A SOCIOCULTURAL AND ACTIVITY THEORETICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE CHANGING PATTERNS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

by

JANE VALERIE LEADBETTER

A thesis submitted to
The University of Birmingham
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Education
The University of Birmingham
August 2002

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ABSTRACT

This thesis describes an investigation into the changing professional practice of educational psychology services in England and Wales with particular reference to the consultation meetings held between educational psychologists and teachers in the schools they visit. The study uses sociocultural and activity theory models and research to structure and guide the analysis and in particular utilises a developmental work research methodology.

As part of the investigation a historical-genetic account of evolving EP services describes their progress, the contradictions and underlying psychological paradigms governing practice since the beginnings of the twentieth century. A second phase of the research describes and analyses some of the working practices of EP services based on a national survey conducted in 1998 in England and Wales utilising data from 92 Local Education Authority Educational Psychology Services. The final phase of research considers the mediating artefacts, activity levels and contradictions that form important elements of the meetings between EPs and teachers.

The study concludes that role of educational psychologists historically and currently is heavily restricted by their employment basis and the resulting enforced focus upon children with special needs. The use of sociocultural and activity theoretical approaches is highly recommended as a theoretically rich and creative paradigm. Developmental work research methodology, although in its infancy, provides a flexible but robust framework for structuring the recursive research process.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Barbara
and to the memory of my father, Reg.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND FRAMING OF THE THESIS

1.1   Background to study

This study aims to investigate the professional practice of educational psychologists using theoretical models and ideas from sociocultural and activity theory research. Motivation to study this topic comes from the researcher's own background as an educational psychologist practitioner, for over twenty years, during which time professional practice has changed dramatically in some ways and yet in other ways has remained constant. A personal transformation to practitioner-researcher and latterly, research-practitioner has increased the writer's curiosity about the influences upon the profession and the impact of such influences upon practice. Similarly, a lack of detailed analysis of the work of educational psychologists (EPs) in the literature stimulated a desire to investigate this area of activity.

The use of sociocultural and activity theory research in this professional context and as the chosen approach to this topic represents an original view, not undertaken by any writer before. The use of this far-reaching and fast-growing approach, drawing as it does upon a range of disciplines, has provided a theoretical orientation, a structure, investigative tools and helpful insights relating to the topic under investigation.

1.2   Research aims

Throughout the study reported here, questions have developed and have been expanded and superseded as knowledge has been transformed, analysis undertaken and new syntheses have emerged. However, the initial research aims remain central to the investigation and are detailed below. Beyond these aims, certain chapters of the thesis contain their own specific questions that are investigated in detail within each section.

1) To use the theoretical bases and methodologies of sociocultural and activity theory to understand, analyse and explore the profession of educational psychology

2) To undertake a historical-genetic analysis of the profession in order to clarify key factors that have moulded practice to the present day

3) To investigate national patterns of practice within EP services across England and Wales both in terms of their internal structures and also their forms of service delivery

4) To explore new ways of working, specifically through consultation, and consider how this might affect the way that EPs work with teachers and schools

5) To analyse current models of working within one EP service in terms of activities undertaken in schools, the shared meanings and use of common artefacts between EPs and teachers and the conflicts and disagreements that occur

6) To evaluate the use of developmental work research and an expansive learning cycle as a model for understanding and guiding practice.

1.3 The current legislative and employment context for educational psychologists

Educational psychologists who practise in the UK have all followed a specified training route that is laid down by the relevant professional body, the British Psychological Society, (BPS). This entails a degree in psychology, a teacher training qualification and a minimum of two year's teaching, (the latter two factors are slightly different in Scotland.) Once qualified, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) or Education and Library Boards (ELBs) in Northern Ireland, employ the vast majority of EPs. There are approximately 2,500 EPs currently employed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The research study reported here relates only to the work of EPs employed by LEAs and not those in private practice or employed in other settings.

Since the 1981 Education Act (DES, 1981) was enacted, EPs have occupied a statutory role in regard to assessment of children who may have special educational needs. They are required to provide psychological advice for every child that LEAs decide to assess. This role has been continued and is part of the procedures described in the 1993 Education Act (DfE, 1993) and again in the 1996 Education Act, (DfE, 1996). Alongside this, the Code of Practice on the assessment of children with special educational needs (DfE, 1994) gives clear guidance on the type of role that EPs should play and the advice that should be provided. This guidance has recently been replaced by a new Code of Practice, (DfES, 2001) but the statutory role for EPs remains unchanged.

The positioning of EPs as public servants within LEAs and with a statutory duty, enforceable by law, has far-reaching implications in terms of the roles that EPs are able to occupy. This is a theme that recurs throughout this thesis and which is discussed in detail in chapter 11. It is a problem that is also recognised in the documents resulting from the government sponsored working group that produced a report entitled, 'Educational Psychology Services (England): Current Role, Good Practice and Future Directions', (DfEE, 2000).

In this report the introduction notes that,

> "The Green Paper, (1997) recognised the wide ranging responsibilities of educational psychologists. In doing so it observed that the growing pressure for statements has led to educational psychologists spending more of their time carrying out statutory assessments, at the expense of providing early intervention and support when the child's needs are first identified. The Green Paper made a commitment to explore ways of changing the balance of educational psychologists' work to ensure their expertise is used more effectively." (DfEE, 2000 p.3)

The report, published towards the end of the time period during which the research reported here was undertaken, was long awaited by the profession. It sets out a clear aim for EPs to work towards, and alongside this aim it sets out a series of key principles. It further describes the core functions that EPs should engage in, namely:

- ❑ Work with individual children
- ❑ Work with groups of children
- ❑ Work with schools and early years providers
- ❑ Work with LEAs
- ❑ Working with other agencies
- ❑ Other work that extends beyond the defined core functions. (p. 7-12).

Although statements of this type are important in terms of establishing the government's view of the profession, there has been little reported change as a result of the report. The report provides suggestions of critical success factors and examples of good practice from across the country but it does not comment upon the funding of EP services nor does it make explicit suggestions as to how EPs can reduce the amount of time spent upon statutory assessments.

In terms of employment, the report concludes that it is still appropriate for EP services to be part of LEAs even though there is recognition that there will be increasing work with other agencies. The government's position is made clear in the following statement:

> "Educational psychologists have an important role in supporting the Government's education and social inclusion agendas and we have therefore concluded that they can make a more effective contribution if they are working within the LEA structure and remain as a central service funded by the LEA" (DfEE, 2000, p. 45)

The positioning of EPs, within Local Authority structures is important in a number of ways and it is clear from research reported in this thesis that problems and conflicts occur between EPs and others which are due, in part, to the situation whereby EPs are employed as LEA officers, rather than applied psychologists. The whole area of employment becomes increasingly complex, as some EP services have been taken over by private companies, as a result of LEAs struggling and being designated as 'failing authorities'. Other EP services have had their funding partially delegated to schools, with a requirement that they earn money back to cover their staffing budgets. This is due to successive government edicts that require LEAs to direct higher proportions of

overall budgets to schools. The effects of these changes have yet to be realised and have not been researched or reported. However, it is likely that they will be seen as significant changes which are likely to effect the relationships between EPs and the schools within which they work. In turn this is likely to effect the perceptions and expectations of the EP's customers: the schools. Divisions of labour, role expectations and rules that govern practice are all significant factors in shaping the work that is undertaken by EPs and this theme similarly, recurs throughout the thesis.

In developing a deeper understanding of how the EP's role has changed and will need to change in the future an approach is needed that is sufficiently broad to encompass all the significant elements and actors. The selection of sociocultural and activity theory research as the most useful and appropriate paradigm to explore the research questions offers a range of approaches to the topic. However, it has been necessary to take a particular focus and line of enquiry and the use of developmental work research and an expansive learning cycle has been used as the basis of the whole investigation.

1.4   Developmental Work Research (DWR) and the Expansive Learning Cycle (ELC)

Developmental work research is grounded in activity theory and sociocultural work. A description of the key elements is included in chapter 2 of this thesis along with an overview of the expansive learning cycle. Both of these approaches have been

developed by Engestrom and are elaborated in seminal articles and chapters, (1987,

1991, 1999b). Engestrom states that,

> "The theory of expansive learning is based on the dialectics of ascending from
> the abstract to the concrete. This is a method of grasping the essence of an
> object by tracing and reproducing theoretically the logic of its development, of
> its historical formation through the emergence and resolution of its inner
> contradictions." (1999, p302).

An expansive learning cycle has been used as a framework for this investigation as the

process forms an original and logical series of steps, leading to the formation of new

knowledge and new practices. Although later steps have not been undertaken in exactly

the manner described by Engestrom, the basic sequence has been followed and later

steps will be continued by the focus EP service

An overview of the expansive learning cycle is shown in Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1 The expansive learning cycle
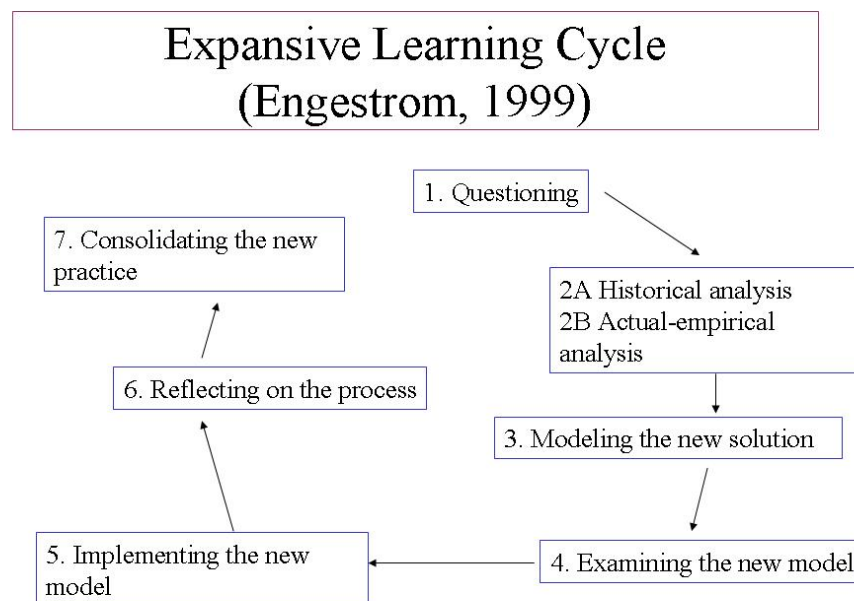
The development of this research study has used the expansive learning cycle to

provide clear steps within the investigative process. Details of each part of the study are

related to steps in the expansive learning cycle in Figure 1.2 shown below.

**Figure 1.2 Expansive learning cycle as a framework for the study
(adapted from Engestrom, 1999)**

Action	Brief explanation	Relation to this research study
1. Questioning	Questioning, criticising or rejecting some existing aspects of the accepted practice and existing wisdom	Chapter 3: Contradictions within the profession of educational psychology
2. Analysing	Involves mental discursive or practical transformation of the situation in order to find out causes or explanatory mechanisms. Evokes "why?" questions and explanatory principles. Two types of analysis; a) *Historical-genetic;* seeks to explain the situation by tracing its origination and evolution b) *Actual-empirical*; seeks to explain the situation by constructing a picture of its inner systemic relations	Chapter 4: Historical-genetic analysis of the development of EP services over the past 100 years Chapter 5: Survey of professional practice in EP services in England and Wales
3. Modelling the new situation	Models the newly found explanatory relationship in some publicly observable and transmittable medium. Means constructing an explicit, simplified model of the new idea that explains and offers a solution to the problematic situation	Chapter 6: Analysis of key influences on EP practice in the area of consultation
4. Examining the new model	Running, operating and experimenting on the model to fully grasp its dynamics, potentials and limitations	Chapters 7, 8 and 9: Describing work undertaken to examine the process of consultation in one EP service
5. Implementing the new model	Concretising the model by means of practical applications, enrichments and conceptual extensions	Chapters 7, 8 and 9: Describing work undertaken to examine the process of consultation in one EP service and in particular developments in practice one year further on

6. Reflecting on the process	Reflecting on and evaluating the process	Chapter 10 synthesis of results
7. Consolidating the new practice	Consolidating its outcomes into a new stable form of practice	Continuing work within the focus EP service

1.5   Structure and content of the thesis

The research undertaken and reported in this thesis follows the expansive learning cycle, providing, as it does a coherent, theoretically based framework. The chapters that comprise the thesis are outlined below.

Following the overview, aims and context described in this opening chapter, chapter 2, sets out the theoretical orientation of the research; grounded, as it is within sociocultural and activity theory. Key aspects are described and a justification for the approach is made. In particular, developmental work research is described and theoretical assumptions about the methodology chosen are justified.

Chapter 3 considers the current position of educational psychologists and explores some of the issues, contradictions and dilemmas that are present in professional practice, as evidenced by current commentators, writers and researchers in the field. After outlining some of the barriers to changing the role of EPs, as described in the DfEE working party report (2000); the chapter discusses four specific issues, namely:

1. Preventative and reactive work: Why are EPs unable to work in the way they say they would choose to?

2. The theory and practice divide: Why do EPs employ different models of psychology and use such diverse methods in their work?

3. Psychology and pupils with special educational needs: Why do EPs only work with children with difficulties?

4. Applied psychologists as public servants: How can EPs adopt a range of roles within the current employment context?

Chapter 4 is a historical-genetic analysis of the development of the profession of educational psychology organised in a chronological manner with sections relating to developments from 1900-1940, 1940-1968, 1968-1981 and 1981-2000. Within each section, key developments in terms of legislative, cultural and social changes are considered in terms of the effects that they appear to have had on EP role and practice. At each stage, a sociocultural perspective is offered using activity theory to conceptualise the current positioning of the involved parties and the key contextual factors. Finally, consideration is given to the dominant psychological paradigms that influenced the work undertaken during each time period.

Chapter 5 describes empirical research undertaken to understand the current working practices of EP services in England and Wales. The results of a questionnaire, focussed upon models of service delivery and internal organisational factors, are described and discussed and specific issues and themes are analysed. The specific aims of this part of the research study are as follows:

1. To describe current practice in EP services throughout the country
2. To analyse links between chosen models of service delivery and other aspects of service cultures

3. To investigate possible correlation between service delivery models and other aspects of service practice

4. To ascertain the direction of current and future developments within EP services

5. To survey views on possible future roles for EP services

6. To investigate the extent to which school visiting / consultation approaches are the subject of discussion and development within services

7. To provide information on those services where reflective practice is built into services systems.

The move towards consultation, a trend noted within the historical-genetic analysis, is described within this chapter and becomes the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter 6, based upon Step 3 of the expansive learning cycle, seeks to model the new situation by considering recent research into consultation in relation to schools and educational psychologists. Research from the United States investigating consultant-consultee relationships and the role of collaboration, positioning and power is described and critiqued from a sociocultural perspective. Following this, UK developments in consultation in general and one specific, widely used approach are described and again subjected to critique from a sociocultural perspective.

