaxation to aid focussing was considered important. An assumption made was that in many organisations the obvious difficulties had been resolved. It was therefore important to find new ways of perceiving difficulties if new solutions were to be found. It seemed important to promote the concept of working 'smarter' rather than 'harder'.

iii) Tertiary

This related to individual approaches at the level of confidential counselling. Clearly this was beyond the remit of the course being designed here.

During the development of the course it was interesting to note the published findings of both Grimshaw (1999) and The Mental Health Foundation (2001) that there was little evidence available of successful interventions at the organisational or primary level. However it was shown that the way certain organisations were developed might protect their employees from many of the effects of stress. Another consideration was that just informing school managers and other staff of what a good organisation looked like would not necessarily help in the quest for routes to improvement.

The organisational stress management course

The major elements required of the course were:

- recognition of good practice;
- development of an interesting and useful stress audit mechanism;
- a sound theoretical basis;
- the ability to help point establishments in a direction for change;
- the ability to engage the audience;
- enjoyment and comprehensibility.

Arroba and James (1987) reinforced the theoretical perspective taken within the personal stress management course. They saw stress as primarily an issue related to perception. This is not to belittle the reality of the forces leading to staff stress, but rather to define it in terms of the personal feeling of being overwhelmed and unable to stay in control of the pressures. This can relate to an organisation at the level of day to day work if staff are feeling overwhelmed by what needs to be achieved.

In order to develop the course, five main elements were used:

- **Stress audit**

The central focus of a stress audit at the organisational level should consider perceptions of:

- (i) the culture of the organisation;
- (ii) the ability of the organisation to give employees recognition;
- (iii) the balance of variety and stimulation with structure and stability within job roles; and
- (iv) the perceptions of the effects of manager behaviour.

Arroba and James (1987) produced questionnaires, which considered the various aspects outlined above. These questionnaires were re-developed to fit the Local Education Authority and school situation. A further questionnaire was developed, which considered directly cultural aspects of the organisation. This was based on work from the 1970s and 1980s, involving the identification of type A and type B behaviours.

A simple definition of these terms would describe Type A behaviours as externally driven and Type B as focused on internal drives. The type A perspective can be typified by going all out, requiring frequent praise and tending to be very competitive. On the other hand type B perspectives are typified by taking a longer-term view, being more reflective and valuing balance in their lives between work and other activities such as family and leisure. Recent work has shown that organisations that promote a Type B culture are achieving well over time, in the present competitively orientated work place (Bridge and Walsh, 1994).

It was therefore a belief of the presenters that organisations, which encouraged a type B way of working, were more likely to self-protect from some of the effects of stress. The evidence to back this assumption is still slim. However there is significant correlational evidence at the personal level that people who operate in a type A manner are more likely to suffer the effects of stress, though not necessarily related physical health difficulties (see Goleman, 1996; Asbell and Wynn, 1992). Further it has been shown that the surrounding culture will affect an individual's modus operandi. Bridge and Walsh (1994) showed that, by promoting a work environment, which valued reflection, communication, openness and opportunity, they were able to support a working environment that, when reviewed by external auditors, was perceived as happy, innovative and relatively stress free.

It is recognised that people are the most important asset to an organisation (Harvey-Jones, 1994). It is therefore, a reasonable assumption that the behaviour types encouraged within a given culture will affect the levels of stress. In fact PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2001) have noted that schools can address stress best by promoting a culture that encourages 'smarter' rather than 'harder' approaches to work.

- **The awkwardness of change**

There is a need for a full recognition of the psychological processes which individuals and organisations undergo during change. Clarkson and Gilbert (1991) showed the importance of the psychological cycle of change from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence, via two awkward stages of conscious behaviour; first incompetent and then competent. The issue here is that, due to the awkwardness of the conscious realisation of the ineffectiveness of one's modus operandi and of new behaviours (Bennett-Goleman, 2001), the personal and organisational drives throw people and organisations back towards unconscious incompetence, since this is at least felt to be safe.

There is often nostalgic talk about how good things were in the past, identification of 'fault' in the outside world, lethargy in effecting the change process and confusion and uncertainty. At the same time there may be limited evaluation of relevant data and no clear view of the actions required to make a difference (Argyris, 1990).

With a full recognition of the psychological processes, which are prominent during change, it is possible for both the individual and the organisation to recognise how it is being influenced by required changes and how this is causing stress. Through this recognition, it becomes possible to identify the difficulties being faced and to set up effective support strategies to help staff through the process. Thus the difficulties caused by the stress of change can be minimised.

- **Teamwork**

In order to manage stress at the psychological level, there is a need for all organisations to understand the importance of teamwork and how teams can develop successful positive working practices, which enable both professional and social support. The general issues relating to team development are detailed in Claridge (2001). However, for the reader's convenience, a short explanation, relating directly to this paper, follows. Drucker (1994) purported that, due to the complexities of modern working practices, the team was the new working unit. Hayes and Orrell (1987, pages 84, 85, 408) refer to Yerkes, Dodson and Law's findings that the greater the difficulty or complexity of task(s) the greater the likelihood of serious stress reactions. It follows therefore that team functioning to enable the organisation to manage the complexities of the work place is going to be of extreme importance. Burke and Greenglass (1993) reported that social support was a moderator of burnout by reducing the effects of workplace stress and leading to better physical and emotional well being. Griffith et al. (1999) showed that low social support is related to high job stress. Many people will use disengagement and suppression as coping strategies. These in fact will tend to lead to higher levels of stress due to the resultant

isolation. It follows therefore that healthy open team working will help both to protect staff from the effects of stress and to ensure that suitable support is available if stress becomes a significant issue.

There are many models of teamwork, which could have been used. In this situation the important aspects were about healthy and effective relationships. The model developed by Peck (1998) was the model used, since it fitted well with the theoretical background to stress as a reaction to perceived threats. Peck (1998), similarly to Argyris (1990), considers that teams are only really effective when the individuals within a team are able to reflect on their views, values and whole life experiences and bring these to bear within the team in an environment of openness and mutual respect.

- **Finding new solutions: relaxation and focussing**

The use of relaxation and focussing was considered important in developing the opportunity for change. Fontana (1999) and others in the Transpersonal Psychology Section of the British Psychological Society have written extensively about the positive use of intuition (defined below) in complex organisations. Bridge and Walsh (1994) encouraged intuitive thinking to enable successful development of the organisation through times of change and uncertainty. The organisation established value around the idea of articulating thoughts, which were not fully formed; but rather remained at the level of an ill formed emerging idea or an intuition, which could not necessarily be rationalised. Also each individual was encouraged to respect the use of reflective time to help formulate original ideas and new resolutions. The organisation was reviewed by external consultants (OPUS), who reported that:

- communication was unusually good;
- staff felt valued;
- management and employees were in close contact;
- employees were able to affect management decisions in a positive manner;
- all staff were empowered to carry out their jobs and take suitable initiatives.

The results of the review concluded that there was relatively little stress in the organisation and staff had positive affect. Members of the organisation talked openly and stress was managed positively. This was considered to be as a result of good management systems, open and effective communication both internally and externally and the valuing of different contributions, which might lead to alternative patterns of solution to difficulties.

It was also the case that when undertaking stress management work with schools at the organisational level, it was clear that they had frequently worked hard to organise professional posts along lines that would reduce stress. Many schools had come to a full stop and required a new way of looking at their situation if they were to be able to move on and reduce stress further.

It was considered that the perspective developed by use of the questionnaires reported above would open up new ways of looking at stress. However it was also important to try to open up new and different ways of developing and establishing action plans.

Relaxation had been particularly effective in the personal stress management seminars and indeed is supported in the literature (e.g. Winzelberg and Luskin, 1999). The presenters therefore introduced an optional session within the seminar, whereby participants could experience a relaxation and focussing half-hour. This session was directed at aiding participants to take a new and different view of their organisation and, from that perspective, start to action plan. It was hypothesised that having experienced this approach, participants would start from a different position when action planning. The underlying assumption was that organisations in general had in fact addressed their stressors from the obvious perspectives. It is only by finding a new and different angle that the organisation will be enabled to move forward.