Chapter 7 is the first of a trilogy of chapters that describe research undertaken within one LEA EP service in England. It considers written accounts by EPs of typical visits undertaken to schools, first during 1999 and again during 2000. Analysis of these narratives provides information concerning the types of activity undertaken, key factors

that emerge as important and new understandings about the levels of co-ordinated, co-operative and communicative activities that take place.

Chapter 8, again based upon the questionnaire returns from the LEA EP service over two years, examines, through the analysis of mediating artefacts, the perceived shared meanings that exist between EPs and teachers concerning work in schools. The artefacts are further analysed by type and in terms of level of usage by EPs. Thus, artefacts that are termed "What" artefacts are considered in terms of the role they perform, alongside "How" artefacts, "Why" artefacts and "Where to" artefacts (Engestrom, 1999b).

Chapter 9 concludes the work undertaken with the focus EP service by analysing areas of disagreements and conflicts that can arise between EPs and teachers during school consultation meetings. Through descriptions of the types of disagreements that arise (based on the artefacts generated earlier) an understanding of the tensions inherent in the work is gained. Following on from this, examples of potential resolutions, donated by EPs are analysed and these are shown to solve disagreements using a variety of techniques that are compatible with explanations provided by other researchers using activity theoretical approaches.

Chapter 10 synthesises the results and conclusions contained in the preceding three chapters and develops common themes that emerge and chapter 11 brings all the elements of the research study together. In this chapter, the initial aims and

contradictions that exist are revisited and the findings of the whole study are summarised. Consideration is given to the theoretical roots of the research and how these have been transformed through the process of reflection, empirical work and the development of deeper understandings about the practice of EPs. This concluding chapter also considers to the limitations of the study and this leads to suggestions for further research in a number of key areas. Finally, the writer reflects on the personal learning and development that has taken place throughout the course of the research process and writing and the transformations that have resulted.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH PARADIGM
UNDERPINNING THESIS

"The type of methodology I have in mind requires that general ideas of activity theory be put to the acid test of practical validity and relevance in interventions that aim at the construction of new models of activity jointly with the participants. Such construction can be successful only when based on careful historical and empirical analyses of the activity in question."

(Engestrom, 1999b, p.35-6)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the broad approach taken to address and achieve the research aims described in the preceding chapter. The nature of the investigation is such that traditional research methods do not provide sufficient scope and flexibility to achieve appropriate information or understandings. This chapter therefore describes the rationale for the chosen approach and within this, an overview of the broad paradigm of sociocultural and activity theory work is provided and this is further developed to outline the key approaches that have informed the original research undertaken and reported here.

The theoretical models forming the basis of this work and that have shaped the writer's thinking are significant in that they come from a broad-based multi-disciplinary field. Theorising and practical applications of sociocultural and activity theory work have been conducted in a range of settings with different groups of participants and have gradually formed a substantial underpinning body of knowledge. However, there are

commonalities across the diversity of approaches that are significant. The topic of

research reported here could be broadly termed 'learning in the workplace' as it

considers the transformation of activity systems across time, settings and situations.

Whilst drawing upon similar developmental work research to inform this design, it is

also possible to consider the outcomes of this research and to use the findings to inform

similar research in other settings.

2.2 Approaches to research in the social sciences

It has been argued that developments in qualitative research methods had little impact

in psychology until the 1990s (Richardson, 1996). This is despite the fact that advances

in qualitative approaches were used more broadly within the social sciences in the

1960s and even further back in subjects such as anthropology. The discussion around

qualitative versus quantitative methodologies is located within the broader debate about

the nature of scientific methods and knowledge and within this thesis it is not

appropriate to outline the wider questions and arguments in any great detail. However

Woolgar, (1996) summarises the traditional 'received view' of science as being

encompassed in the following four assumptions:

- ❑ "Objects in the natural world are objective and real, and they enjoy an existence independent of human beings. Human agency is basically incidental to the objective character of the world 'out there'
- ❑ It follows from this that scientific knowledge is determined by the actual character of the physical world
- ❑ Science comprises a unitary set of methods and procedures, concerning which there is, by and large, consensus
- ❑ Science is an activity that is individualistic and mentalistic (The latter is sometimes expressed as 'cognitive')"   (Woolgar, 1996 p.13)

Within this positivist view of science, the scientist is viewed as an observer of social reality, gathering data that can be analysed and subsequently expressed in 'laws' or 'law-like' generalisations that could be applied throughout a society, (Giddens, 1975). Alongside this, a positivist viewpoint holds that a theory is only tenable if supported by a body of information gathered in experiments, which exert rigorous control over the other extraneous variables (Barratt, 1971).

Challenges to the positivist stance and alternatives and developments out of positivism are many and varied and again, within this thesis, it is not appropriate to discuss these in great detail. Woolgar, (1996) having stated the assumptions of the 'received view' of science challenges these, suggesting that they are at best inaccurate and positively misleading. He justifies why this view is not appropriate in the social sciences by stating that:

- ❑ "It is misleading to posit a straightforwardly realist ontology of the objects of the natural world.
- ❑ Scientific knowledge is determined not by 'the actual character of the physical world' but instead by the social relations, beliefs and value systems that pertain within scientific communities.
- ❑ Science can be considered to be neither a unitary set of methods and procedures nor a universal practice. What counts as 'science' varies over time (philosophically, historically and sociologically) and is elusive.
- ❑ Science is not primarily an individualistic and mentalistic activity. Instead it is a social process that takes place within a language community and hence is responsive to prevalent values, beliefs and expectations of that community." (Woolgar, 1996 p. 19)

The search for more appropriate approaches to studying social sciences have resulted in a range of ontological and epistemological developments and in turn, alternative approaches. Henwood, (1996) suggests,

"To some extent, all discussions of methodology in the human and social sciences, not just in psychology, are influenced by the esteem afforded to detachment, objectivity and rationality – the guiding principles of Western science – in industrialised democracies." (p. 26).

Henwood's analysis moves on to suggest that qualitative research is a method of enquiry in its own right and is complex, due to the fact that it is informed by a range of intellectual traditions. Some of these influences, she suggests, are associated with more traditional viewpoints, such as positivism, whereas other traditions, such as "post-structuralism, which stresses the indeterminacy of language and meaning; and interpretative studies of culture, symbolism and texts." (p.25), draw from very different perspectives.

In terms of the research aims of this study, a more qualitative paradigm provides a framework within which to construct a research design. Within this paradigm, the labels of 'interpretative, contextual and naturalistic' can also be applied. (Henwood, p.27). Having ascertained that a qualitative approach provides a useful starting point, there have been many different routes taken to investigate a range of social phenomena. Social anthropology has tended to use 'thick description', (Geertz, 1979) in order to obtain detailed, contextually sensitive, meaningful research data. Sociologists have sought to generate theories that have emerged from analysis of unstructured materials, specific problem areas and local contexts. This has been termed a 'grounded theory' approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). An outcome of the increasing popularity and applications of such approaches has been for researchers to take a more radical approach and to reject empiricism, arguing instead that,

"Researchers construct versions of the world through their activities as social and political subjects, and do not merely reflect facts with a self-evident objective reality" (Henwood, 1996, p.27)

This view is commonly known as epistemological 'constructionism' or epistemological 'constructivism'.

Therefore the research reported in this thesis falls within a constructivist paradigm and has elements of a grounded theory approach. However, it is not in any sense pure grounded theory and indeed perhaps touches upon an approach developed by Reason and Hawkins, (1988) that they term 'co-operative inquiry'. They describe how their students became bored with categorizing the data from their experience and developing grounded theory from it.

"They wanted an approach which would express more the liveliness, the involvement, and even the passion of their experiences. So they started to tell the stories of their lives and their inquiries….we continued to explore how stories and storytelling might be part of an emergent paradigm of inquiry." (p.79)

Within this research study, the use of narrative accounts clearly draws upon the importance of personal experience, opinion and meanings in social activities and data obtained using this approach is analysed in chapter 7. However, the method of co-operative inquiry was not adopted as a main vehicle to guide the research process. In searching for appropriate approaches to investigate the areas of concern, a key concept was 'shared meanings' between teachers and psychologists. Given that this was a priority focus of the research, qualitative research was a logical choice.

Having adopted an essentially qualitative approach to the research, within the design of the study, both in terms of the survey that was conducted (reported in chapter 5) and also in the collection of data on the amounts of perceived shared meaning between EPs and teachers, (reported in chapter 7) use is made of quantitative methods of data collection and analysis.

> "Quantitative data are useful when one needs to supplement, validate, explain, or reinterpret qualitative data gathered from the same setting" (Miles and Hubermann, 1994, p.10).

To conclude this section discussing appropriate paradigmatic approaches, it is worth considering how typical the approach chosen to guide this study is of other research undertaken within the field of applied educational psychology. Burden, (1997) has strongly held views that practising EPs are in a very good position to undertake well-grounded, purposeful research within schools and other settings. However, he feels that this has not been forthcoming and as such has been a great disservice to the profession and the wider research community. He feels that one of the main reasons for this state of affairs,

> "…has been a heavy emphasis in most applied psychologists' formative years upon narrow and often inappropriate research methodologies rooted within a positivist paradigm." (Burden, 1997, p. 13).

He continues by suggesting an alternative approach is needed,

> "…providing a grounding in naturalistic research which recognises the limitations of experimental-control group designs when applied to the real world and focuses instead upon ways of throwing light upon the actions of ordinary people in their everyday lives." (p. 13).

The research reported here lies within this latter category and is more in the tradition of cultural psychology, as envisaged originally by Wundt in the early days and development of the discipline of psychology. At this time Wundt suggested that there were two related but different forms of science: naturwissenschaften (the natural sciences) and geistewissenschaften, (the cultural sciences), (Burden, 1997, p.14). He felt that the future of psychology lay in the latter category but unfortunately, it is the former route possibly 'aping' the traditional sciences, that has occupied most psychologists, leaving cultural psychology to be appropriated by researchers from a range of other disciplines and backgrounds.

2.3 Constructionist approaches

The term constructionist is often used interchangeably with the terms social constructionism and constructivism although there are important differences in derivation, uses and inferences, (see Potter, 1996). There is, however, no one discrete constructionist method. Billig, (1988) suggests that the most appropriate consideration is what he calls 'scholarship'. Potter amplifies this by suggesting that,

> "…the lack of a 'method', in the sense of some formally specified set of procedures or calculations, does not imply that the theoretical system is not guiding analysis in various ways." (Potter, 1996, p.129).

Within the research aims of this investigation, a range of constructionist approaches were considered that might enable investigation and illumination of the research questions. Ethnomethodology, with its emphasis on how people make sense of their everyday world and the mechanisms by which participants achieve and sustain interaction in social settings (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.31) had some appeal in that

sense-making is an important aspect of successful activities between EPs and teachers. However, within this approach there is insufficient attention paid to contextual factors and therefore an alternative was sought.

Similarly, personal construct theory, (Kelly, 1955) with its emphasis on people actively engaged in making sense of and extending their experience of the world offered some useful techniques and theoretical assumptions that could have underpinned this research study. A particular benefit arising from such an approach might have accrued as Kelly's theories, although originating from his work as a psychotherapist, has been employed by psychologists working with teachers to understand children's difficulties. Kelly realised that he needed to understand the construction of the problem from the teacher's perspective and therefore he included the teacher and their views in any analysis of the problem and the situation. His theory expanded to describe constructs as dimensions that we create to help us to understand, predict, conceptualise, forecast and rehearse situations in every day life.

Kelly's work was successfully developed in practical contexts by Ravenette, (1997) who, in a paper entitled 'Transcending the obvious and illuminating the ordinary' described typical EP work as follows:

> "The aim of these consultations will be to move the participants through problems and difficulties which, ostensibly located within the child, inevitably involve the constructions and the concerns of the adults in the situation." (p.262)

Jensen, Malcolm, Phelps and Stoker, (2002) suggest that this is an example of educational psychologists' work that effects organisational change by understanding the language, thoughts and constructs of key individuals. To an extent, the development of a method involving the generation of constructs, on the part of the EPs and possibly the teachers in this study, would have been possible. However, not dissimilar to the criticism made of ethnomethodological approaches detailed above, context is not foregrounded. More importantly, for the purposes of this study, there is little attention given to the artefacts that play a major role in the formation of constructs and in the facilitation of social action. Artefacts are an important element of this investigation and therefore an approach was needed that paid sufficient attention to them.

Systems theory and related eco-systemic approaches aim to explain the interrelationships between different groups of people, organisations and societal variables and in terms of understanding the role that EPs play in relation to schools, teachers, parents, children and LEAs a systemic analysis can prove useful. Dowling and Osborne, (1994) offer useful insights in to the complexities involved in such work, particularly within a therapeutic approach. However, systemic analyses tend to be situated in the here-and-now and pay little attention to historicity and how systems come to operate as they do. Part of the aim of this study is to reflect on the current practices of EPs by analysis and reflection on the past activities. Therefore, an approach that is richer in terms of depth and attention to historical and cultural factors yields informative and formative results.

Finally in this section, much current research undertaken within educational psychology practice falls under the heading of collaborative action research. Kurt Lewin first used the term in the 1940's and the approach has its roots in humanistic psychology, (Reason, 1988) in that the main aim is to develop an approach that can illuminate practice, through direct experience with individuals, in specific contexts (Cohen and Manion, 1994).

Although collaborative action research can be undertaken in a number of different ways, Oja and Smulyan (1989) have suggested that an important factor is,

> "If teachers and researchers work together on a common problem clarifying and negotiating ideas and concerns, they will be more likely to change their attitudes and behaviours if research indicates that such a change is necessary." (p.14)

Action research is not without its critics as Atkinson and Delamont (1985) have suggested that it is atheoretical and lacking systematic methods. From a more empirical, positivist viewpoint they suggest that it can be poor quality and can contribute very little to understanding the factors that contribute to effective learning. Sapsford and Abbott (1992) stress there is always uncertainty over which action has produced results, the action within the research project or the evaluation actions

Within this study, action research with participating teachers was not an aim. However, work with participating EPs was envisaged but an action research cycle was not used as the researcher was keen to develop new learning and new knowledge of the areas of practice and the activity systems involved and action research does not necessarily allow for or encourage such processes. Within a developmental framework, new

models of practice and information resulting from the research process were fed back to

the participating EPs as a step in the process and this is discussed in chapter 10.