This approach is not well researched. However, it fitted with the transpersonal perspective of the presenters and has been alluded to by, for example, Fontana (1999) and Bridge and Walsh (1994). To date the experience has been found helpful, though some participants have found it difficult to comprehend. Recently this approach has been endorsed by the working party within Essex LEA looking at promoting healthy schools as organisations.

▪ **Manager dilemmas**

In taking an approach, which emphasised the perceptual aspects of stress, it was considered most important that the reality of the experience was recognised. Therefore a list of manager dilemmas was produced which is used to set the scene. These were developed from the feedback received formally and informally during seminar sessions and from Kelly's (1997) finding. This list has been used now in some fifty seminars and has always met with face validity. It is used to ensure that the participants are respected for the very real experiences of stress being imposed. However there is a further aim relating to the requirement for all staff to understand the interrelation between working in the present and planning for the future.

Present developments

To date the seminars have been well received, as shown by evaluations carried out immediately after the sessions. However, there has been no real long-term evaluation and this must be an aim for the future.

It is always important to keep developing the work, since the only constancy in education is that of change. There has been a significant shift in responsibilities starting with the Education Reform Act (1988). The impact of new education legislation is imminent with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001), the SEN Code of Practice (2001) and changes to the Ofsted framework (2001). There is talk now of increasing delegation to 90% or more and the concept of schools as self-directed organisations is well established. Future directions for this work need to focus now on school self-review and what that might entail in relation to stress and stress management. It is important that this work is considered within an understanding of the number of initiatives hitting schools and the significant pressure

they are under. Nevertheless or maybe because of this situation, taking stress and stress management seriously is most important. It seems therefore that a number of levels of intervention is required.

Levels of intervention:

(i) Annual stress audit

At its most simple it is a requirement that schools in Essex undertake an annual stress audit. It may be argued that such an audit should rely on data around staff illness and absence. There are three immediate problems with such an approach:

- Firstly, it is often the case that stress related illness is reported under a different heading. Although Pithers and Fogarty (1995) have shown that suffering from stress is not necessarily related to weak or ineffectual teaching, many staff still feel there is a stigma attached to stress and therefore do not admit it to their line manager (Travers and Cooper, 1996).
- Secondly such an audit would only collect data related to the results of stress and therefore would not necessarily enable preventative action.
- Thirdly, as Spence (2002) points out, most stress audit information is too general and too inaccurate to pinpoint the difficulties.

Furthermore Rumsby et al. (2002) amongst others have pointed to the importance of embedding stress management in a focus on enhancing staff wellbeing in schools. Vandenberghe and Huberman (1998) have reviewed the research on preventing teacher burnout, which suggests a focus on wellbeing is required. Mohammed and Moore (2002) have shown that in Essex, whilst stress is a serious issue, the majority of staff are most interested in measures to enhance wellbeing. It is also noted that without clear and precise information, it is not possible to form suitable preventative or reactive actions both because:

1. without the information it is difficult to design suitable interventions;
2. the information is required in order to evaluate the affect of interventions. (Nytro et. al., 2000);

(ii) Use of questionnaires

It is therefore suggested that a more appropriate approach is based on using suitable questionnaires. Some possible questionnaires have been outlined above and will be found in the overhead pack on occupational stress management (Claridge and Murphy, 1997b). However, in the first instance, some schools have found it more helpful to ask open-ended questions, such as 'what are the five most stressful aspects of the work?' rating each on a scale of one to four. However, again this may be too open. Spence (2002) quoting Dr. Briner says that general questions are very unlikely to get to the sources of stress; especially if the sources of stress are in the hands of management. The results may be difficult to interpret and staff may not always consider all the aspects which might be relevant.

Nonetheless, in some circumstances this may not be a bad starting point, if for instance the culture of a particular organisation is known to be open. The concern that remains however, is how a decision can be made as to the openness of a culture prior to assessment through audit. For this reason, the present recommendation is for use of the questionnaires outlined within Claridge (2002).

(iii) Using audit information

This level of intervention might form the point of entry into a consideration of organisational stress. More usually, though, it will result from an open survey, which might have used the questionnaires presented in the seminars on organisational stress management as a starting point.

It is argued that the data from the questionnaires should be used as a starting point from which to build the story of what may be happening in a given organisation. This starting position ensures suitable anonymity in the first instance, which is of the utmost importance when trying to understand the effects of stress within an organisation. The data collected should not be used as data with a particular value: rather its use is in initiating a discussion from a position of relative safety but with a degree of clarity already established. The questionnaires should be used to identify risk areas and then form the basis of the more in depth discussion. By ensuring that the questionnaire data is used as a catalyst for further in depth discussion many of the reservations outlined by Spence (2002) can be addressed.

This level of intervention would still be within the autonomy of the school. However some schools might prefer to use an outside consultant to orchestrate the conversation or even to administer the questionnaires. Outside consultants can help the process due to being separate from the organisation and therefore less likely to over-interpret or reach inappropriately biased rationalisations. It may also be easier for participants to be honest with outsiders who are ostensibly in an objective position and one of complete confidentiality. Thus the detail of significant internal organisational issues may be better addressed.

(iv) Level three intervention

In some cases there may be the need for a more in depth analysis. This might involve a day or two days' work from an external consultant, who would interview representative staff and share the results with members of the organisation. Then he or she would work with the school to form an action plan with suitable evaluation criteria. This level of intervention would usually require a full session with all relevant staff to ensure that the findings were made public and all participants were able to work together to find solutions and develop an action plan.

Seminars

Seminars might form part of this hierarchy of responses at a number of levels. Firstly they could be used to inform the school of the rationale behind the survey intervention. Secondly they could be used to find ways forward. Particular emphasis would be required on relaxation and focussing as well as analysis of the

questionnaires and conducting of discussion sessions such that they moved things forward rather than caused friction. Educational psychologists would be in a particularly good position to undertake such work due to their training in conducting difficult meetings and orchestrating methods of getting full participation through the use of for example nominal group techniques and how-how diagrams.

A wellbeing focus

Most recently Essex LEA has commissioned a survey of absenteeism (Mohammed and Moore, 2002). A working party, which has involved occupational health, LEA officers, headteacher representatives and representation from the LEA healthy schools initiative, has been working to develop a co-ordinated response to stress management at the organisational level in schools. As a result, it has been agreed that an approach, which focuses on wellbeing is most appropriate. To this end the present author has developed a package based on the work that has already been carried out at the organisational level (Claridge, 2002). The present work is focussed on support for schools to carry out an audit and subsequently develop an action plan to meet the need to reduce stress, whilst concentrating on enhancing wellbeing in the school as a whole.

Another premise of the present work is that of supporting autonomy. The materials have been developed to support independent self-review and action planning by schools. Some schools may want help at a number of levels, which might include introduction to the materials, support to use them or a full consultancy package.

The present work has moved away from a seminar training approach to stress management, since such work may be vulnerable to having only a short-term effect (see Zairnik and Bernstein, 1982). In order to aim for sustained improvements a longer term view is required. It is important that interventions aim to challenge preconceived ideas and particularly motivate the organisation to find ways of:

- discussing and challenging staff views and feelings;
- developing an understanding of the value set(s) underlying the views and feeling;
- setting actions to make improvements;
- evaluating outcomes at a level, which tests out the veracity of preconceived ideas.

In short, stress management within a framework to encourage wellbeing needs to follow a process which encourages 'double-loop' learning as outlined by Argyris and Schon (1996).

The materials include a set of questions to support reflection on the information available in the school, which might relate to an analysis of stress levels. This is followed by two entry level questionnaires, which help focus the school on the areas of potential concern identified in the research. There is then a number of more focussed detailed questionnaires, which are to be used sparingly to aid the organisation in researching particular areas. These may be of greater concern in a particular school. Also available are more in depth general questionnaires, which may

be helpful for some schools where there are a number of concerns about stress levels, or indeed where the information available to the school is very limited. Finally a number of action planning and review formats are included. Notes for usage are included as are routes to contact consultancy support if required.

It is recognised that all schools will be at different points and indeed will have different areas of difficulty to explore. The pack will form the basis of a research project with 12 schools over the following 2 terms. The pilot will take the form of a seminar to present the materials. Schools will be asked to carry out an audit and there will be two follow-up visits to support information analysis, action planning and evaluation. The project will culminate with a further seminar, to which other schools will be invited in the spirit of encouraging networking as recommended by Rumsby et al. (2002).

Although this work is still to be completed, a pre-pilot has been embarked upon with one school. There has been a presentation to staff and the pack has been well received. The headteacher has formed a working party of representative staff. He is using the entry-level questionnaires to survey the school. The results of the survey will be used to focus on more in depth questionnaires as deemed appropriate. A full evaluation remains to be undertaken.

Summary and conclusions

This paper has concentrated on the stress management training provided by the author and a colleague over approximately seven years, as well as outlining present on-going work. Evaluation indicates that one of the primary design aims, to construct seminar content and process, which would be valued highly by participants, has been achieved.

It is acknowledged that an important aim of any stress management programme must be to impart stress management techniques, which are effective over an extended period of time and this aspect of the seminars needs further examination.

Deliberations are taking place about the future role and training of educational psychologists at British Psychological Society and DfES levels. It is also the case that LEA work is increasingly moving towards a marketplace focus, whereby schools have the budgets and educational psychologists (and others) bid for work to support schools in achieving their objectives. At the time of these deliberations it is hopefully of interest that educational psychologists are in a position to use their professional experience, not only within the LEA and throughout the County Council, but also within external agencies in the public and private sectors.

Surveys show that occupational stress is on the increase (Cooper, 1998 and 1997: HSC, 1999, p11). It is clear that teachers' stress is a matter of grave concern within the teaching profession (Travers and Cooper 1996). It is also clear that employers' responsibilities in relation to occupational stress management fall within the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974).

LEAs, naturally, are required to give high priority to their statutory duties under educational legislation. However occupational stress management also has statutory

status under health and safety legislation. Educational psychologists have an opportunity to develop services in this important statutory area. If educational psychology is to take a leading role in this work the following points are worthy of consideration:

- an approach, which highlights one off seminars may be helpful to raise awareness, but is likely to have limited success at changing behaviour over time;
- consultative approaches need to be developed for this work to have long-term success. Psychologists are in a good position to take this forward;
- a wellbeing approach, which emphasises organisational responsibilities and systems will tend to have more positive effects over time.

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Assignment IV:

The Loneliness of Leadership: Reflection on my Leadership Skills and Methods for Further Improvement.

The Loneliness of Leadership: reflection on leadership skills and methods for further improvement.

Contents.

Introduction	Page	119
Leadership: a working definition	Page	119
Some Leadership Limitations	Page	119
Critique of Belbin Team Type Analyses	Page	120
Examples from working life	Page	120
The use of 360-degree feedback approaches	Page	121
360-degree Feedback Explained	Page	121
Critique of 360-degree feedback	Page	122
Analysis of the information from 360-degree feedback	Page	123
The Difference Between Management and Leadership	Page	125
The Underlying Systemic Position	Page	126
The Focus of the Paper	Page	127
Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Successful People	Page	128-138
Being Proactive	Page	128
Begin With the End Game in Mind	Page	130
Put First Things First	Page	134
Think Win-Win	Page	135
Seek First to Understand and then to be Understood	Page	135
Synergy	Page	136
Sharpen the Saw	Page	137
Conclusions	Page	138
The Doctoral Course and It's Effects	Page	138
References	Page	140-142

Introduction

This assignment will consider the issues appertaining to good leadership from a personal perspective. It is the opinion of the author that he has been able to manage situations and systems well when not the person holding the final responsibility. However when put in overall charge, especially with nobody to refer to something seems to happen to the author, which hampers the process of gaining successful access to the full range of his available skills and abilities.

Leadership: a working definition

It is important to define leadership to further this assignment. The concept of leadership will be discussed throughout this assignment, which will lead to greater understanding of the issues surrounding leadership and definitions thereof. It suffices here to make the distinction between leadership and management. Farkas et. al. (1995) suggest that leadership includes envisioning, strategic developments and empowering individuals within the organisation. Management on the other hand refers to the mechanisms of control and evaluation of achievement. Leadership therefore is essentially a human process, whereas management is essentially about data handling.

Some leadership limitations

When in overall command, it seems to become much more difficult for the author to access skills to their full potential and consequently the subsequent achievements are not so great. Additionally, on occasions when the goal is achieved it tends to be with a cost to social relationships. The process is one of becoming diffident and uncertain as well as emotionally and behaviourally less stable. These behaviour patterns then lead to poorer leadership, resulting in less satisfaction in relation to both process and outcome. The results of a 360-degree appraisal process carried out in 1997 showed that direct reports considered the author was not very good at managing stress. Although this was an unexpected finding, it does correlate with the perception that on occasions the achieving goals either is not achieved or involves a process of anxiety, which can affect personal relationships.

Another significant issue for the author is that of sustaining interest and involvement over time. Handy (1995) notes that in order to maintain sustained involvement when in a leadership position, it is important to have a clear understanding of one's personal strengths and areas of lesser ability. Such knowledge enables the leader to establish the required skill set and to be able to gain personal insight and reflection on his or her practice. Belbin (1991) offered an approach to aid analysis of the individual's natural strengths within a team context. This approach can be most useful in the light of modern working practices, in which team based approaches are central (Drucker, 1995). An assessment of team skills carried out in 1997 established that the author strongly identified with the 'plant' role, 'resource investigator' and the role of 'team player'. However, he was weak in the areas of 'finisher'. This profile would suggest that he is naturally most happy when playing with new ideas within a team and exploring the environment for supporting opportunities. Following things through to the end or in fact ensuring the practicability of new ideas may be areas, which require further work.

Critique of Belbin team type analyses

Whilst such analyses can be helpful, it is important to critique the Belbin (1981, 1996) approach, since the analysis is very subjective. Handy & Aitkin (1990) point out that education is notoriously full of people who self assess as 'plants'. This, they say, leads to the profile of the educational world being typified by too many ideas with little follow through. However, it is entirely possible that since the assessment of characteristics is based on a self-assessment, that the results are effected by a degree of subjective wish fulfilment. It may be that people do not operate as they report in team type analyses.

Examples from working life

In deciding whether the above potential limitation has any credence in this case, it is useful to move to some real examples from the author's working life.

The first example relates to involvement with the inclusion agenda in Essex. In 1998, the author organised the first conference in Essex relating to inclusion. The conference was a large affair, which brought together all the various peripatetic professionals and administrative staff within the LEA. The day was spent listening to outside speakers of some national renown (e.g. Tony Dessent, the director of education in Luton and author of *Making the Ordinary School Special*) and participating in group work. The day was well received according to the feedback and there was a resulting outline action plan. A further conference was arranged to push the debate forward, to which Richard Reiser, a specialist teacher of some renown in the field of inclusion, who works the Council for Inclusion was asked as the main speaker. Again, the author took responsibility for this event. It was very successful and consequently inclusion became firmly embedded as part of the LEA's top agendas. These days were the catalyst for the Essex approach to inclusion, which has been mentioned within national publications (Kelly & Gray, 2000; DFEE, 1997). Despite this, in a recent meeting with the inclusion officer, whose post actually resulted from these conferences, there was no knowledge of the history of the development of inclusion in the County and specifically no recognition of my involvement in the process.

The above example could be interpreted as of being of little relevance to the issue under discussion here. Nevertheless, it may have relevance, because somehow, from being the lynchpin in the drive towards the inclusion agenda becoming a reality in Essex, the author, who has remained in post in Essex, has become dislodged from direct involvement in keeping the inclusion agenda moving. Although there may be many reasons for the above occurrences, the example adds weight to the idea that the author was able to instigate an initiative of national importance at the level of influencing the direction of the LEA, but not to maintain the necessary level of interest or involvement over time.

It should be acknowledged that the government interest in inclusion has increased since those early days and therefore the County as a whole has had to respond to the inclusion agenda. Notwithstanding this fact, there is some evidence of there being an

issue around leadership and sustaining involvement, which is worthy of further exploration.