Although a constructionist approach has been adopted as a basis for this research it is

important to acknowledge that there are critics of this approach and to note the cautions

that they urge when advocating more traditional approaches. Major criticism centres on

the extent to which subjective knowledge, perceptions and intentions owned by

individuals can be brought together in any meaningful way to form a body of

knowledge that can be used and built upon. Giddens, (1976) suggests that,

> "No specific person can possess detailed knowledge of anything more than the
> particular sector of society in which he participates, so that there still remains
> the task of making into an explicit and comprehensive body of knowledge that
> which is only known in a partial way by lay actors themselves".
> (Giddens, 1976, quoted in Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 34)

A second major criticism is that anti-positivist, or constructionist approaches have

moved too far in abandoning traditional scientific methods associated with procedures

of verification. Adopting such methods means that there is little chance of discovering

any useful generalisations about behaviour, (Mead, 1934). Argyle, (1978) suggests that

the methods employed to conduct research using newer perspectives are more suspect

than other more traditional approaches within experimental psychology. In choosing a

particular approach it is important to be aware of the inherent limitations and

constraints of that approach and to ensure that conclusions reached are circumspect.

However, given that developmental work research builds in review steps and cyclical

evaluations, validity can be checked constantly with the participants and co-workers

during the change process. Through the development of experimental tools and their

applications in work settings new approaches can be created and from this replications of the approach can be set up. Therefore a level of consistency and eventually some generalisation is possible.

2.4 Sociocultural and activity theory

2.4.1 Introduction

The previous sections have described and discussed possible methodological approaches that might have been chosen as an underlying framework to structure the design of this research study. It is now pertinent to outline the background to and key aspects of sociocultural and activity theory that have been formative in the design of the study and have provided the theoretical models through which analysis of the data has been undertaken and sense has been made of the findings. This approach to study was chosen as the research questions focussed upon the internalisation of values, ideas and motivations and how these are 'played out' in the context of complex and changing activity systems. As the research developed, sociocultural and activity theoretical approaches were continually found to be of value in making sense of the data and in providing tools for conceptualising.

This is a huge area of current theorising and research and it is impossible to include all relevant aspects within this thesis. Therefore, a brief outline of the origins of the field of study is included and then aspects of sociocultural and activity theory that have become crucial building blocks in the research design are described. Finally, other areas

of related research that come within the umbrella of sociocultural work and that might

have been used as part of this research are discussed.

2.4.2 Cultural psychology and sociocultural approaches

Writers and researchers whose work can be viewed as sociocultural or activity theory

based, come from a wide range of disciplines and there is no agreed clear distinction

between different approaches. Cultural psychology is viewed by many as an approach

that unifies some of the various strands and perhaps forms a common basis from which

branches of inquiry develop. However, cultural psychology is formulated in many

different ways (Wertsch, Del Rio and Alvarez, 1995).

One writer, Ratner, (1997), suggests that,

> "The cultural psychologist investigates subjective psychological phenomena;
> however, he goes beyond the mere subjective experience of the subject. His
> standpoint is that of an observer who analyses people's psychological
> phenomena in order to detect features, relationships and dynamics that may
> escape the subject's own awareness." (1997, p.2)

This dual position of acknowledging that psychological phenomena are subjective but

that they can be viewed from an objective position is an important tenet of cultural

psychology. Furthermore, cultural psychology has implications far beyond study of the

individual and their activities. Cole (1990) suggests that,

> "Cultural psychology is different from specialised branches of psychology in
> that it did not evolve as a sub-discipline after the founding of experimental
> psychology; the idea of cultural psychology predates experimental psychology
> and was present at its birth." (1990, p.279)

It is not appropriate to speculate here about why cultural psychology has been

neglected as a discipline especially compared with experimental psychology. The

implications of this fact have already been discussed earlier in this chapter when

Burden bemoaned the fact that Wundt's dual emphasis on the study of natural and

cultural psychology was not heeded.

Ratner suggests in the preface to his book on 'Cultural Psychology and Qualitative

Methodology' (1997) that in order to become a scientific discipline, cultural

psychology needs a sound theoretical basis and a rigorous methodology. Ratner turns to

Vygotsky's theories to underpin his approach as have the majority of theorists since

and it is certainly Vygotsky's work that underpins sociocultural and activity theoretical

developments. Before moving on from cultural psychology it is important to explore

the characteristics of cultural psychology that have been developed into other

approaches. Ratner suggests that it can be characterised as follows:

> " People collectively construct concepts that objectify their understanding of
> things (objects, animals, and humans). These cultural concepts enable people to
> communicate about things. Cultural concepts also organise the manner in which
> people perceive, imagine, think about, remember, and feel about things. In other
> words, collectively constructed concepts compose culture, and cultural symbols
> organise psychological phenomena." (1997. p.93)

This definition is important both in terms of understanding subsequent theoretical

developments within the field but more specifically as it is an underpinning principle

that is formative in the design of the research study reported in this thesis. The use of

cultural concepts to explore the levels of perceived shared meaning between

psychologists and teachers is described in chapter 7.

Sociocultural approaches are viewed by Wertsch et al (1995) to be founded in Vygotskian theory although they report that Vygotsky himself rarely used the term sociocultural, preferring to use sociohistorical, (p.6). Wertsch stresses that there are many approaches to sociocultural work but he summarises by suggesting that,

> "..the goal of a sociocultural approach is to explicate the relationships between human mental functioning, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional, and historical situations in which this functioning occurs, on the other." (1995, p.3)

Within this approach a key area for study is the nature of human action (Wertsch, 1995) or social action (Ratner, 1997). This emphasis upon action again has its roots in Vygotkian and post-Vygotskian theorising and led to the development of activity theory. Activity theory forms an important underlying theoretical approach that has guided this thesis and therefore the next section of this chapter considers this in more detail.

2.4.3 Activity theory

The study of activity has been a fundamental focus for Soviet researchers and theorisers since the birth of the study of psychology. Although definitions of activity and beliefs about its roots, function and relationships to other concepts have varied over time and are still strongly debated today. Daniels (1996), suggests,

> "Since the time of its inception in the 1920s, this category has undergone a metamorphosis and has been the subject of so many disputes that it cannot be adequately comprehended out of the context of its history." (1996, p.99)

It is not possible here to explore the range of interpretations that exist within current activity theoretical debates. For the purposes of this thesis a definition is adhered to that underpins the research processes undertaken and the questions raised. Kozulin, (1998), in interpreting Vygotsky's theories around higher mental functioning posits that most human behaviour should be considered as 'purposive and culturally meaningful actions' rather than reactive or adaptive responses to environmental or biological stimuli. Thus, in contrast to a pure behaviourist interpretation, Kozulin claims,

> "Activity then takes the place of hyphen in the formula S-R (stimulus-response), turning it into the formula subject-activity-object, where both subject and object are historically and socially specific." (1998, p.13)

From this basic assumption of activity as a core unit of analysis the study of activity theory has arisen and again, it is not possible to enter the debates around emphasis and interpretation within this thesis. Using activity theoretical ideas to structure aspects of this thesis has aided the historical analysis and understanding of the development of the profession of educational psychology in the UK. This is described and analysed in chapter 4 where activity systems are shown to develop over time due to external social, cultural, legal and historical factors. Similarly, the consideration of EP-teacher meetings as mini-activity systems working within larger systems enabled detailed analysis of the elements to be undertaken. Therefore, at a meta-level, the following view of activity theory underpins the work undertaken within this study.

> "Activity theory posits psychological development and thus psychological analysis as grounded in practical cultural activities." (Daniels, 2001, p.76)

Activity theory is not without its critics. Ratner, (1997) whilst accepting that activity theory has helped cultural psychologists because the research and conceptualisations are usually based in real activities and 'socio-technical systems' suggests that this is not always the case. He cites examples where activity theorists have not always considered the concrete social organisation of activity and have therefore not always taken account of wider sociocultural factors, (1997, p.101).

Activity theory has been developed in a range of directions and within diverse contexts. However, the research aims of this study have been pursued by adherence to the development and theorising of activity theory undertaken by Engestrom in a wealth of published literature. (see Engestrom, Miettinen and Punamaki, 1999).

Engestrom has suggested that there are five principles that are central to activity theory in its current form and these are taken by Daniels (2001, p.93-4) to represent a manifesto. In brief, they are as follows:

> " A collective, artefact-mediated and object-oriented activity system, seen in its network relations to other activity systems, is taken as the prime unit of analysis.
> …The multi-voicedness of activity systems. An activity system is always a community of multiple points of view, traditions and interest.
> The third principle is historicity. Activity systems take shape and get transformed over long periods of time.
> The fourth principle is the central role of contradictions as sources of change and development.
> The fifth principle proclaims the possibility of expansive transformations in activity systems."   (Engestrom, 1999, p.4-5.)

Within the research study reported here all of these principles are underpinning assumptions which constitute important aspects of the design, implementation and subsequent theorising about the nature of the investigation.

Engestrom depicts the development of activity theory as falling in to three generations with the first comprising of the simple triangle linking the subject and the object through a range of mediational means.