The second example is more recent. With a colleague, the author was responsible for a significant number of developments relating to stress and stress management at both the organisational and the individual level. Murphy and Claridge (2002) outline the details of this work and subsequent work is discussed in Claridge (2003). Here it will suffice to say that the work moved beyond the educational psychology service into schools, the County council and to the level of national conferences and advice to three other LEAs. It was always acknowledged that the author was the main instigator of the work through his enthusiasm and leadership. Additionally, his drive kept the work going and evolving. However, since his colleague moved to another authority this work seems to have dried up and no new initiatives have developed.

This cannot be solely laid at the door of the author's leadership skills. There could be a number of reasons for a change in interest in the work on stress management. However, teachers are still professing to be stressed and it has recently become clear that there is a statutory responsibility for organisational stress management under health and safety legislation (HSE, 1974, 2001; HSC, 1999). It seems therefore reasonable to conclude that there is still a market for stress management, yet the service is no longer required from the author. This example therefore adds weight to the notion that at some level the author's leadership abilities are of relevance here.

The use of 360-degree feedback approaches

In a search for further relevant data to decide whether this is a real issue, it is helpful to turn to appraisal mechanisms such as 360-degree feedback data. The author has completed 360-degree appraisal on three occasions, which helps to give data and examine change and development over time. The first was completed in 1997. This was a full management analysis, which was not specifically directed at educational psychologists, but rather at gaining perspectives on all management competencies. This was very detailed, including some 36 competencies, each of which had four questions. In addition, for the sake of trying to make the feedback specific to the particular management role a number of specific comparative groups were available. The author's comparative group was that of managers working in service industries.

The latter two 360-degree feedback investigations have been completed as part of the author's doctoral training, the first in 2000 and the second in 2003. These were identical investigations developed especially for educational psychologists in managerial positions. They were much shorter, involving only 45 questions as opposed to 144 resulting from research carried out specifically in relation to educational psychologists and their work (Sharp et. al., 2000). However there are a number of limitations to the 360-degree results. These are set out below.

360-degree feedback explained

360-degree feedback is a method of analysis of a person's strengths and weaknesses collected from a number of colleagues, which include the line manager, the subject him or herself and a minimum of four colleagues and / or staff who are line managed by the subject of appraisal. The system allows the appraisee to consider a number of

people's responses to predetermined questions based on the required core qualities of the employee. It has become widely used in industry and more recently in the public sector and has been hailed as offering rich data, which can enable the appraisee to reflect on his or her practice and set targets for improvement. The method of appraisal allows the appraisee to compare his or her own perceptions of their working practice with that of not only the line manager but colleagues from the stock of peers and from those who are line managed by the appraisee. Information is gained from a wide basis including those directly effected by the appraisee, who choose people from his or her own choice on the basis of these opinions carrying more weight for the appraisee.

Recently 360-degree feedback has been developed for educational psychologists as a group. The information gained is analysed confidentially and then arranged in quartiles, which cover the level of skill and the perceived level of significance for the specific job of the appraisee. This enables the appraisee to consider the results in terms not only what he or she could be better at, but also in relation to the importance of a particular item as perceived by all the appraisers. Thus, some areas of relative weakness can be seen as important and come into the 'fix it' quartile and some can be seen as of less importance. Equally some areas of strength can be seen as worthy of 'celebration', whilst others may be of relatively little consequence. The analysis of the data gives a percentage rating in which scores below 50 percent fall into the 'fix it' area and scores above 50 percent are considered 'worthy of celebration'.

Critique of 360-degree feedback

Firstly in this particular case, the 360-degree investigations cannot be compared directly both because of different questions (as in the first in relation to the others) and because some different colleagues were used (as a matter of necessity due to staff turnover in all three cases). Nonetheless, it is possible to use the results to gain some insights into perceptions of the leadership and working practices of the client, in this case the author.

There are also potential limitations to the structure. Firstly, it is actually an assumption that honesty of answers will prevail because of confidentiality. The choice of appraisers is left to the appraisee. This idea was adhered to originally in order to cover the concern that appraisee's might take little notice of the information if potentially coming from colleagues who might not be respected. If a random sample of colleagues is asked then the results can be interpreted through a number of filters of denial, which might include identifying specific unsympathetic characteristics of the particular appraiser or the limits of the appraisers experience of the appraisee. This concern was minimised by developing the process to include the line manager and appraisee, but otherwise only people with certain relationships who were the choice of the appraisee.

Whilst the attempt to reduce the possibility of rationalising the findings is laudable, there is a further exacerbating factor. When left to choose one's own appraisers there is a greater likelihood that those chosen will be valued by the appraisee. However the very fact that a particular colleague's view is considered to be of value may in itself bias the findings. Having explored the literature, it seems that this concept has not yet been researched.

The present author tried to establish some possible baselines in this area by asking for the opinion of matched colleagues of which one group was considered to have similar core constructs and the other not. Unfortunately, the data was not possible to analyse along such lines due to a misunderstanding of the collection rationale. Nonetheless, the issue that requires further exploration is that if a particular colleague is valued then there will be a reason that the particular appraiser has been chosen.

Attribution theory suggests that ordinarily people value and respect others that share their core values (Berkowitz, 1978). It is reasonable, therefore to conjecture that the appraisee's choice of appraiser may be influenced by the degree to which it seems that they share core value sets. If the above assumption is found to be correct then it is likely that working methods and values will be similar, which, in turn, will lead to the probability that there will be a positive correlation in the completion of the appraisal questionnaires. Whilst the finding may be felt to have value by the appraisee because the appraisers have been self selected, it is reasonably likely that the results are biased by the choice of appraisers being filtered through agreement at the level of core constructs. This may mean that 360-degree information may veer toward overly positive affirmations of the appraisee, which may not help him or her to identify the important aspects of working practice, which may need reflection and change.

Within this paper, whilst the limitation voiced above are acknowledged, the core data used does come from 360-degree appraisal. It is assumed that as long as the 'health warning' remains in focus, there is important data available through this process. Also there are significant positives about such an appraisal system.

Firstly, the fact that the subject is gaining feedback not only from their line manager, but also from colleagues who work with the individual directly and who report to that individual means that there is the potential for real information on the impact of work from the recipients' point of view. Systems of appraisal that rely on a top down model often rely on perceptions more than real experience of the effects of a person's practice and therefore may be less reliable.

It is also completed by enough people that there is a degree of confidentiality. This of course protects the individual from identification and therefore it can be inferred that there should be higher levels of honesty in the feedback.

A further benefit is that the appraisee is able to compare his or her answers to specific questions to others', thus testing the appraisee's perceptions directly against the experiences and perceptions of colleagues covering the whole gamut of working life.

Analysis of the information from 360-degree feedback

In considering the 360-degree feedback data, some useful hypotheses can be drawn. Firstly, it is interesting to note that whilst overall the appraisee tended to rate himself lower than appraisers, there were some significant exceptions.

In the 2000 feedback, colleagues considered the appraisee to be particularly skilled in relation to professional knowledge and practice, whilst he scored himself as having moderate skills in this area. This difference is perhaps understandable since ordinarily people tend to rate themselves lower than colleagues in 360-degree exercises and this

is particularly true in the so called caring professions (Furnham & Stringfield, 1998). In addition, this feedback was completed soon after the beginning of the doctoral course, which may have been a time when the author was particularly anxious about his professional skills. The final feedback (2003) shows this gap to have lessened and the overall scores to have increased slightly, which suggests that confidence in this area might have increased. Further answers to questions asking about the appraisee's ability to empower and develop team members have also increased in their rating. It may be possible then to conclude that, through increased confidence in his professional skills, the author has become better able to pass this confidence on to others and thus help build the available professional expertise of the team. This can be no more than a tentative conclusion at this stage.

Of more surprise to the author was the apparent belief in his work organisation and management (reported in the 2000 and 2003 feedback), where again colleagues tended to rate him highly. Scores showed a significant improvement since the full management 360-degree feedback carried out in 1997. This earlier report found the key development needs to be in the areas of management control, objective setting, execution and concern for excellence. In the more recent 360-degree information, focussed directly on the work of educational psychology these areas were seen as strengths by appraisers, with every score in the quartile to be celebrated. These gains since 1997 seem to have been maintained since this remained an area for celebration in the most recent feedback (2003).