Figure 2.1 First generation activity theory model
(From Daniels, 2001, p.86)

```
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                    │
│                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐                │
│                    │ Mediational means (Tools)     │                │
│                    │ Machines, writing, speaking,  │                │
│                    │ gesture, architecture, music, │                │
│                    └──────────────────────────────┘                │
│                                                                    │
│  I                            /\                                    │
│                              /  \                                   │
│                             /    \                                  │
│                            /      \                                 │
│                           /        \                               │
│                          /          \                              │
│  I                      /_____\                             │
│        ┌──────────────────┐         ┌────────────────────────────┐ │
│        │ Subject(s)         │         │ Object/ Motive ➤ Outcomes(s)│ │
│        │ Individual, dyad,  │         │                            │ │
│        │ group              │         │                            │ │
│        └──────────────────┘         └────────────────────────────┘ │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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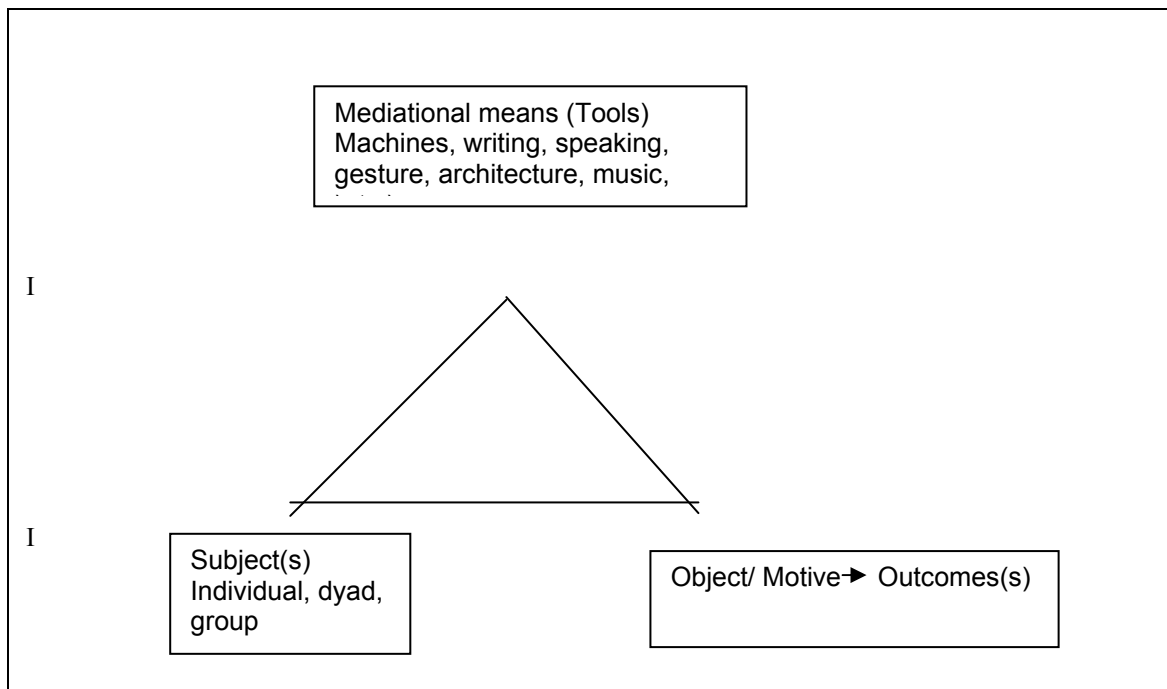
However, it is Engestrom's second generation of activity theory that emphasises the importance of the study of artefacts and mediation that has formed a fundamental tool of formulation and analysis in this thesis. Within Engestrom's formulation, he has expanded the triangular conception of an activity system to include a much wider

'macro-level' analysis that emphasises collective and communal factors. Hence he introduces the notions of 'Rules', 'Community' and 'Division of Labour'. A diagram showing the second generation activity theory model is contained in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Second generation activity theory model (Engestrom, 1987)

Mediating Artefacts:
Tools and Signs

Object

Subject

Sense
Outcome
Meaning

Rules   Community   Division of Labour

The structure of a human activity system Engestrom 1987 p. 78
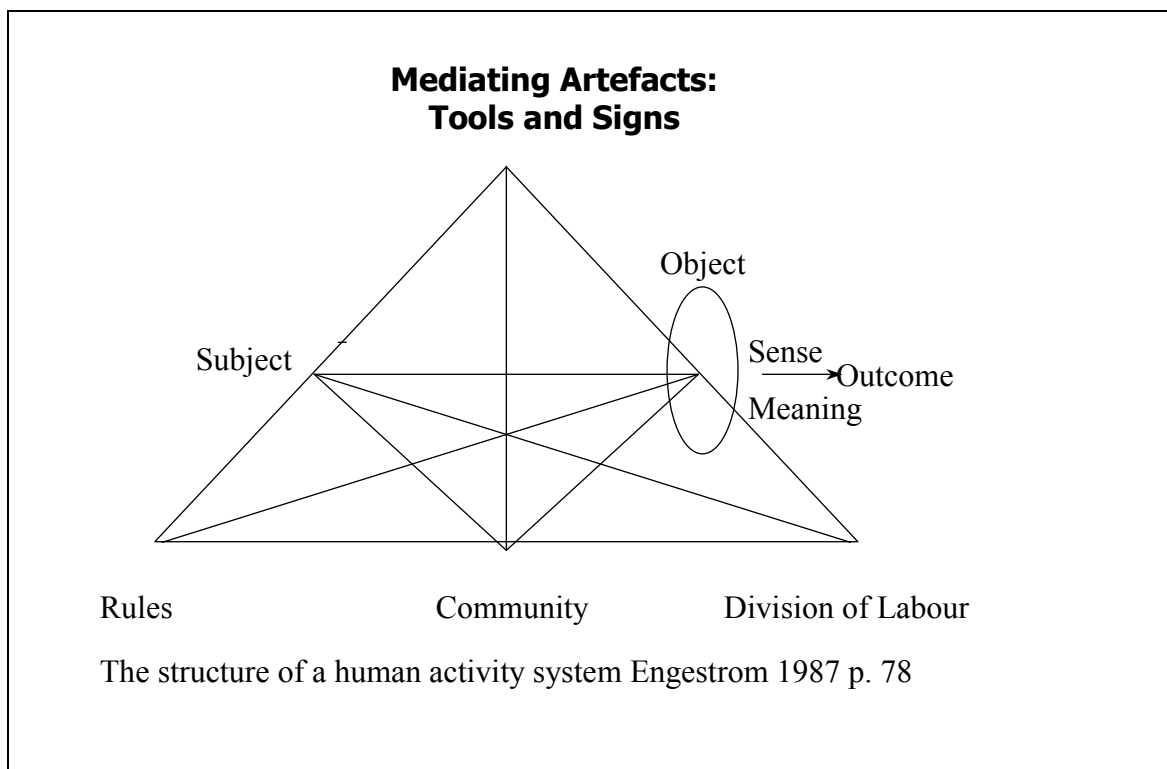
Engestrom emphasises the importance of the interaction between the various elements within this expanded activity system and also the importance of the constant changing of the subjects and objects. Examples of how this method of analysis has been used are included in chapter 4.

2.4.4 The centrality of mediation

One of the research aims of this study is to illuminate the conversations that take place between EPs and teachers during routine meetings in schools. Within this approach, particular attention is paid to the concepts used, the processes referred to and the linguistic devices and rhetorical utterances that are used. However, there is no micro-analysis of the various components undertaken, although that might have been a useful additional line of enquiry, using methods deriving from discourse and conversation analysis. Rather, the role of these tools as mediators is viewed as important and is the subject of investigation.

Clearly, meditation is a fundamental concept within Vygotskian theorising in contrast to other post-Vygotskians such as Leont'ev whose theory of activity focussed upon activity and action. (Wertsch, 1995 p.20). In discussing mediation Wertsch posits that as well as being empowering, in that it can open up opportunities for new action, mediation can also be constraining. He suggests that,

> "When analysing or planning for new forms of mediation, the focus is typically on how these new mediational means will overcome some perceived problem or restriction inherent in existing forms of mediated action. However, one of the points that follows inescapably from the view of mediated action…is that even if a new cultural tool frees us from some earlier limitation of perspective, it introduces new ones of its own." (1995, p.24-5).

This is an interesting and often neglected attribute of mediation, which is normally seen as a positive force or intervention. It is discussed in chapter 11 in terms of the mediation and mediational tools under investigation within this study.

Developing an understanding of mediation is clearly important and Kozulin (1990), in interpreting Vygotsky's work suggests that he envisaged a theoretical programme in which there existed three types of mediator: signs and symbols; individual activities; and interpersonal relations. (see Daniels, 1996). However, there are important points of difference in terms of the role of mediated action within activity theoretical work. Engestrom et al (1999) argue that sociocultural approaches tend to privilege mediated action as the proper unit of analysis, (Wertsch, 1995). They do not emphasise ideas of historicity or object-orientedness: elements that have a strong emphasis within the works of Engestrom and his followers. Clearly, mediation is another complex and keenly debated concept within sociocultural and activity theory discourses, but for the purposes of this study the emphasis is upon the nature of the mediating artefacts that are used during dyadic meetings between EPs and teachers (chapter 7) and upon the tools and instruments used in EP practice over its 100 year history (chapter 4).

2.4.5 Artefacts and psychological tools

The concept of a psychological tool as being analogous to a material tool again has its origins in early Vygotskian work (Kozulin, 1998, p.13).

> "The most essential feature distinguishing the psychological tool from the technical tool, is that it directs the mind and behaviour whereas the technical tool, which is also inserted as an intermediate link between human activity and the external object, is directed toward producing one or other set of changes in the object itself." (Vygotsky, 1981, p.140).

However, despite this clear comparison between the functions of psychological and material tools, Cole makes a clear distinction between tools and artefacts, (1996). He

views tools as a subcategory of a wider overarching concept of artefacts. As part of this premise he cites the fact that people, as well as objects may be used as mediating artefacts. Certainly artefacts can be viewed, analysed, categorised and defined in a variety of ways. Clearly the different methods of analysis will each be grounded in slightly different theoretical positions and will serve specific lines of research or enquiry. This richness of approach is not necessarily a bad thing as Engestrom and Miettinan, 1999, point out,

> "Activity theory needs to develop tools for analysing and transforming networks of culturally heterogeneous activities through dialogue and debate." (1999, p.7).

The use of artefacts within EP work is a central focus of this research and as such it is important to understand the nature of these artefacts and, if possible their creation and function and the shared understanding that exists between different people concerning such artefacts.

Engestrom and Miettinen feel that,

> "There has been very little concrete research on creation of artefacts, production of novel social patterns, and expansive transformations of activity contexts." (1999, p.27)

This research aims to contribute to the body of knowledge that is growing within activity theory research. Given that artefact usage is a key domain of study the research develops methods of investigating this area. Following the theoretical linkages made by Engestrom, the use of his taxonomies and definitions is fundamental to this research design. Descriptions of Engestrom's work and its implications for this research study are contained in the following sections of this chapter.

2.5 Developmental Work Research and the Use of Expansive Learning Cycles

Within the paradigm of sociocultural and activity theory, a practically based orientation to research and theorising has been developed by Engestrom and his team working in Helsinki and in San Diego. In formulating a methodology to guide the research study reported here, developmental work research has great appeal and face validity in that it employs concepts from activity theory and uses them to assist in real life and work settings. Developmental work research (DWR) has as its focus, learning in organisations and it differs from methods such as systems approaches and collaborative action research, (outlined earlier in this chapter) in key aspects. The key features of DWR are described in this section along with the expansive learning cycle, also developed by Engestrom, as an underpinning framework to structure the developmental research process.

Engestrom, (1995) suggests that innovative organisational learning should consist of collaborative learning that includes the production of new knowledge and solutions and transformations of practices. He suggests that earlier studies have produced relatively generalised tools and cites Argyris and Schon's theory of action work (1978) and Senge's work on learning organisations (1990) as exemplars of this type of work. The approach to analysing cycles of knowledge creation, through the use of an expansive learning cycle, is favoured by Engestrom and it is this method that forms a key constituent of developmental work research.

Just as the roots of activity theory lie in Vygotsky's work, developmental work research

is firmly located within the same theoretical orientation. Scribner, (1985) suggests that

Vygotsky did not advocate one particular method of approach to investigations but

instead highlighted four stages,

- ❑ "Observation of contemporary everyday behaviour, or rudimentary behaviour
- ❑ Reconstruction of the historical phases of the cultural evolution of the behaviour under investigation
- ❑ Experimental production of change from rudimentary to higher forms of behaviour
- ❑ Observation of actual development in naturally occurring behaviour."

(In Engestrom, 1999, p.35)

These steps have been developed by Engestrom to form a methodology that can guide

research within organisations about practices at all levels. Further he suggests that the

researcher should enter the activity system that is undergoing transformation, but in a

markedly different way to action research. The problem, Engestrom suggests is that,

> "People face not only the challenge of acquiring established culture; they also face situations in which they must formulate desirable culture. In order to understand such transformations going on in human activity systems, we need a methodology for studying expansive cycles. Such a methodology does not easily fit into the boundaries of psychology or sociology or any other particular discipline." (Engestrom, 1999, p.35)

The development of an expansive cycle originated from research undertaken by Cole

and Engestrom, (1993) whereby they conceptualised cognition as new knowledge (on

the part of the subject) emerging from the analysis and synthesis of more than one

source of information. Daniels, 2001, suggests that Engestrom,

".. sees internalisation as related to reproduction of culture and externalisation as the
production of new cultural artefacts.." (2001, p.93)

37

The steps of the Expansive Learning Cycle (ELC), as defined by Engestrom are shown in figure 2.3 below and Engestrom and his team have used the conceptual tool to guide research in a range of settings.

Figure 2.3 Expansive learning cycle

5. Implementing the new model

4. Examining the new model

3. Modelling the new solution

6. Reflecting on the process

2A Historical analysis
2B Actual-empirical analysis

7. Consolidating the new practice

1. Questioning

Expansive Learning Cycle
(Engestrow, 1999)
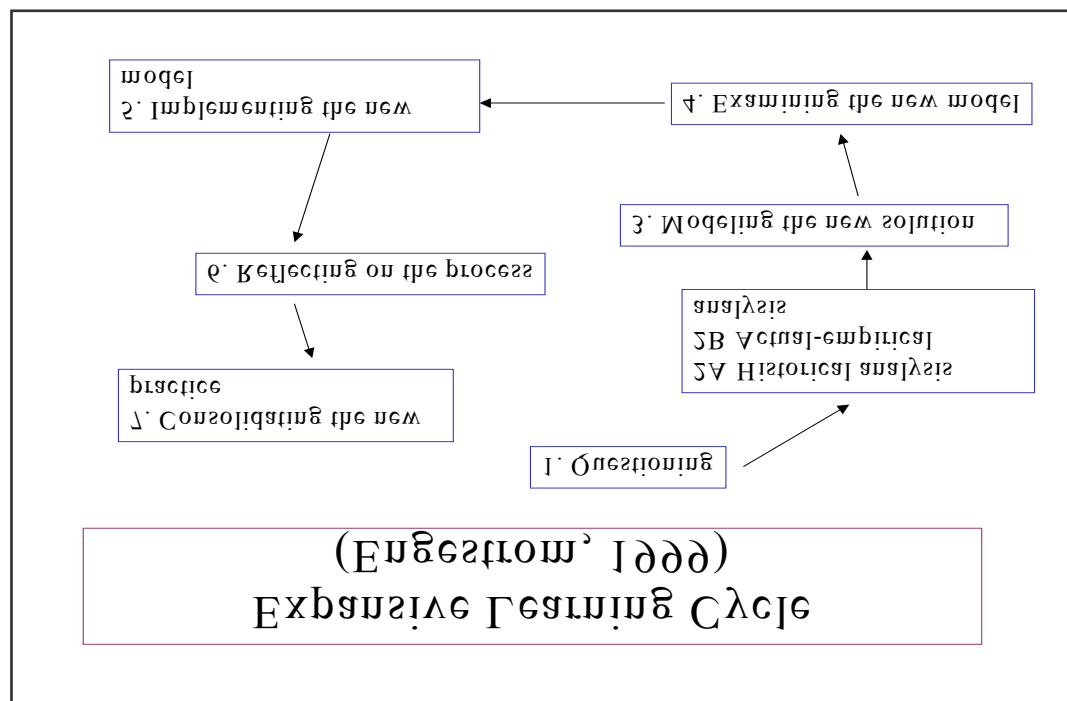
The early stages of the ELC focus mainly on internalisation, with learning, socialising and reflective steps taking precedence. As the cycle progresses, 'creative externalisation' occurs and as disruptions and contradictions emerge then there is a return to more internalisation in the form of critical reflection. At this point, externalisation can be seen as the search for new solutions occurs. As new methods of

working are agreed and become stabilised, then internalisation again becomes paramount as the ways and means of the new system are learnt.

Due to the nature of this research study, it has not been appropriate to observe the implementation of large-scale changes at a micro-level that would permit analysis of such steps in a process. Over the two-year period that data was collected within the target EP Service, the expansive learning cycle was used at the macro-level to understand the activities taking place, rather than to conceptualise individual working practices and changes and developments.

The steps of the expansive learning cycle have been used in a much broader manner, however to structure the overall approach to the research aims inherent in this study. Hence the initial stages of questioning and analysis are addressed within the early chapters of the thesis, (relating to professional practice of EPs) and the latter stages of the cycle reflect the data collection, analysis and feedback and developmental work. The structure of the research study and the thesis are shown in figure 2.4 below.

Figure 2.4 Expansive Learning Cycle as a framework for this research study

(adapted from Engestrom, 1999, p.384)

Action	Brief explanation	Relation to this research study
1. Questioning	Questioning, criticising or rejecting some existing aspects of the accepted practice and existing wisdom	Chapter 3: Contradictions within the profession of educational psychology
2. Analysing	Involves mental discursive, or practical transformation of the situation in order to find out causes or explanatory mechanisms. Evokes "why?" questions and explanatory principles. Two types of analysis; c) *Historical-genetic;* seeks to explain the situation by tracing its origination and evolution d) *Actual-empirical*; seeks to explain the situation by constructing a picture of its inner systemic relations	Chapter 4: Historical-genetic analysis of the development of EP services over the past 100 years Chapter 5: Survey of professional practice in EP services in England and Wales
3. Modelling the new situation	Models the newly found explanatory relationship in some publicly observable and transmittable medium. Means constructing an explicit, simplified model of the new idea that explains and offers a solution to the problematic situation	Chapter 6: Analysis of key influences on EP practice in the area of consultation
4. Examining the new model	Running, operating and experimenting on the model to fully grasp its dynamics, potentials and limitations	Chapters 7, 8 and 9: Describing work undertaken to examine the process of consultation in one EP service
5. Implementing the new model	Concretising the model by means of practical applications, enrichments and conceptual extensions	Chapters 7, 8 and 9: Describing work undertaken to examine the process of consultation in one EP service and in particular developments in practice one year further on
6. Reflecting on the process	Reflecting on and evaluating the process	Chapter 10: A summary of findings and emerging themes
7. Consolidating the new practice	Consolidating its outcomes into a new stable form of practice	Continuing work within the focus EP service

The process of expansive learning involves understanding and analysing contradictions and tensions within systems. Attention needs to be paid to the objects of the activities, the artefacts involved in the transformations and the different perspectives of the participants. (Engestrom, 1999, p.384). All these components constitute key parts of this research study and are described in more detail within the relevant chapters. The focus on particular steps of the ELC, (for instance the attention paid within this thesis to the historical-genetic analysis) is something that has happened in other examples of developmental work research as is the lengthy time-scale, (Engestrom, 1991, 1993).

2.6 Developments from the theory of expansive learning

A key aim of the research study is to understand the activity systems that are created when EPs and teachers engage in conversations within their working practices and this is explored and reported within chapters 7,8, and 9. One aspect of the study concerns the role relationships between the EP and the teacher and how the context, expectations and division of labour define these. It is therefore important to distinguish between the instrumental and the communicative aspects of the activities. Given that there are two or more subjects involved in the activity (EP, teacher and sometimes other staff) and that they may have shared or different objects as the focus of their activities, it is important to develop conceptual models that can help in understanding the subject-subject relationships and the subject-object relationships. Work by Engestrom, (1997), based on a three-level model suggested by Raeithel (1983) and Fichtner (1984), has informed this research study and the details are described in chapter 7. Within this three-level notion of subject-object-subject relations the three levels are termed; co-

ordination, co-operation and communication. The conceptual model is developed within this research study to encompass the use of artefacts within the activity systems.

A second core area of investigation within this research study is the use of mediating artefacts between EPs and teachers within their professional conversations. Cole, (1996) defines an artefact as,

> "..an aspect of the material world that has been modified over the history of its incorporation into goal-directed human action." (1996, p.117).

For Engestrom, in seeking to understand the use artefacts, it is more useful to conceptualise different types of artefacts in terms of the different processes they represent. He suggests four groups of artefacts that can be distinguished by specific features: "What" artefacts, used to identify and describe objects, "How" artefacts, used to guide and direct processes and procedures on, within or between objects, "Why" artefacts, used to diagnose and explain the properties of objects and "where to" artefacts used to envision the future or potential development of objects. These four categories and their application within this research are described in chapter 7. However, within this study the artefacts are viewed and judged from the perspective of the subjects (the EPs) and this is acknowledged as a significant factor within this research. This fact alone does not mean that the research is significantly flawed, rather it is providing only one voice within the activity; a factor that is discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis. Engestrom explains the construction of artefacts thus:

> " The artefact-mediated construction of objects does not happen in a solitary manner or in harmonious unison. It is a collaborative and dialogical process in which different perspectives (Holland and Reeves, 1996) and voices

(R. Engestrom, 1995) meet, collide and merge. The different perspectives are rooted in different communities and practices that continue to co-exist within one and the same collective activity system." (1999, p.382.)

The suggestion inherent in this quote is that within the same community of practice, there exist different perspectives that in turn lead to different practices. Hence, EPs and teachers, working within a shared community of practice will bring different views, expectations, needs and goals. Activity theory and particularly the study of artefact-mediated action can address these dilemmas through the theoretical concepts that have been developed.

The diversity of views and needs that EPs and teachers bring to their work can be viewed as contradictions and this is another area that has been successfully theorised by Engestrom and others as a means of understanding the transformation of activity systems. Conflicts and potential disagreements between EPs and teachers are examined within this research study as potential indicators of contradictions within activity systems. Contradictions are central to one of the five principles of activity theory outlined earlier in this chapter. Engestrom views them as having a central role as sources of change and development and distinguishes them from problems or conflicts.

"Contradictions are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems." (1999a, p.5)

This view has developed from the work of Bateson, (1972) who suggested that expansive learning could be triggered by double-binds generated by contradictory demands occurring within contexts and imposed on subjects by contextual and other external variables. Paradoxical positions, or double-binds seem to be a feature of the

professional practice of EPs and therefore this area of study is addressed within the thesis at two levels.

The historical genetic analysis of the development of the profession contained in chapter 4 seeks, throughout the chronological descriptions, to identify the contradictions that arise and the effects these have upon developing practice. These major themes are discussed in chapter 11 where they are related to the findings within current EP practice.

At a micro-level, EPs are asked to identify potential conflicts and disagreements, in relation to shared artefacts, between themselves and teachers and these are taken as indicators of potential contradictions within the activity systems. This part of the investigation is described and analysed and discussed in chapter 9 of the thesis. Hence contradictions and the important role they play within transformations of activity systems is yet another important element of activity theoretical work that has been fundamental to the research reported in this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN THE PROFESSION OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY: STEP 1 OF AN EXPANSIVE LEARNING CYCLE: QUESTIONING – THE CURRENT PRACTICE OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE UK

3.1 Introduction

The expansive learning cycle, as conceived by Engestrom, (1999b), has been described in Chapter 2 and the first step in this process is described as 'questioning'. Engestrom suggests that,

> "The first action is questioning, criticizing, or rejecting some aspects of the accepted practice and existing wisdom." (p.383)

The context for this research activity is professional practice of educational psychologists (EPs) at the beginning of the twenty first century and the opening chapter of this thesis outlines the context in terms of current legislation, employment and expectations. In order to begin an investigation, using the suggested expansive learning cycle, it is important to raise questions that are of significance to the profession at the present time. Some of the questioning that is described in this chapter relates to contradictions which have been present within the profession for a long time and which are described within chapter 4; the historical-genetic analysis of the profession.

The questions, contradictions or themes that are discussed here are not the only difficulties facing the profession. They have been selected on the basis of other leading writers' views and the experience of the researcher and on the basis of the recent DfEE

working party report that is outlined in chapter 1. They are questions that are used again in the national survey, reported in chapter 5 and in the research exercise conducted within one EP Services reported in chapters 7,8 and 9. They are also clearly a subset of the research questions addressed on a wider scale within this research thesis.

3.2 The DfEE Working Party Report: Barriers to a shift in focus for EP work

The latter part of the DfEE working group report, (2000) considers factors that can operate either as barriers to or as opportunities for a shift in EP work. This is a relatively small section of the report as most of the report is concerned with describing the type of working practices that should be developed and encouraged. However, the following potential barriers are listed:

- ❑ The extent to which users have different expectations of the service
- ❑ The attitudes and perceptions of schools towards the educational psychology service and its role
- ❑ LEA policies and structures
- ❑ Models of service delivery adopted by individual services
- ❑ The training and skills needed to support a wider role in the LEA
- ❑ The nature of other support services and agencies in each area and their enthusiasm for collaborative working
- ❑ Variations in the availability of resources to local authorities through the School Spending Allowance (SSA), to support a broadening of the educational psychologist role

❑ The response of individual LEAs to the enhanced freedom under Fair Funding regulations to delegate resources for educational psychology services to schools. (p.47)

Clearly, some of the factors included in the list are beyond the remit of this thesis. However, other potential barriers cited in the report, have been raised by other writers and are key features of this research. These are discussed in the following sections.

3.3 Preventative and reactive work: Why are educational psychologists unable to work in the way they say they would choose to?

One of the long-standing dilemmas for EPs working in the UK concerns the wish to apply psychology, in its broadest sense, within the realm of education. This aspiration is prominent in some of the general statements from the two main bodies that represent EPs in this country, the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) of the British Psychological Society (BPS) and the Association of Educational Psychologists, (AEP). It is reiterated more recently in the DfEE working group report (2000), both in the aim and in the first principle,

"Aim; To promote child development and learning through the application of psychology by working with individual and groups of children, teachers and other adults in schools, families, other LEA officers, health and social services and other agencies.
Key Principle; In pursuit of this aim, all educational psychology services should: apply psychology to promote attainment and healthy emotional development of children and young people from 0-19 years" (p.5).

The training to become an educational psychologist requires a degree in psychology and the core curriculum, prescribed and monitored by the BPS, for all training courses

within the UK, includes a high proportion of time devoted to applying psychology at a range of levels.

Psychology can be applied both within preventative and reactive work in that the body of knowledge that is drawn upon to undertake an accurate and professional assessment of a child's difficulties and to make suggestions about ways to alleviate the difficulties is essentially psychological in nature. However, beyond this there is a wish, on the part of many EPs to be able to intervene, in a positive way, to make a difference to a child's learning and development. Webster, Hingley and Franey, (2000) in a survey of new entrants to the profession of educational psychology categorised reasons why their respondents chose to enter the profession. They found that 34% fitted a category they termed 'pragmatist',

> "characterised by problem-solving or using psychology to make a difference" (p.437).

In order to undertake such work, more EP time is needed and this is one area where difficulties arise due to resources available and therefore EP time (as noted in the DfEE report as a potential barrier).

A second barrier to this type of work, also cited as a potential barrier in the DfEE report, is user expectations and attitudes and perceptions of others involved in education and children's development and learning. This dilemma, or series of contradictions, forms the basis of much of the research presented in this thesis. As noted by Argyris and Schon, (1987) even when people state that they may believe a

certain course of action to be right, for instance, using an EP's time in a particular way, their actual behaviour can be very different. Therefore their espoused theory is at odds with their theory in action. Thus in planning meetings, schools may state that they want more interventionist or systemic work, but in day-to-day work they may prefer to refer individual troublesome children.

This dimension of preventative, interventionist, systemic work versus reactive work has been an issue since the beginnings of the profession. However, Wolfendale, (1992) considers that,

> "The complexities of the phenomea with which we are engaged preclude gratuitous prescriptions and militate against unidimensional solutions, in the way, indeed that Quicke, (1982) identified when he explored the apparent tensions between status-quo-maintaining and the change-oriented practices of educational psychologists." (p. 2, 1992).

Balancing these two extremes and dealing with the resulting tensions is a theme within this thesis.

3.4 The theory and practice divide: Why do educational psychologists employ different models of psychology and use such diverse methods in their work?

Across the country professional educational psychology is practised in a wide variety of ways, although governed by a common legislative framework, as outlined in Chapter 1. In some EP services there are common philosophies and approaches but within such broad parameters, there is a degree of professional autonomy. This autonomy can be restricted by a number of factors, some of which are cited in the DfEE report (user expectations, LEA policies). The latter of these can result in high levels of internal

conflict for individuals who would perhaps prefer to conduct their professional work according to certain principles but are required to undertake activities in order to fulfil their duties as LEA officers.

An example of this might be an EP who takes a social interactionist perspective of a child's difficulties in school and would wish to conduct an assessment of the environment and the teaching as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the individual child. However, for the purposes of the LEA's assessment, to which the EP must contribute, they may be required to focus only upon the child and on particular aspects of the child's functioning, in some cases as purportedly measured by prescribed instruments. This may result in a discrepancy between espoused theory and theory in action, as described by Argyris and Schon (1987). Expectations of service users in such an authority will also be shaped by the policies and practices of the EP service.

From the perspective of professional training courses in the UK, a balanced, eclectic approach is advocated, but a scientific, hypothesis-testing model is usually recommended for assessment. However, assessment is not the only area of practice where diverse approaches are used. Models of service delivery and preferred methods of intervention are two other key areas of difference. This situation has prompted authors such as Lunt and Majors, (2000) to suggest that,

> " a more refined and subtle epistemology of practice is required to support the work of practitioners" (p.242).

They ascribe some of the difficulties facing the profession, in terms of the lack of

coherent epistemology of practice, to the theory-practice divide and in turn they suggest

that this is due in part to the underlying methodologies;

> "It could be suggested that the, perhaps, inevitable gap between psychological
> theory and practice, has been unnecessarily widened by the traditional
> adherence to a restricted scientific methodology." (p.241).

Here lies a second dilemma for the profession: working within an appropriate

methodology that is defensible and yet pragmatic. A positivist epistemology of

practice, as discussed in chapter 2, has not proved to be wholly appropriate for the tasks

facing psychologists working in schools and real-life settings, (Schon, 1996).

**3.5 Psychology and pupils with special educational needs: Why do EPs only work
with children with difficulties?**

The tensions arising from preventative versus reactive work are present in an albeit

slightly different form, when EPs hope to apply psychology in a systemic manner, to

greater numbers of children, rather than to specially identified individuals in need of

help. This espoused aim of the profession, which has risen to prominence at different

times during the history of the profession (Gillham, 1978), has never been realised to

any great extent. It arises from a belief that applied psychology can be of benefit to the

whole spectrum of adults and children, individually and in groups, in difficulty and

functioning normally. In the same way that organizational psychology can be used to

inform changes in industry to improve working practices and productivity, educational

psychology should be able to be applied to schools and other settings to improve

teaching and learning and the social and emotional health of organizations.

Clearly, there are a number of reasons why the current situation pertains. The potential

barriers identified in the DfEE working report (2000) are again fundamental

contributors to this dilemma. Attitudes, expectations and needs of consumers, mainly

schools, are key factors and many schools expect that EPs will only be interested in

special needs aspects of school functioning. A second, long-standing and far-reaching

barrier to widening the role of EPs, noted in the report, relates to resources. Whilst EP

time to schools is limited and schools cannot buy extra time, they will prioritise those

children deemed to have difficulties.

Wolfendale, (1992) suggests that there is an implicit benevolent, humanitarian intention

in the work of educational psychologists and this is focused on,

> "…clients who offer themselves up for such help, or who are persuaded by
> educational psychologists or other agents that they need it. Client receivers have
> first to demonstrate eligibility for professional help; that is to be assessed on a
> criteria of need." (p.4, 1992).

However, if LEAs, as the employers of most EPs in the UK, regarded schools

as clients, then referrals to EP services might be for the most needy schools rather than

the most needy individuals. In some areas of the country this is beginning to happen to

an extent that EP services are giving more time to schools that are deemed to be

'failing' in some way. Although this begins to meet the aspirations of EPs to work

systemically, it is still working within a model of deficit or failure, rather than with

organizations at all levels of development.

One possible consequence of the focus on special needs and in particular, named

children identified as having difficulties, is the over-pathologisation both of children

and more generally of psychologists' work in this area. In order to justify EP's time being used in specific ways; for instance the assessment of children who may have difficulties, there is a tendency to emphasise the problems and to locate them within the individual, rather than considering more systemic or interactional explanations. Billington, (2000) explores this process through detailed individual case studies and suggests that,

> "We (professionals*)* can most effectively support ourselves in our work by resisting the culture of blame which pathologizes children's unacceptable differences and which can otherwise lead to lifetimes of separation and fragmentation." (p.3)

The research findings described and discussed later in this thesis reflect this issue and demonstrate that it is of the utmost importance, certainly to those EPs who participated in the research.

The dilemma confronting EPs is perhaps similar to others working in the areas of medicine and public services, where a balance needs to be struck between targeting help to those in extreme need versus improving quality of life factors for a broader range of people. How this might be achieved for EPs working in schools could partly be answered by considering the range of possible roles and in particular, that of researcher. However, this possible role is embedded within a final set of questions and dilemmas for the profession that are described in the final section of this chapter.

3.6 Applied psychologists as public servants: How can EPs adopt a range of roles within the current employment context?