However, the area of concern for this paper relates to that of interpersonal and communication skills. In 1997, the key strengths were problem analysis, innovation, impact, organisational awareness, strategic perspective, cross-functional awareness, decisiveness, initiative, and oral communication skills. Whilst many of these refer to a political understanding of the organisation there are some, which relate directly to interpersonal skills. In 2000, the appraisee rated his key strengths as being those of:

1. checking out understanding;
2. developing effective working relationships;
3. listening and responding appropriately;
4. helping people to identify and make links between factors contributing to problem situations;
5. working with people to identify possible solutions.

Yet colleagues saw point five and point one as within the five statements, on which the author was given the lowest scores. It is important to keep this in context in that the 'fix it' index was respectively at 40.63 % and 43.75 %, showing that the requirement for fixing was relatively weak as the scores were towards the 50 % line. However, the author had scored them within the 'celebratory indexes' with scores of 83.33 % and 66.67 % showing differences respectively of 43% and 23 %. Although the situation had improved somewhat by 2003, there was still some degree of difference, which does suggest some concerns in relation to management and leadership styles and skills remained. Further these results suggest that further work

on self-recognition may be important in order that there may be more similarity in scores from both appraisee and appraisers. especially since Goleman et. al. (2002) point out that the worst leaders have the least congruence with others as to their performance ratings.

It seems that the doctorate training has enabled the author to consider the issues arising from a more objective and reflective perspective than previously. This paper will consider the concerns raised above in greater detail in an attempt to gain a better understanding of a useful way forward for the author. In order to explore the relevant issues, the central tool used is the 360-degree feedback for senior educational psychologists, which has been carried out both at the beginning of the period of doctoral study and towards the end. The paper will refer also to the previous 360-degree management feedback carried out as part of an internal Essex senior management development extended course completed in 1997.

Further the paper will refer to relevant literature on leadership and personal development aimed at managers and leaders. Due to the nature of the difficulty as viewed by the author, the paper will concentrate on management literature, which considers the requirement for emotional development and sophistication in managers if they are to be successful. This paper is intended to help the process of self-reflection in an attempt to manage better a difficulty that has been present for a number of years and seems to persist in one guise or another. It is not an attempt to fully cover the literature base or to offer general ways forward, suitable for others.

The main concern then relates to the perceived difficulty with leadership when holding overall responsibility and the perceptions of the author's leadership in the team he manages. It is suggested that these two issues are intimately connected and that if it is possible to understand the inter-relational and intra-relational aspects of leadership better, the result will be the ability to further improve leadership.

The difference between management and leadership

It is important to reflect in a little more detail than above on the differences between management and leadership. Most writers would make the case for the two being seen as separate. In simple terms leadership is about setting the direction and strategy for work, whereas management is about setting steps, monitoring progress and ensuring movement towards the aims and goals set by leadership.

Whilst it is easy to make such a distinction; that is that leaders need to look into the future and take a wide and holistic view and managers need to ensure that the engine room is functioning smoothly and effectively in order to deliver the leader's direction, the reality is more confused. Both Covey (1999 a) and Goleman et. al. (2002) see managers needing to have leadership qualities, since they lead people in their section. Management skills alone are not enough. Senge (1990) points to a learning organisation being one where everybody is learning and therefore leadership is actually distributed across the whole organisation. It is the position of this paper that leadership qualities, which are about direction setting and enabling people to do their jobs, are integrally tied into any management position. This is especially true when considering such a post as an area senior educational psychologist with direct management responsibility for 12 educational psychologists and 3 assistant

It seems then as psychologists and managers of psychologists that it is most important to have a clear understanding not only of the external world, but also of the internal world. Without such an exploration, actions are likely to remain effective at one level only. Goleman et. al. (2002) direct the reader to recognise the sense in which one's own values and way of being, including one's internal life has direct significant effects on how one projects and how one is received by others. Therefore, without clear acknowledgement and understanding of one's own internal world little real progress with management style can be achieved. This concept is captured by Goleman et. al. (2002) in the following quote:

'Because emotions are so contagious – especially from leaders to others in the group – leaders' first tasks are the emotional equivalent of good hygiene: getting their own emotions in hand. Quite simply, leaders cannot effectively manage emotions in anyone else without first handling their own. How a leader feels thus becomes more than just a private matter; given the reality of emotional leakage, a leader's emotions have public consequences.' (Goleman et. al., 2002, p.46.)

Craib (1994) views the concept of authenticity as central to human action. There needs to be a clear integration of the individual's inner world with that of how he or she experiences and acts in the external world for the individual to be effective. The importance of this is further reported in Goleman et. al. (2002) when addressing the requirements of leadership styles and the fact of what they refer to as 'emotional leakage'. The fact of emotional leakage means that lack of authenticity will be known by others either consciously or unconsciously and thus it is likely to undermine one's attempts to affect a direction, quite apart from the moral requirement to act with integrity and authenticity.

Craib (1994), quotes the importance of a clear recognition of the base levels of psycho-dynamic processes for one to act effectively in the world. Bion (1970) further explains the processes that affect our ability to operate successfully as a leader. He suggests that all people require fulfilment of certain underlying needs for attachment, moral and spiritual recognition and terrestrial aspiration. Automatically the leader is sought out to be able to respond to these human needs. If these needs are not met discordance may follow. In Craib's (1994, 2001) view the central aspects of being are encompassed within an acceptance of the need to acknowledge these core needs. The leader therefore must acknowledge these core issues and respond in a manner befitting the individuals whom he or she may be leading.

The focus of the paper

The importance for any leader is that without a full exploration of his or her personal situation, their leadership qualities may not be able to progress. Covey (1999 a) points to seven habits of highly effective people in his influential book. Each of his seven habits will be discussed individually in an attempt to explore further where and how the author is successful at present and what aspects of his work could be improved and by what means. The paper will try go further than Covey (1999 a) and explore the links between the functional, the psychological, and the spiritual level and their relationship to successful management. It may seem bizarre to consider the spiritual level as a relevant management concern, but there is a significant literature in this

area, which has been illustrated through the transpersonal psychology section of the British Psychological Society (BPS) (see Slack (1999)). The concern at the spiritual level relates on the one hand to an understanding of the role of intuition and integrity and, on the other hand, to how we can best 'hold' our own anxiety, lack of control and impotence particularly at times of the greatest personal trials and challenges. (Goleman, 2003)

Covey's seven habits of highly successful people

It will be seen that much of Covey's (1999 a) work in defining his seven habits of highly successful people, covers the same ground as Gardner (1999) in his discussions of the importance of intra-personal and interpersonal intelligences. Covey's (1999 a) seven habits are discussed in the following paragraphs.

i) Being Proactive

In Covey's (1999) definition, this sentiment refers not only to the idea that it is most important to purvey the world to ensure one is fit for tomorrow, but also (and indeed mainly) to the importance of always acting with an eye to one's values and core beliefs. The concept being addressed here is that of the need for authenticity, not only in the eyes of others, but in relation to oneself.

Goleman et. al. (2002) take this concept further, when considering successful leadership training. They look at the high level of unsuccessful leadership and management training courses. From a meta-analysis, they draw the conclusion that the vast majority of such training, whether through extended courses or not, cannot be seen to have made significant differences to managers' behaviour after six to twelve months. They posit that the overriding reason for such a high level of failure of courses to deliver sustained changes is because courses start with the wrong premise. Most courses work from an intellectual basis for driving change. The difficulty found is that the intellectual developments do not seem to be sustained over time. Rather those attending courses were found to make short term changes in their behaviour. Delegates then tended to revert to previous patterns of behaviour within at maximum twelve months. Goleman et. al. (2002) showed that training was usually unsuccessful unless some ingredient addition to intellectual challenge and development is added to courses.