Most educational psychologists working in the UK are employed by Local Education Authorities (LEAs), with very few qualified EPs working privately or in other settings. The DfEE report (2000) notes that one of the potential barriers to any change or development of the role is LEA policy and structures (p.47). The current climate, where huge changes are being implemented to local government services in all areas, has introduced further potential threats to EP practice. In particular, the move to delegate more money directly to schools and away from LEAs has seen many support services becoming fully delegated and hence losing some autonomy. Within LEAs, as their powers and influence have diminished, Special Needs is often the largest remaining section of some LEAs and so EP services, usually positioned within Special Needs sections, have often been combined with other support services or have been given more work. This can work positively, for instance where EPs have been positively included within the support LEAs give to schools in difficulty, but it can be negative, where budgets are cut back and only the minimum, statutory levels of work are commissioned. Therefore, LEA policies and practices and beyond this, governmental policies and legislation can make widening the role of EPs and applying psychology very difficult. A worst case scenario is that EPs become 'street-level bureaucrats' (Lunt and Majors, 2000, p.239).

Should the employment base change radically so that services were delegated to schools and other organizations then this scenario is likely to have an impact upon practice in a number of ways. Wolfendale, 1992, notes that,

> "..a service of the future, under full delegation and possibly reliant on ability to pay, cannot at the same time be accessible and equally available to all." (p.4)

Therefore, from an equal access and equal opportunities perspective, moving to a situation where EPs were not paid for from the public purse, would be a retrospective and detrimental step. However, there may be some advantages to such a move as Sutton suggested in 1981.

> "Those whose social consciences are offended by such private trading might reflect that the harsh economies of such a market-place could introduce a degree of accountability and reality-testing that is not apparent in the general run of public practice, and that the demands engendered might prove a useful spur for psychological practice as a whole." (p.157)

Sutton does not suggest specific psychological practices that EPs should turn to but other writers have criticised the focus of EPs work and have suggested other more fruitful roles. In particular the position of EP as researcher is advocated by Burden, 1997. He writes that,

> "It could be argued that few professional researchers are in a better position than applied educational psychologists to investigate and report upon meaningful and socially relevant issues in education." (p. 13)

However, as discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis, Burden feels that one of the main reasons why EPs are not significant contributors to applied psychological research in education is the inappropriate positivist research methodologies upon which much of psychology is based. Similarly, Schon (1996) suggests that adherence to a model based

upon technical rationality has led to ' a crisis of confidence in professional knowledge' (p.14). Thus, EPs may not be adequately equipped in terms of their knowledge and skills to undertake research, but there still remains the question of whether they would be employed to undertake this type of work, even given appropriate methodological models and adequate training. LEAs, schools or other bodies such as public-private partnerships or charities would need to be convinced that investing in research and development activities, by EPs or others, would be cost-effective and would result in measurable benefits for their major client groups. Therefore, the final dilemma discussed in this chapter remains: how can EPs work in contexts where their skills as applied psychologists and possibly as researchers can be fully utilised.

3.7 Conclusion

The questions and dilemmas described in this chapter have raised major issues concerning the focus of EPs work. The subsequent chapters of this thesis, following, as they do, the steps of the expansive learning cycle, seek to understand, examine and critique the role and practices in detail and from different perspectives. The overarching dilemmas and contradictions, as discussed in the opening chapters are reviewed and synthesised in the latter chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4

A HISTORICAL-GENETIC ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES IN THE UK. STEP 2A OF AN EXPANSIVE LEARNING CYCLE: ANALYSING – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON CHANGING EP PRACTICE IN RELATION TO DOMINANT PARADIGMS AND THEORETICAL MODELS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to describe the evolution and development of educational psychology services in the UK since the appointment of the first educational psychologist in 1913. The purpose of this chapter is to define the current practices that dominate the profession at the start of the 21st century, using the techniques arising from developmental work research and the theory of expansive learning (Engestrom, 1987). A detailed explanation of this approach can be found in chapter 2 and a summary of the overall structure of this thesis, grounded within an expansive learning cycle, can be found in chapter 1

An important principle of sociocultural activity theory is its "historicity" Engestrom (1999a). Activity systems, as described in chapter 2, can best be understood with reference to a number of factors and when viewed from a number of perspectives. One key aspect is the historical-genetic nature of their existence. By seeking to understand the origination and evolution of a system, situation or activity, it becomes possible to understand the current practices, key players, motivations, values and much more. Engestrom maintains that, because activity systems take shape over time and

become successively transformed, 'their problems and potentials can only be understood against their own history.' (p.4)

Within the expansive learning cycle that forms the framework for this thesis, the second stage or action is termed *analysing* the situation. Two types of analysis can be undertaken, according to Engestrom, (1999b): the first approach is historical-genetic and the second is actual-empirical. Both forms of analysis involve discursive and descriptive reflection, which seeks to question why changes came about and on what basis.

In seeking to understand the key transformations that have taken place within educational psychology practice, since its birth in the UK, a chronological approach has been employed, punctuated by descriptions of key events that appear to have had a radical effect on practice. Within this analysis, an attempt has been made to understand the key social and political factors (community, in activity theory terms) and the key legislative and policy changes which have clearly impacted on the profession (rules, in activity theory terms).

Progress and development of professional practice is charted in terms of key activities undertaken by EPs at various points in time and this in turn is referenced to the new knowledge and skills available to the profession from research in psychology, education and pedagogy. A final strand is an attempt to uncover the 'contradictions'

that were present at various points in this history, as Engestrom claims that such aspects are crucial as sources of change and development. He defines contradictions as follows:

> 'Contradictions are not the same as problems or conflicts. Contradictions are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems.' (p.5, 1999a)

The history begins at the start of the 20th century, commonly taken to be the beginnings of the formation of the discipline of psychology.

4.2 The early development of educational psychology and educational psychology services   (1900 – 1940)

4.2.1 The emergence of educational psychology as a discipline

A key marker in the history of the professional practice of educational psychology was the appointment of the first educational psychologist, Cyril Burt (later Sir Cyril Burt), to the London City Council in 1913. In order to understand the context within which he began his practice, it is necessary to describe key background influences and developments from both educational and psychological points of view.

The history of education in this country is a subject in its own right, strongly influenced by population growth, wealth, together with religious and political factors. Maliphant, (1997) comments:

> 'It is not always appreciated that the notion of education for all was often strongly resisted in the 18th and 19th centuries on the grounds that it was irrelevant to many and disruptive to their lifestyle.' (p.102)

Key developments in educational policy were the 1880 Education Act that made school attendance compulsory for 5 – 12 year olds with education becoming free in 1891. The first Board of Education (a forerunner to the current DfEE), was established in 1899. Hence, during the early years of the 20th century, most children up to the age of 12 had access to free education.

However, from the beginnings of this more accessible education system, many children were excluded. A recognition that children varied, by nature of their various disabilities/handicaps/backwardness/measures of intelligence, whatever the language of the time, was not accompanied by any means of clearly identifying such difficulties and differences, nor any notion of how (or even whether) the children, or their presenting difficulties, should be differentially treated.

The beginnings of the discipline of psychology are difficult to establish and it is necessary to trace the work of pioneers in related fields to uncover the roots of psychology. Early work by Charles Darwin shook the scientific community and laid open many fruitful lines of study in terms of understanding human development and behaviour. In 1877, Darwin published 'A biographical sketch of an infant' which influenced, amongst others, his half-cousin, Galton. Galton set up an anthropological laboratory in London and began investigations concerning the measurement of physical and mental phenomena in people; a forerunner to the psychometric movement.

The inaugural meeting of the British Psychological Society was held in 1901 at University College, London. This meeting was convened by Sully who had, in 1884, published one of the seminal books in this field, *'Outlines of Psychology: With Special Reference to the Theory of Education'*. This combination of psychology and education reflects an important point in the study of educational psychology and forms the basis of the later work of psychologists such as Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner. As psychology began to establish itself as a science, slowly acquiring the necessary attributes of traditional scientific study, early tensions emerged, which still persist to the present day, in terms of appropriate methodological and phenomenological approaches. The difficulties, uncertainties and contradictions of applying traditional scientific methods to the study of human development, the study of the mind and the understanding of behaviour have proved a constant challenge to psychologists working in both the applied and academic arenas.

Right from the beginnings of the discipline, the requirement, arising from social and political imperatives, to direct attention and research to areas with practical applications is apparent. Hence, early work, emanating from Galton, tended to focus upon measurement of human capability and ability and this work was expanded by the mathematician Pearson and in the United States by Spearman. Within educational circles, both in the UK and in France, concerns were raised, from an economic point of view, about the selection of pupils for schools. It was perceived, by those in charge of budgets, that expensive mistakes in identification, usually undertaken by medical personnel involved with the children, were being made during selection processes.

Therefore, economic and social forces channelled the study of educational psychology into the development of techniques for measuring cognitive abilities, or intelligence tests. The first of these techniques, the Binet-Simon Intelligence Scale, was published in France in 1905.

It is difficult to evaluate whether contradictions were present in the discussions of these early pioneers. It is possible that they were frustrated by being channelled into the identification and measurement area of study rather than being asked to research the learning of children in general and those with difficulties in particular. However, they may not have seen this as a wasted opportunity, given that this was the birth of a new area of study and the external forces that funded and directed their work were enthusiastic for their products to be of practical use. They may have relished the opportunity presented. Either way, the starting point for applied practice was clear and it was only later that psychologists began to research into learning more generally. Sadly, by that time the professional practice of educational psychologists had already been channelled down a singular route.

4.2.2 The development of psychometrics

Sir Cyril Burt receives a mixed press within educational psychology circles and beyond. However, as the first educational psychologist appointed in the UK his name will never be forgotten. Given the potential to develop the role of educational psychologist, it is interesting to be reminded of the breadth of the task by this quote from Sir Cyril, cited in Love, (1973);

'Burt's recollection of the first day of the first educational psychologist: "When I appeared in the doorway of the Education Officer's room asking, very humbly, for my terms of reference, I was greeted with a curt, 'Young man, Ye've all of London at your feet……. go away and draw 'em up yersel !'"' (p.35)

The direction of those terms of reference is interesting in itself and again has implications for the development of the profession and highlights potential contradictions present at the time. Burt saw the role primarily as that of scientific researcher and his areas of interest were in backwardness, delinquency and educational testing. He used survey and assessment techniques and his work included assisting individual children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Valentine, 1965).

Although his employers valued his work, the formation of a proper educational psychology service was deferred until after the Second World War. Interestingly, the second educational psychologist to be appointed was in Leicester in 1931. Hence the profession grew at a slow rate and had its foundations mainly within the psychometric movement. Criticisms of psychometrics are legion and it is not appropriate for the arguments to be laid out in this study. However, it is important to note that from early on,

"Criticisms that psychometry had forgotten its parent body, psychology,…. have some pertinence." (Maliphant, 1997, p.105)

Right from the beginning, the focus was upon the individual and was wedded to a deficit model, intent upon measuring deviation from some assumed norm.

This within-child focus has been a dominant paradigm within the profession throughout its history and is one of the themes that thread through this study. This focus can also

been seen as the basis of many contradictions, in Engestrom's terms, at key turning points in the profession's development. The failure to acknowledge the role of context and environmental factors in the assessment of pupil performance, not to mention the role that other factors play, in both an interactional and developmental sense, from the early beginnings, represents lost opportunities and a major narrowing of focus.

4.2.3 The development of the child guidance movement and medical model of practice

Children who presented problems in terms of their adjustment, behaviour or deviance were also a cause of concern at this time and their treatment, as well as their identification was addressed through the establishment of Child Guidance Centres and clinics. The roots of this movement can be traced back to early psychoanalytic and psychodynamic theories. From this theoretical standpoint, it was generally believed that unless disturbances in early childhood were identified and addressed, then serious problems would emerge later in life. Surprisingly, although there has never been convincing empirical evidence of the effectiveness of such approaches, they have had a lasting impact upon therapeutic work in this and other areas of practice.

The origins of the psychodynamic and psychoanalytic movement date back to 1899 when De Sanctis set up a cross-disciplinary team to address childhood problems in Italy. Similar movements were emerging in the United States with the foundation of the Chicago Juvenile Psychopathic Institute, by Healy in 1908 (DES, 1968). The first clinic was set up in the United States in 1920. Its aim was to study difficult, delinquent and

pre-delinquent children and to develop methods of treating them. Soon after, in 1932, the first clinic was set up in the UK, in Birmingham and consisted of a psychologist, psychiatrist and psychiatric social worker. Within this triad, the psychiatrist took a lead role and the psychologist was often cast in the role of psychometrician, providing data to aid diagnosis and only rarely contributing to any treatment programmes. The construction of the role in this way ensured that again, the focus was on the individual and seeking to find within-child explanations of difficulty.

It is important to note that at this stage psychologists working within Child Guidance settings were under the auspices of health and were adhering to a medical model of practice with all the attendant corollaries. Again, it is difficult to surmise whether there were contradictions in the minds of practitioners as they sought to categorise children in a multitude of ways using multifarious labelling devices. Given the psychodynamic and psychoanalytic backcloth and the techniques that were being developed within psychometry, and in the absence of any dominant paradigms emerging from social psychology, it is unlikely that this young profession would have had the confidence to question the powerful medical establishment and the models it eschewed.