Boyatzis (1999, 2001) has shown that training can be effective over extended periods of time, if it is based around motivational change. Long term motivational change, though can only successfully be accomplished when the focus of training is based on working at the level of emotional functionality. Boyatzis (1999, 2001) showed that changes needed to occur, which impinged on the emotional centres of the brain such as the limbic system rather than merely at the intellectual levels of the functioning of the neo-cortex. He concluded that intellectual changes are only sustained when the change is linked to an emotional valency of importance to the individual. This conclusion has echoes of Craib's (1994) concept of authenticity. Boyatzis (1999, 2001) talk about successful sustained change being based on five 'discoveries':

- My ideal self – who I want to be?

- My real self – who I am? What are my strengths and gaps?
- My learning agenda – how can I build on my strengths while reducing my gaps?
- Experimenting with and practising new behaviours thoughts and feelings to the point of mastery.
- Developing supportive and trusting relationships that make change possible.

This may not seem particularly different from an ordinary training process. However, it includes two elements that are not usually seen as central to change. Those are the first and last ‘discoveries’. The premise here is that for there to be any sustained change, it needs to be based on the core principles, values and beliefs held dear to the individual. If one is to maintain contact with these, the individual will benefit from a set of supporting relationships to help keep him or her on track. As with Covey (1999 a), the implication is that the individual will need to be authentic to his or herself, if change is to be sustained.

It follows that the first principle of success comes from being aware of one’s own values and one’s own success criteria. Covey (1999 a) suggests the specific activity of considering one’s own death and what one would wish to be remembered for from four distinct perspectives: those of the family, work, friends and community. The idea is that through thinking clearly about what one would wish to be remembered for there is the probability of gaining closer contact with one’s own core values and beliefs. These then should be the basis for evaluating when and how to act in any given situation. Goleman et. al. (2002) suggest a similar practice, but based on articulating one’s ideal life in ten to fifteen years time and / or writing down 27 things that one wishes to do or achieve before dying. The principles can be seen as very similar and based on projective activities aimed at helping the individual locate his or her core beliefs to identify patterns, which will help him or her to plan change. Goleman et. al. (2002) have reached their conclusions after investigating a wide range of management research. They conclude that successful changes to a leader’s quality needs to be based on such activities as suggested earlier. The resultant integrity and authenticity bring into focus the individual’s values, which in turn creates meaning to professional activity. Goleman et. al. (2002) show that this process helps a leader become effective when working with colleagues and particularly direct reports, due to the resultant clarity of purpose and interpersonal respect.

The author can learn from this concept since part of his personal limitations result from the occasional extreme uncertainty coupled with the need to be liked and admired. Goleman et. al. (2002) talk about the potential limitations to certain management styles through the need for personal emotional fulfilment, the details of which will be discussed in a later section. The point here is that part of the author’s limitations may relate to the need for positive feedback. This, at times, leads to a denial of core beliefs and values, which can result in compromised actions. In turn this compromise may actually leave some staff confused and feeling unsupported by unforeseen changes in behaviour.

It is important to recognise that whilst the author requires the 'admiration' of colleagues and that at times this can undermine the ability to remain focussed on the value set held, it is equally important to recognise that maintaining meta-values is a strength. The very facts of initiating the move towards inclusion and the drive in relation to stress management are proof of this. From the 360-degree feedback colleagues believe that the author shows clear commitment to equal opportunities and other ethical issues. Therefore, this issue is significant and worthy of consideration, but relatively limited in its impact.

One further consideration is that of transparency. The authors so far quoted consider it to be of major importance to be real and visible in the sense of being open and transparent. However, the author does not maintain transparency: rather sometimes it is not clear what he may be doing. This is manifest in the fact that for all staff their programme of work is in the public domain and all proportional workloads are determined at the beginning of the academic year. The author neither keeps a public diary complete nor is his work pattern open to the public eye. To some extent this is necessary, since a significant proportion of work revolves around maintaining team energy and problem solving issues as they arise. However, again it is worthy of note that the resultant mystique or secretiveness is enjoyed by the author. This situation is usually accepted by the team, but can lead to inquisitiveness and uncertainty. During an extended management training it was commented that the author was very self-motivated (SMDT, 1997). This was acceptable to those who trusted his work, but for others it led to frustration and suspicion. Maybe this is not to the good for management and leadership. Certainly Goleman et. al. (2002) would contend that such a working practice, continued over time, would not engender loyalty and might lead to suspicion in the work force. This issue has not been raised through 360-degree feedback, but none-the-less is worthy of note when considering an improvement plan.

ii) Begin With the End Game in Mind

Covey (1999 a) makes a distinction between management and leadership, pointing to the fact that management is about resolving day to day issue in order to support the direction of a given concern. Leadership is more focussed on the big picture and thus on understanding and 'selling' the ideas which will help ensure the company is healthy for the future.

What Covey is driving at is that actions should relate to the core beliefs and values already identified within his concept of pro-activity. The premise here is that if activity is evaluated in relation to the end game or those central personal values, then activity will always be of worth and indeed will be carried through, because of the connection to one's core value set. This is well documented in Goleman et. al. (2002) when they talk about the basis of motivation being found through joining day-to-day activities to those involved in fulfilling one's dreams and aspirations. Conversely, activities do not get followed through in the longer term when the drivers are related only to the completion of the job in hand.

Boyatzis (2001) takes a slightly different slant, when he refers to the importance of coming to terms with the real self before being able to set a plan for action. In coming to understand the real self and its departures from the ideal self, there is a sense in which the gap between hope and reality is found. This gap will be evident to others,

which results in a degree of empty aspirations if the ideal self is relied upon. Therefore it is only through working at the level of the real self, that authenticity and effective action can be maintained.

Goleman et. al. (2002) suggest that this is an area of weakness for many managers and leaders. They evidence the fact that over time with the pressures of work and company achievement, people lose sight of their core values and tend to act within the company mores rather than maintaining their own values. The result however, is a decrease in energy and effectiveness, which is neither good for the individual nor the company.

In the present case it is clear that 360-degree feedback suggests that ethically the work remains of value. However the differences between the author's perception of his interpersonal skills and effectiveness and that of colleagues who completed the 360-degree feedback questionnaires raises some issues. It is interesting to note that feedback from 360-degree analysis has always commented on the degree of interest and involvement in the future of the organisation. People have commented that the author accomplishes the ability to translate ideas and possibilities about the future to staff very well or excellently. The author is aware that he has a strong interest in monitoring and exploring the influences on the futures from a variety of disciplines. These disciplines include consideration of the macro political, the micro political and the personal as well as the ideological. Networking both within the organisation and beyond it has always been a strength and has previously been recognised through personal assessment, using, for example Belbin (1996) analyses of my stronger working practices (SMDT, 1997). It has been commented on that the author tends to reach beyond individual disciplines in order to form judgements (Frederickson, 2002), which helps establish strong pro-active connections.

However all the above has to be set against a clear message that the author rated his social and professional interpersonal skills and support to be at a significantly higher level than do colleagues (see page 8). A connection here may be that setting the vision, whilst important can be perceived as arm chair philosophising, which in itself can be disconcerting.

It seems that some of the issues raised by Goleman et. al. (2002), when looking at leadership styles are of significance here. They set out a framework, from which to analyse the use of particular leadership styles. These may help to identify the uses that the present author makes of such styles and where they are useful and where they may lead to difficulties. They identify six leadership styles:

Visionary- setting and communicating the values, beliefs and direction for the organisation and then helping people to remain working within that vision.

Coaching- supporting individuals by getting to know them and their core values and beliefs and supporting them in gaining opportunities, within the company and beyond, to fulfil their dreams.

Affiliative- team building principles, involving valuing each individual and his or her particular needs by creating harmony and connections for everybody within the team.

Democratic- listening to each individual within the team and reaching decisions and agreeing actions only through democratic agreements, thus ensuring participation of each and every individual.

Pacesetting- setting the targets and requirements and monitoring them closely; leading by example, but stepping in to take over from anybody who is not achieving results.

Commanding- directing activity without ever giving recourse to explanation; expecting immediate loyalty and action without questioning.

The first four are perceived as building resonance and the last two as potentially dissonant. The view of Goleman et. al. (2002) is that good leaders are able to move between all styles of leadership smoothly and of course to use them appropriately either from an intuitive understanding or through conscious management of the given situation. Leaders who are successful over time always use a mixture of the first four much more than the latter two.

From the evidence available from 360-degree feedback over time, the author is good at using a visionary style of leadership. He can articulate the direction and the reasons for going in that direction. However, it is not clear that he always articulates the detail in a manner that is comprehensible to others, since the appraisers have stated that whilst there is vision, difficulties remain with:

- understanding the detail through joint problem solving experiences
- and the experience of limited listening skills from which to build a mutual development strategy.

It has been said that whilst the author uses analogies, similes and metaphors to good effect in building a picture, the language can be convoluted and not easily accessible. This can result in encouraging a way forward, but without any real transmission of a depth of understanding or agreement. Further, when the vision is not fully understood (or possibly disagreed with) there is a tendency to show frustration, which of course undermines others and create anxiety. The expression of vision or other aspects of leadership being questioned in public are particularly likely to raise anxieties.

It may be of significance that these are of course those situations when one is being watched by others for how one reacts to difficult situations. Thus, such public situations can be seen as setting the tenure of one's leadership and relationship with other team members. Further, by watching the methods with which the manager deals with his or her anxiety, an insight into that manager's integrity can be found.

It can be concluded that it is important for the author to look further into issues around integrity. It is important to clarify the vision prior to articulation and to consider how closely it really fits with his ideals as opposed to those assumed to be articulated by the organisation. In short there is an issue of authenticity here, worthy of consideration when coming to action planning.

The author perceived his main leadership style as that of coaching, however this is not borne out by the evidence. Whilst he considers himself to be positive and concerned about the individual as an individual, the feedback from 360-degree information suggests that he is not particularly sensitive to his colleagues' real needs and anxieties. Whilst this could be rationalised as being because individuals do not want to work within the organisation's constraints and there is inevitable conflict in keeping staff on track and ensuring no slippage of pace, the finding seems to suggest a focussed ambition in this particular leader. It could be posited that the relationship with staff becomes lost in the drive for results, when in fact results are often more easily maintained through more personal approaches to leadership.

It may be that there is another level of interest here, which relates to how the author forms relationships with or without authenticity. It seems that what happens is the author moves between the visionary style and the dissonant leadership style of pace setting. This occurs through a number of processes, which suggest interest in the individual and allude to processes which could be claimed to marry to resonant styles of leadership such as coaching and democratic styles and even affiliative at times. If considered critically, it can be argued that, with the exception of the visionary style, all the other resonant styles of leadership require commitment at the interpersonal level; and that requires risk: the risk that one might be forced to change and the risk of being vulnerable.

Argyris (1990) and Argyris & Schon (1996) talk about manager defence mechanisms often ensuring that no real change occurs. It seems that the feedback received, suggest that the author has many positive values, but does not readily engage at a real and authentic level with colleagues. As a result, their needs are not taken as seriously as they require. This is due to an inauthentic relationship with the resonant styles of leadership. Rather, the author relies on visionary leadership, without the follow through to ensure that firstly all staff understand the vision and secondly that there are continual opportunities for debates about the vision, within a real coaching style of leadership.

Goleman et.al. (2002) make the point that often there is a match between one's strengths and one's skill gaps. The very fact of a passionate belief in one aspect of leadership, can lead to weaker developments in another area. In this situation the very fact of having a strength in encouraging people to sign up to a vision and being able to 'sell' this very well, means that on the other side of the coin the patience and care to listen to individual staff members and their concerns may be limited. This issue comes into focus when the author is being asked to reflect with a direct report on an issue, which may be trivial or easily resolved. At these times it is difficult to treat the situation with the gravity required by the colleague. Rather the tendency to seek to continue to persuade him or her of the vision beliefs, without really listening can prevail. Covey's (1999) fifth point of 'seek first to understand and then to be understood' and his fourth point of 'think win-win' deal with this concern, which will be returned to below.

iii) Put First Things First

This habit refers to that of ensuring that the important things are dealt with rather than the easy or the immediate. Covey (1999 a) offers the idea of creating a management matrix with four quadrants, covering things that are:

Not important nor urgent	Important but not urgent
Urgent but not important	Important and urgent

The 360-degree feedback returns suggested that turning up to meetings with all the correct and necessary information is not always accomplished and that people sometimes feel that appropriate notice in relation to meeting structure, work commitments and so forth is not always made available early enough. Whilst not all of these are within the author's gift (for instance the annual programme is agreed centrally before it can be distributed to the team), improvements could be made. Covey (1999 a) talks about 'put(ing) first things first' in the context of an issue about character. He has researched the self-help books produced over the last 150 years and noted that until the last few years the main thrust was about developing personal characteristics. His first three habits all relate to such characteristics in the sense that they are about macro personal values. Putting first things first relates back to his concept of being proactive. This is not a simple management concern of getting things done, but rather about rating activities according to one's own core values as discussed above.

Although the author will tend to articulate his vision and get people signed up to that vision, follow through does not always occur. The tendency to follow that, which is perceived to be interesting, but not necessarily central to the development of the vision, can create frustration for others. Although all office practice is based on an open door policy which is used well, the author is frequently absent on tasks, which are viewed as interesting, but may not necessarily be important. Covey's (1999) view is that it is central to successful leadership to concentrate on doing those things, which are important but not urgent. There is a tendency to do those things that are interesting, without real consideration as to how they fit into the espoused vision and therefore often end up completing tasks that are important only when they have become urgent. This needs to change, through two actions: firstly, there is the issues of authenticity. It is important to focus on the real values and ideal self in relation to the real self. Secondly, the importance of activities and actions need to be evaluated within that paradigm.

The major difficulties here relate to the four quadrants mentioned by Covey (1999, 1999 a) when considering time management from the point of view of focussing on one's own values and beliefs. In the author's case, too much is left until it becomes urgent. Thus the management style becomes reactive resulting in not giving others enough notice of requirements or operational time. This can lead to impatience when trying to explain the value of something. It seems logical to view this behaviour as resulting from the same issue. The impatience results from the squeeze on time, coming from having left the important until it is urgent rather than having dealt with the important issues when they were not urgent. From Covey's (1999) perspective, such behaviour will only be overcome by concentrating on first things first within an authentic value set. This position is re-enforced by Goleman et. al. (2002) in their

review of motivational literature, showing that change maintained over time only occurs when the motivation for change is centred on the achievement of core values and beliefs.

A further consideration of importance, is that work time is often filled with completing activities, which are of primary interest to the author. However, these tasks may have little to do with the important requirements of the employment post either in the sense of fulfilling the job specification, or in the sense of availability to the team. This work style can lead to flitting from one interruption or task to another, without any clear strategy or system of how one task may fit with another or how any of the tasks actually lead towards a greater goal or a particular target.

Additionally, the author is not good at setting and sticking to a specific amount of time when talking to somebody. This is due both to wishing the conversation to come to a natural end, despite possibly keeping somebody else waiting, and due to a lack of discipline and an enjoyment of engaging in diversionary activities.

iv) Think Win-Win

Here Covey (1999 a) is referring to the fact that in all interactions there has to be a positive outcome for all participants. Goleman et. al. (2002) refer to this issue when explaining that if staff are not signed up then actually at best their professional activity will not be as effective as it can be in promoting the organisation's goals. At worst, staff will undermine the organisation's direction and / or leave the organisation. This will be particularly true for the more able staff who will ordinarily find no difficulty in getting a replacement post elsewhere.