However, the profession of educational psychology was becoming established mainly as part of the child guidance movement. By 1939, Hearnshaw, (1964) records 22 clinics maintained or partly maintained by Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and, to a lesser extent, within school psychological services.

4.2.4 A sociocultural perspective

Conceptualising the work of educational psychologists, obviously in broad-brush terms, as an activity system, helps to understand the development of the role from a sociocultural perspective. This is depicted in figure 4.1 and a description and discussion of activity theory, in its wider context is included in chapter 2.

Figure 4.1 Diagram of activity system depicting EP work from 1900 -1940
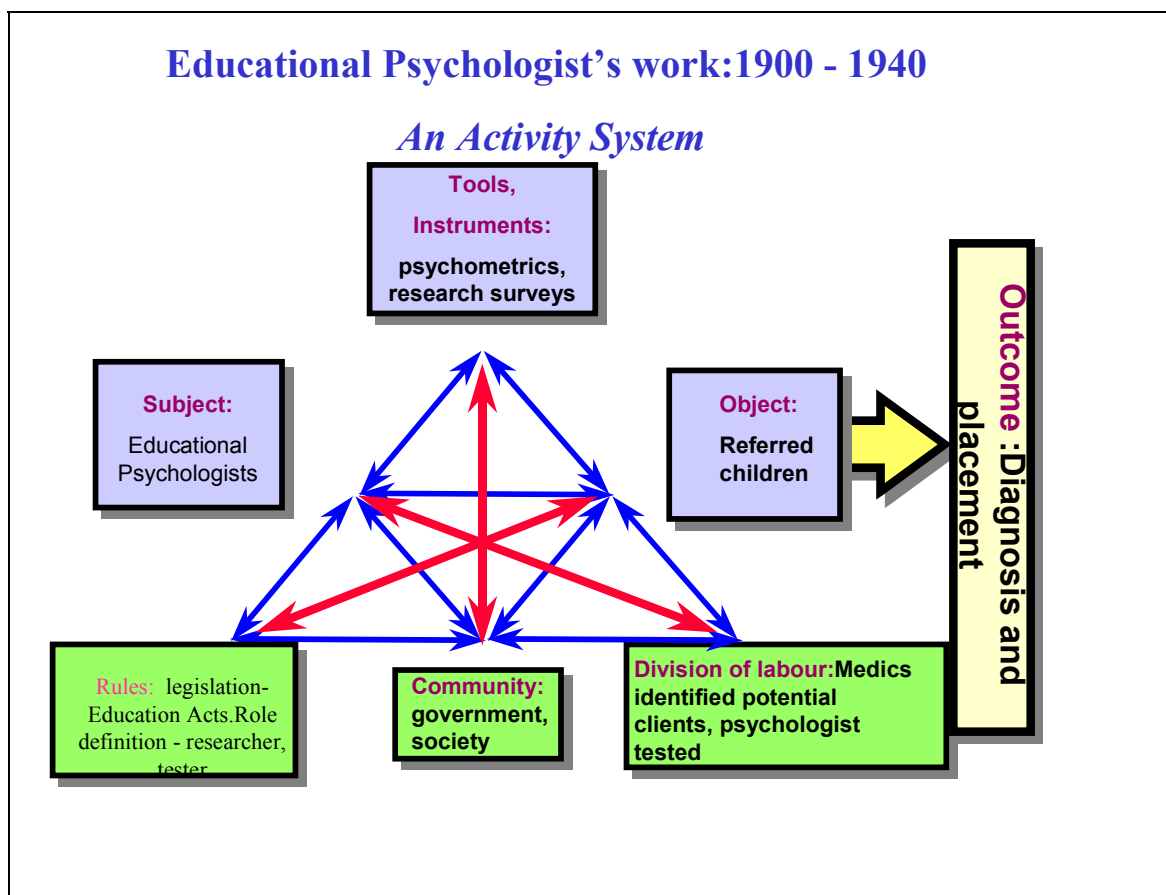
For the purposes of this analysis, the subject is the body of EPs working at the time and the objects are the children referred to EPs. Throughout this historical-genetic analysis, the subject remains the same but the object changes slightly. During this period of time,

the main tools or instruments that were used or 'mediated' the work of EPs were psychometrics, as described in earlier sections of this chapter. However, the techniques associated with developing research methods were also valuable tools as Burt tried to understand and describe populations according to emerging norms.

Outcomes, at this time tended to be mainly the results or diagnosis, resulting from the psychometrics, that may have led to differential placement or the allocation of educational resources. This activity system was underpinned, in Engestrom's terms by three sets of circumstances: rules, community and division of labour. Speculating on key influences over 80 years ago is somewhat difficult but it is likely that the key rules that governed practice were, as now, the relevant legislation. Thus, the Education Acts mentioned earlier, which entitled pupils to educational opportunities, formed the backcloth to the lone EP attempting to classify children. The wider community in activity theory terms can be thought of as society in general, perhaps particularly the local context in London, and the government, in the form of the newly created Education Boards.

Division of labour and, subsumed within this, the politics of power, was a key influence as the client group was initially identified from a medical basis with doctors playing a key role. Hence the role of EP as tester stemmed both from the technologies available but also the position that education found itself in with respect to the more established medical fraternity. The extent to which this role development was dependent upon the key interests, skills and preferred style of the (then) lone EP is difficult to ascertain.

Certainly, given the circumstances of Burt's appointment and his opportunity to draw up his own terms of reference, it is safe to assume he was happy in his work. Such degrees of freedom are not necessarily apparent in the wider development of EP role as this analysis of the development of the profession demonstrates.

4.2.5 Summary of psychological paradigms underpinning practice

The powerful influence of psychometrics that dominated the early development of educational psychology stemmed from a number of key areas of psychology, alluded to earlier in this chapter. The early work of Darwin and Galton (see Maliphant, 1997) formed the basis of the biological understanding of human behaviour and also provided the strong underpinnings of a tradition in experimental psychology. Allied to this, the need for measurement came from the work of William James (Coolican, 1996), whose work combined studies in philosophy, theories of knowledge and empirical psychology. He is credited with establishing psychology as a science, and some of his work formed the basis of later studies conducted by a long line of behaviourists emanating from the United States.

Cognitive psychology, similarly stemming from the work of James and developed by Binet and his co-workers, was also a powerful underpinning of the growth of psychometrics. There was little evidence of interest in developmental psychology per se at this time nor of early behavioural traditions. Moreover, social psychology and the role of others in the development of individuals, was yet to be considered. Practice

followed the theory and research prevalent at the time with developments in practice having little discernible feedback into successive lines of enquiry.

4.3 Post-war developments (1940 – 1968)

4.3.1 The Second World War

The Second World War provided ample material for psychologists to develop their therapeutic and supportive skills as many children were evacuated from their families, resulting in disturbances to family life. Additionally, with fathers away from the home, uncertainty surrounding individual and collective futures existed. In many families, mothers were going out to work for the first time and there were severe pressures on families and children resulting in greater numbers referred for child guidance. By about 1944, there were about 70 child guidance clinics in the UK (Dessent, 1978).

A strong influence at this time came from the work of Bowlby who, following the psychodynamic tradition, had begun to study the effects of maternal deprivation on young children. He studied the effects of institutional care on children, (Bowlby, 1946; 1952) and it is his work on the developmental effects of deprivation for which he is remembered. The implications of his work underpinned the development of theoretical and research work in the area of attachment theory. Again this strong, individualised, within-child model was pursued, albeit within the context of the effects of parenting, or lack of it. Within this child guidance model, the psychologist still tended to occupy the role of 'psychometric athlete' (Maliphant, 1997) and did not use knowledge of psychology to comment or advise on parent-child relationships.

4.3.2 The 1944 Education Act

The publication of the 1944 Education Act introduced, amongst many changes, the concept of educational sub-normality and also established maladjustment as a handicapping condition in the same way that blindness or deafness existed. In terms of the industry of categorisation, labelling, discriminating and selecting, this created ever-new vistas for psychologists. At this time, many psychologists were spending some of their time working as part of a child guidance team and part of the time within a school psychological service. This latter development was essentially post-war and marked the beginnings of educational psychologists working directly in schools. It would be gratifying to report that EPs worked *with* schools but in fact they tended to replicate the practices undertaken in clinical settings, namely testing, within various corners of school buildings.

However, the 1944 Education Act, by including more children within the legitimate remit of education, at least provided a forum for questions to be asked about provision for these new groups of children. Numbers of educational psychologists increased, so that a report by UNESCO in 1948, indicates that there were about 70 – 100 educational psychologists in England and Wales, but many of those were part-time.

4.3.3 Growth in the profession

Indicative figures of the number of EPs are included periodically within this account to show that, although the numbers of EPs were growing, it was still a very small profession, with little research underway, no dedicated journal for the exchange of

views or practice and few published books on the subject. Therefore, in terms of impetus for change, which might be evidenced through contradictions, (historically accumulating structural tensions, in Engestrom's terms) there are no reported views articulated at that time. Perhaps isolated individuals, not belonging to clearly recognised services, did not have the breadth of knowledge or self-confidence to advocate different ways of working.

At this point it is perhaps pertinent to refer briefly to the training of educational psychologists. This area is worthy of further discussion because the training courses set up at varying times across the UK have always played an important part in shaping developments in the profession. Although training centres for child guidance existed in London, the first course dedicated to the training of educational psychologists, based in a university, was established at University College, London in 1945. A year later, a similar course was set up at Birmingham University. The formalisation of the qualifications needed to practise as an educational psychologist has evolved over time, but the limited number of training places, was and continues to be a key factor in the employment and role development of educational psychologists.

The 1950's saw the development of School Psychological Services alongside Child Guidance Clinics with a typical arrangement being that educational psychologists spent part of their time each week in each of the two settings. An impetus for change came from the frustrations of psychologists feeling that the role within child guidance was essentially restricted and medically based and that there was more scope for the

development of the role within more educational settings. This pattern continued

throughout the 1960's and culminated in the commissioning and publication of a

government report on *Psychologists in Education Services*, more commonly known as

the Summerfield Report (1968).

4.3.4 A sociocultural perspective

Acknowledging the danger, once again, of oversimplifying complex situations, by

using a basic analytical tool, it is possible to conceptualise the developing role of EPs

during the period of time described above. Using activity theory models, as outlined

earlier, the relationships and influences can be represented as in Figure 4.2

Figure 4.2 Diagram of activity system depicting EP work from 1940 -1968

Educational Psychologist's work:1940 - 1968

An Activity System

Tools, Instruments: psychometrics, therapeutic skills

Subject: Educational Psychologists

Object: Referred children

Outcome :Diagnosis and placement, treatment

Rules: legislation- Education Acts.Role definition - tester, therapist

Community: government, society, schools

Division of labour: Medics and schools identified children, E.P. tested, some interventions

Mirroring the earlier analysis, it is fair to depict EPs and referred children as the subject and object in the activity system. Outcomes were usually diagnosis and placement – as was the case pre-war. However, another typical outcome, arising from the growth of child guidance, was treatment of specific problems. This additional outcome was possible partly from increased skills and approaches in the armoury of psychologists and allied professions (psychiatry and social work), emanating from psycho-dynamic and psycho-analytic theory.

The legislative structures begin to play a greater part in the role definition with more labelling of children from not only the 1944 Education Act but also the Underwood Report (1955), which introduced the term 'maladjustment' into common parlance, giving it the status of a recognised 'condition'. Hence, the role definition broadened slightly, veering further towards a medical model of practice, to include that of therapist. The broader community within which the profession grew, encompassed not only government departments and society in general, but also Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools. As school psychological services were set up, the power of referral increased to encompass schools as well as medical agencies. It is important to note that at this point, as was the case from the beginnings of the establishment of the profession, parents themselves - and certainly not children - have no direct access to EP services. Thus, a division of labour emerged where medical staff and schools identified potential beneficiaries of EP attention and EPs obliged by identifying (usually via traditional testing) and occasionally intervening, usually from a medico-psychodynamic basis.

4.3.5 Summary of psychological paradigms underpinning practice

The tradition of psychometrics, underpinned by experimental and cognitive psychology, flourished during the 1950's and 60's and this was accompanied by a growth of interest in developmental psychology and child development in particular. Piaget's work (see Maliphant, 1997) was clearly an important building block both in terms of psychological thinking, but more broadly in terms of pedagogies that

influenced education more broadly. The work of Kellmer Pringle, (1966) in particular with young children, also added new understandings of how children develop and how milestones can be measured.

Behavioural psychology was influential in the United States, particularly the work of Skinner (1953), but failed to make much of an impact in the UK until the mid-sixties when a number of psychologists began applying behavioural techniques and approaches in some settings. Similarly, Russian psychology and Vygotsky's work in particular, (1978) was largely ignored here, as it was in most parts of the world. Social psychology, developing as a subject in its own right, began to offer concepts such as 'deviance' and 'maladjustment' thus contrasting these terms with concepts of normality and conformity. However, the psychology of individual difference was still paramount, with psychologists acting as 'master classifier' in one role or another.

As has been noted earlier, another dominant tradition was the psycho-dynamic approach, clearly rooted in Freud's early work (1933), and perpetuated by his followers. This tradition dominated therapeutic work and for a long time was the only approach to intervention offered in many spheres and areas of the country. The child guidance movement embraced this approach, with its medical within-child model and it was only later that psycho-dynamic theory broadened out to embrace a wider systemic view of the individual operating within a number of wider concentric, important contexts (Dowling and Osborne ,1994).

4.4 Beyond the Summerfield Report and into the Reconstructing Movement

 (1968 – 1981)

4.4.1 The Summerfield Report

The Summerfield Report, published in 1968, was based on the results of a working group set up in 1965 by the government of the day. The first such body to consider the profession, it was established due to the increase in demand for the services of educational psychologists, particularly in school psychological services rather than child guidance centres. This increase in demand came at a time when many EPs were leaving the profession for posts in the expanding universities, colleges of education and for senior appointments within LEAs. Concurrently, the training courses were, as is still the case now, unable to meet the demand in terms of the number of qualified EPs trained each year. The remit of the committee was to consider the field of work of LEA psychologists, the qualifications and training needed, an estimate of the numbers required and to make recommendations for the future. The findings gave the first full picture of the profession and cited actual and suggested ratios of EPs to child population – a calculation that is still regularly cited today.

The picture this report paints is not one of a thriving profession, working in creative ways to use psychological knowledge in schools. Many psychologists moved upwards and onwards into related posts – again a trend which is still present today- leaving the core of the profession doing what? The descriptions of the work as portrayed in the Summerfield Report suggest that not much had changed, in terms of the focus of the work, over the previous 10 –15 years. Before considering the nature of the work it is

perhaps worth noting that at the time of the survey, 1965, most practising EPs in

England and Wales were included in the survey; the number of respondents being 326.

Most respondents were under 40 years of age and most were male. Two thirds of the

respondents to the survey were trained as teachers, (as well as having qualifications in

educational psychology) and 90% had taught for one year or more.

4.4.2 Range of work undertaken by educational psychologists

The report provided data on the amount of time EPs spent in different activities – the

first of many such surveys. The results reflect a continuation of the trends described in

earlier parts of this chapter, as the two key activities were 'psychological assessments'

and 'treating children'. Within this breakdown, approximately 10% of the time was

spent assessing children in child guidance settings and between 20% and 70% assessing

children in schools and other settings.

> "The work analysis thus showed a preponderance of individual clinical,
> diagnostic and therapeutic work with little indication of involvement in
> advisory, preventative or in-service training work. More over, the scientific
> research role of the educational psychologist, so strongly advocated and
> practised by Burt received little mention." (Dessent, 1978, p.31)

This balance of work seems to have been rarely challenged even whilst the number of

psychologists continued to increase on a greater scale than before. The increase in posts

was in part due to the fact that more children were coming within the purview of

education as the 1970 Education Act deemed that children previously labelled

educationally sub-normal, ESN(S), should now become the responsibility of education

departments. To an extent, this group of pupils paved the way for psychologists to

begin to employ behavioural principles in their work, something that had not been prevalent up to this point. However, this new approach was necessary in order to design suitable curricula, teaching programmes and behaviour management techniques.

The decade following the publication of the Summerfield report saw the development of a role that came to be known as a traditional role for educational psychologists. Writers such as Phillips (1971), who was involved in training at the time, stated that the core skills and responsibilities of EPs were identification, diagnosis and treatment, the main client groups being children with learning or adjustment problems. This view was fairly widespread and was given more credence when it was expanded and exemplified in a book, published in 1974, which became a rare commentary on the practice of professional educational psychology and a text book for trainee psychologists. (Chazan, Moore, Williams and Wright, 1974).