Although the author would view his approach as win-win, the 360-degree feedback does suggest that maybe a better explanation of actions is that there is often an attempt to win in relation to social standing and position. Ideally, this does not lead to another loosing, but if it does, there may be limited concern. This is an important issue and relates to previous discussion about the use of leadership styles. It will be picked up again in the concluding section. Here it suffices to note that the issue of 'think win-win' is seen by Covey (1999 a) as being the first of his technical skills, the latter two of which are to come. The most important and difficult issues from his standpoint are to make the required changes in relation to the first three habits. This perspective is similar to that of Goleman et. al. (2002), who insist that successful management and leadership rely primarily on factors very similar to those of Covey's (1999) first three habits.

v) Seek First to Understand and Then to be Understood

This technical habit seems to be of central importance. From previous discussion, it is clear that the author holds the view that he will try to understand first and indeed at times adopts well developed reflective listening skills. However, an equally realistic perspective might be that the emphasis is on a search to persuade through a number of techniques and skills that are useful in themselves, but do not necessarily include authentic listening. Goleman et. al. (2002) explore this issue in relation to the pacesetting management style. They note that many managers and leaders who have come through technical ranks in higher technical industries particularly have

succeeded because of their intellectual and technical skills. They often set very high standards and expect others to achieve at their, sometimes fanatical levels. When this fails to happen they tend to take over and thus undermine others' confidence, at the same time denying them the learning opportunity.

The feedback suggests that there is no significant difficulty in this area, since delegation is managed well. It is supported with suggestions, but the responsibility for completing the work will remain with the person to whom it has been delegated. Usually the author will have a particular expect way for the work to be completed and this will be 'offered' often wrapped up as part of the vision. Of course this can lead to a top down solution rather than that of the person to whom the work has been delegated and can mean that the interaction that goes on is based on a search of the others' understanding for agreement with the author. However, usually this potential difficulty is overcome and the allocated worker is able to complete the task(s) as he or she sees fit.

The author has been working with some success on this area. Recently for example, two staff were put to task to produce a short position paper relating issues around inclusion and children in public care to the school improvement agenda. The reason for this was that as an education department being amalgamated with social services under a new director from a social services background, it seemed politically important to 'help' the director see the benefits of keeping educational psychologists involved with the wider agendas such as school improvement, rather than focussing their work solely towards an individual assessment and placement model. The report is still to be finalised, but having discussed the political and practical requirements of the report with the two specialist educational psychologists and set the time line, they have been left to complete the task as they see fit. They have reported back that they have met and agreed an outline for completion. In this case the visionary style of leadership was utilised along with a small degree of positive use of pacesetting all to good avail.

vi) Synergy

This concept refers to the idea that more positive and creative solutions are possible when people work together in a win-win situation rather than battling for an individual solution. The idea behind this is that colleagues' well-being is of importance and therefore compromise solutions may actually be more creative and better all round. The technique then is to look for win-win situations, through listening to others, being authentic to oneself (and others) and continuing a dialogue until a solution that is satisfactory to all parties is reached. If no satisfactory solution can be reached then no solution occurs, rather than a particular dominant solution being accepted.

This is an area that again where the author would consider his skills to be well developed. However, the feedback suggests that others may be involved in a different manner, which tends to lead to ensuring the author's solution is agreed through apparently democratic processes.

Goleman et. al. (2002) comment on this area of development in relation to the fact that firstly such a process is really the only way to keep staff happy and energised in the long run. If subtle coercive styles of leadership are dominant instead of a true

search for synergy, although effective in the short term, staff begin to realise that their needs are not in fact being met and then a gradual reduction in return starts to effect the company.

Secondly, they and Covey (1999 a) note that many people view this way of working as idealistic but when balanced against the real world of work, naive. Both authors, though site numerous examples where such a process of reaching a synergetic goal with authenticity has meant not only that all staff have remained energised and committed, but that new and interesting solutions have come up. These solutions have often turned out to be more successful for the company and of course have ensured real emotional and intellectual engagement of all relevant staff in finding the solution, a finding that has been seen as central to successful consultation and therefore likely to be of great importance within a team (Petty et. al., 1997).

vii) Sharpen the Saw

The concept of 'sharpen the saw' refers to the need to look after oneself in order to be effective. Covey (1999 a) divides the self into four aspects:

- physical needs
- emotional needs
- intellectual needs
- spiritual needs.

All four of these foci need to be kept in harmony if one is to be successful. The specific manner in which an individual may look after his or her needs will differ, but all four aspects must be taken care of or a gradual decline will ensue. Although Goleman et. al. (2002) do not refer to these aspects of a person, they do comment on the idea of burn-out occurring as a result of slow overheating, a concept first written about by Handy (1989), when he described how if a frog is placed in water which is slowly heated it will not remove itself and will slowly die. However, if the frog is placed in hot water directly, it will jump out immediately.

The author views himself as looking after some of his needs only. He tends to find it difficult to say 'no'(due to the need, sometimes overriding, to be liked) and therefore take on too much at times. This can lead to situations, where it is difficult to follow through on all commitments. The author will try to keep too many balls juggling in the air resulting in a tendency to flit from one activity to another. Goleman et. al. (2002) refer to research, which showed that training in mindfulness (Bennett-Goleman, 2001) for managers had significant effects on the results attained through their management and on employee satisfaction. Mindfulness is a form of meditation, based on focussing on the mind to the exclusion of all other information flitting in and out of the brain. Goleman (2003) when talking with the Dalai Lama, makes the point that through the practice of mindfulness, it becomes easier to get to the central issue of concern and to focus on that in a positive manner. This reduces destructive behaviour and results not only in greater personal satisfaction, but also in healthier management and leadership practices.

In relation to a future action plan, it may be necessary to consider this issue more closely and make further attempts to keep a healthy and nurturing balance in life in order to enhance the effective use of leadership skills.

Conclusions

Adair (2003), the first professor of leadership skills in the world, states that the new breed of leader needs to focus on three aspects of leadership at the same time. These are those of team leadership, operational leadership and strategic leadership. From an analysis of the present 360-degree results, it seems that the author's actions as a team leader are generally acceptable and improving. However, there is a need to work towards a greater degree of authenticity in all situations. Strategic leadership is in the main an area of strength. The main area of weakness is in the area of operational leadership. These difficulties manifest themselves mainly through not always informing people what is required of them quickly enough and with enough clarity. Further the author is perceived as not always being available and supportive in relation to difficulties, which may be perceived by him as petty.

In order to make operational management changes, which will last and thus improve the quality of leadership, the author needs to concentrate first on ensuring that he is in contact with his own values and beliefs. To that end, there is a need to review his work and the meaning of it. Only after that can the issues surrounding time management and authentic support of others be usefully tackled. It is difficult, at this moment to know what outcomes are appropriate to set since the basis of change and reflection needs to relate core values. These are around issues of inclusion and enabling education to have meaning for all participants.

It seems that over the years, the author has become too focussed on the organisation's requirements to the extent of compromising his own, which actually has led to a decline in real efficiency. A real opportunity to focus on core values and beliefs may be presented through the new green paper (Clarke et. al., 2003). This paper is likely to challenge educational psychology to make changes in working practices and thus to revisit some assumptions which have become entrenched over the years. The ideas behind children's trusts and the development of successful locality based multi-agency work to support the needs of children, will give the opportunity to reflect on how best to attain a working environment, which enables work towards the fulfilment of the author's values and beliefs. Through this process of re-evaluation and change, it is hoped that there will be further improvements to operational management activities.

The doctoral course and its effects

The doctoral course has involved the author in rigorous research and literature reviews across a variety of topics within educational psychology. Further, there has been the opportunity to critically reflect on practice with colleagues and tutors in a coherent manner. Finally, the course has had a number of 'searchlight' days where leading edge research has been discussed along with formal course input.

The author has undertaken a number of wide ranging assignments, which have covered team functioning, assessment and intervention methods, stress management and consultation skills. Also data has been collected and reviewed relating to the

author's effectiveness in the workplace. These studies have enabled the author to look critically at his practice by self-reflection as well as group reflection.

Devereau (1997) showed that self reflection is a necessary process in managing behaviour change when considering ways of dealing with stress. Goleman et. al. (2002) and Covey (1999a) have noted the real need to reflect on core values and beliefs in order to build authenticity. This process necessitates reflective critical self-appraisal as outlined by Devereau (1997). However, in order to improve practice in the workplace, it is necessary also to consider other's views and to reflect with a wider audience than just oneself. The doctoral course, through it's focus on critical reflection in a supportive and academic group has enabled the three processes of critical self-reflection, reflection with 'critical friends' and academic reflection to complement each other through co-existence over the four year period.

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