Most EP practice at this time seemed to conform to the model suggested above, judging by the articles submitted to the main journal at this time. However, many practitioners were becoming openly dissatisfied by the circumstances they found themselves in and the prescribed role they were occupying.

4.4.3 The reconstructing movement

Against the custom and practice formed over many decades, in different parts of the UK, new techniques, roles and models of practice were being discussed and in some cases put into practice. Leyden (1978) portrays a picture of the climate and culture against which this happened.

> "Faced with school populations of 20,000 to 30,000 and a system of open referrals with no initial screening, the enthusiasm for testing began to wane, initially on the simple grounds that it was inappropriate and impossible for the large number of children referred." (p.163-164)

The seminal text 'Reconstructing Educational Psychology' published in 1978, brought together a collection of writers, all educational psychologists, who represented the frustrations and dissatisfactions felt by many, surrounding the role of educational psychologists. The book also included descriptions of possible alternative models of working and modes of employment. Criticisms centred on chapters entitled; 'Medical and psychological concepts of problem behaviour', 'The failure of psychometrics' and 'The psychologists' professionalism and the right to psychology'.

Prior to this publication, rumblings of discontent had also been voiced through journal articles, some of which were posing awkward fundamental questions for psychologists. One such example from Topping (1977) was expressed emotively as:

> "The practice of educational psychology has become an increasingly insecure occupation as many of its buttresses have been demolished. Several sacred cows have emerged badly from both conceptual and empirical scrutinies of their effectiveness." (p.20)

Here Topping was referring to psychotherapeutic cures, special schooling, especially those schools for children labelled maladjusted or moderately ESN(M), child guidance services and remedial education. This broad sweep of criticism must have shaken practitioners, but many of the institutions criticised were fundamental to the special schooling system, which was growing in strength and numbers. An important correlation, which it is not possible to explore here, is the inter-relation of the growth

and specialisation of special education and the functioning of educational

psychologists. As Tizard pointed out in 1976,

> "To apply psychology was to assign individuals to points in a multi-dimensional
> matrix. This would enable them to be sorted into appropriate categories, for
> which there were appropriate educational niches or forms of remedial
> treatment."(p.226)

Clearly, the medical model was still perceived to be dominant. An interesting point

emerges here as some psychologists sought to shed themselves of roles they felt to be

inappropriate. Throughout the history of the profession there is a theme that educational

psychologists' roles have always been defined by others rather than by themselves. For

most of the time up to the late 1970's, it seems that there was little incongruence

between the two groups. Leyden, (1978) suggests that from the early beginnings of the

profession, most EPs were faced with a definition of their area of competence made by

other people.

At this point in the history of the profession, when role definition was particularly

crucial, Topping suggested that, even though many EPs were beginning to question a

medical model of professional practice, this premise

> "…remains firmly part of the cognitive map of the teaching profession, and
> teacher's expectations of psychologists' in many areas are still couched in terms
> of the "assessment and treatment" of individual children, who, by virtue of
> needing such attention, must be "abnormal"." (1978, p.21)

This is an important assumption, which will be explored later in this thesis in terms of

the mutual role expectations between EPs and teachers and through examining

conversational devices, employed by EPs and teachers.

Moving on to the suggested changes that were profiled in 'Reconstructing Educational Psychology', the role of the EP as an agent of change working with school systems was outlined by Burden (1978). In this chapter, Burden describes some projects undertaken by trainee educational psychologists in local schools. Using these examples he suggests a process by which project work can be initiated and managed and he also recommends a model of evaluation, taken from other settings but applied to school-based work (Stufflebeam, 1968).

A conceptualisation of the role of the EP as being concerned with the wider environment, employing systemic and preventative approaches, was a welcome relief to many EPs dissatisfied with the narrowly defined role previously outlined. The examples, given by Burden, were among the first in a long line of projects undertaken and written about by EPs. This conceptualisation of role also represents the beginnings of 'the great debate', as it came to be known (Reid, 1976). Other writers since this time have typified the tensions, which exist between the push to undertake crisis-driven individualised work with children and the belief that preventative, systemic applications of psychology are more effective. Polarisation of the descriptions of working practices, in this form, continues to this day and is an important factor to consider within the remainder of this historical-genetic analysis.

4.4.4 A sociocultural perspective

The changes in the professional practice of educational psychologists during the 1960's and 1970's may have been more in the minds and aspirations of a creative few rather

than representing a huge sea change of activity. However, their views are significant as they formed the first wave of new, broader thinking. Using activity theory models to analyse the situation at the end of the 1970's and on into the early 1980's, the relationships between subject and object can be viewed as shifting slightly from the last conceptualisation offered, from 1940-1968. Figure 4.3 shows an activity system for this period.

Figure 4.3 Diagram of activity system depicting EP work from 1968 – 1981
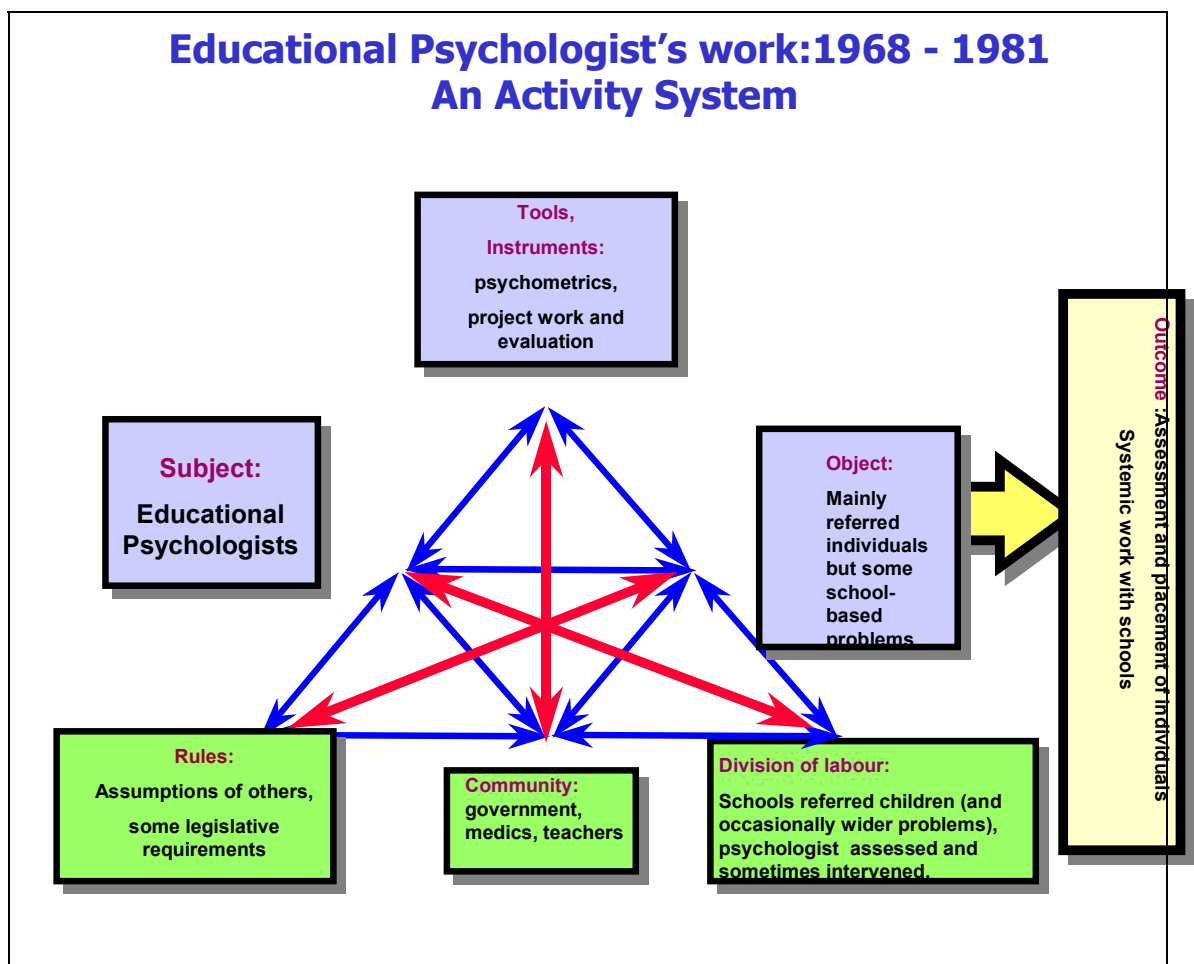
Still assuming the EP to be the subject, the objects can be viewed as referred, named children. A significant development, certainly for school age children, is that referrals

tended to come from schools rather than from medics. (This was and is not the case for pre-school age children for obvious reasons). In some cases and in some parts of the country, the objects could be seen to be whole class or whole school problems, demanding a more environmental, systemic approach.

The tools available had begun to broaden to include skills in project work and evaluation. This assumes that EP training had begun to shift in order to embrace new areas of psychology. However, this new knowledge and these embryonic skills did not replace the core tools of the trade; assessment and testing methods and materials.

Underneath the basic activity system triangle, the prevailing rules were perhaps set as much by tradition and other peoples' expectations as by heavy legislative strictures or guidance, as discussed earlier. The community (in a broad sense) had widened out to include teachers and schools as key players in the system and the division of labour had also moved a little but still consisted of teachers referring problems (usually children) and EPs mainly assessing and occasionally intervening. Again, it is important to acknowledge that this is a simplification and generalisation of what went on over a significant period of time. The purpose of such an analysis and the benefits that ensue lie in highlighting the changes over time and in understanding the reasons for these changes.

4.4.5 Summary of psychological paradigms underpinning practice

During this period of time, new ideas were being embraced by the profession and were beginning to be introduced into professional practice, as demonstrated in earlier sections of this chapter. The growth of behaviourism in the Unites States and interest in behavioural approaches was imported to this country, but to a much smaller degree. Applied behavioural analysis (Lovitt, 1977), as a tool for understanding problematic behaviour and for managing – or modifying - that behaviour, was gaining in popularity, not just with children with severe learning difficulties (as typified by the work of the Hester Adrian Research Centre on the Education of the Developmentally Young project; EDY for short, Farrell, McBrien and Foxen, 1992) In many settings, psychologists and others were applying behaviour modification techniques successfully.

Another manifestation of behavioural principles applied to learning resulted in the blossoming of instructional psychology with its use of behavioural objectives (Ainscow and Tweddle, 1979). This led to the techniques of direct instruction and precision teaching which were introduced to schools in many parts of the country. Clearly, these two developments, although having profound effects on the learning and behaviour, required teachers to behave differently and this in turn meant that EP attention was beginning to shift from exclusive focus on children to some focus on children but also a focus upon the teaching side of teaching and learning. This is a development that has significance in terms of current practice and is a theme that permeates this study.

During this time, whilst some attention was paid to the role of teachers in educating children with difficulties and to what EPs had to offer, there was also a regeneration of interest in cognitive psychology particularly with the rediscovery of Vygotsky, (Daniels, 1996) and those that further developed his ideas. However, this work was sadly slow to permeate into schools, with some notable exceptions such as Bruner (1966).

In certain parts of the country there was also an interest in the work of George Kelly, (1955), who had formulated his theories of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP). EPs who began to experiment both with the techniques that emanated from PCP but also with the implications that derive from the theory, began to understand that working with teachers and children was far more complex than had previously been conceived.

There were undoubtedly other important developments in psychology that influenced EP practice during this time. Alongside this raft of progress, knowledge of educational practice, pedagogy and special educational needs teaching were all expanding. However, for the purposes of this analysis and due to constraints of space, these have not been included.

4.5 A statutory role for educational psychologists (1981- 2000)

4.5.1 The impact of legislation

The next period of time saw a significant shift in role definition for EPs as the profession gained, for the first time, a statutory function within special needs

legislation. This was heralded by many as an important shift, in that the status, position and specific skills and knowledge of EPs was recognised for the first time. However, with hindsight other commentators have reflected that it was the beginning of a different type of straightjacket for the profession. These perceptions and the effects of the legislation on role are explored within this section.

4.5.2 Statementing

The Warnock Report, which was researched during the latter part of the 1970's and was published in 1978, formed the basis upon which the 1981 Education Act was constructed and enacted. Although warmly received in many quarters because it made early attempts to deconstruct labels for children, it introduced the concept of special educational needs and suggested that "integration" into mainstream settings was something that ought to be considered for some children in some situations. This legislation is now viewed to have been cumbersome, unrealistic and damaging. Gillham (1999), commenting on the effect of the 1981 Act on the profession of educational psychology suggests,

> " The 1981 Education Act leading to the implementation of the statementing procedure and its corollaries can now be seen as nothing less than a tragedy for the profession" (p220)

Additionally, he comments,

> "The irony is that at a time when no one believes in the procedure (not least its progenitor), educational psychologists are still lumbered with it"(p. 220).

The results of the implementation of the 1981 Education Act and its minor restructuring via the 1993 Education Act and the Code of Practice (1994), the 1996 Education Act and the revised Code of Practice (2001) have been huge for all institutions, schools, LEA departments and professionals working in the field of special needs. However, for the purposes of this analysis, the focus of this study will remain on educational psychologists.

At the time of the 1981 Act, although the role of the EP was only one part of the whole assessment process, in terms of the long-standing rivalry between medical staff and psychologists, EPs were given some supremacy. This occurred because their advice was often viewed by LEA officers as the most important advice submitted and in many LEAs the EP was required to draft or even write the final statement as well as submitting their psychological advice. However, this role definition, whilst providing job security for many, did little to further the cause of applied educational psychology in schools.

Across the country, the numbers of children whose special needs have been assessed and for whom statements have been issued has increased year on year. These figures have been collected on a regular basis and are available in different sources. However, the government has sought, via the Audit commission, to advise LEAs on how to manage assessments and provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), (Audit Commission, 1992). For educational psychology services across the country, there has been a battle to meet the new statutory requirements to assess children within

specific time limits, as well as maintaining a balance of other tasks that legitimately fall within their remit. Alongside this, most EP services have increased the number of posts within the EPS but often have been unable to fill these posts. With some minor differences, this is the position that still pertains at the present time in most EP services, in terms of balancing time spent on statutory work and on other functions.

Some radical writers have suggested that statementing has destroyed educational psychology as a profession as we know it, (Sutton, 1997). It has certainly been a dominating force that has unfortunately shaped practice and therefore training for the past two decades.

4.5.3 The Education Reform Act

Numbers of statements have risen nationally due to the change in the assessment procedures but also for other related reasons. The most important of these is that more children with SEN have been accommodated within mainstream environments since the 1981 Education Act, initially through positive attempts to integrate at a variety of levels; functional, locational and social, (Warnock, 1978). More recently, calls for inclusive education have resulted in policies that promote the inclusion of all children with SEN in mainstream settings, (CSIE 1989). Until recently, in order for provision to be allocated to such pupils, a statement was needed. This, in turn necessitated an assessment of need that in turn requires EP involvement and advice. This train of bureaucracy is costly in terms of time and money and has also changed the relationship between schools, LEAs and support services.

In many areas of the country, EPs have been placed in positions, either officially or unofficially, where they are required to make decisions about whether a child's level of need requires an assessment or provision. This invidious position is concerned with measuring against locally or nationally agreed criteria and once again does not involve the application of psychology. Selecting pupils to benefit from assessment has put EPs in direct conflict with parents and teachers in both mainstream and special schools. This developing role has felt uncomfortable for many EPs, partly because the system is complex and distracts time from more interventionist work but also because in many areas it has forced practice back in time in that more brief, but less rigorous assessments are being carried out upon greater numbers of children to meet bureaucratic requirements.

If arguments promoting inclusion and integration can be positively connoted in terms of increases in statementing, then other developments, resulting in yet more increases, cannot. In particular, the legislation which came in to force in 1988, the Education Reform Act (ERA), which included Local Management of Schools (LMS), the introduction of Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) and league tables can be viewed as having a negative effect on pupils with special needs. Schools have found themselves, and still do, under pressure to continuously improve their performances in a range of areas. With this aim in mind, pupils with SEN, and in particular, with emotional and behaviour problems, can militate against the school's overall improvements. If a child has a statement, then this means they could be exempted from national testing and also means, in some cases, that the pupil does not need to be excluded from school because

of behaviour problems – a move which again is often viewed as failure on the school's behalf.

Some commentators at the time felt that the prevailing educational climate, which gave rise to the Education Reform Act and all that has followed since, was evidence in itself of failure of the profession of educational psychology to have the impact it should have achieved. Pearson, (1989), quotes George Miller's presidential address to the American Psychological Society 20 years earlier as follows:

> "As a science directly concerned with behavioural and social processes psychology might be expected to provide intellectual leadership in the search for new and better personal and social arrangements. In fact, however, we psychologists have contributed little of real importance – even less than our rather modest understanding of behaviour might justify. We should have contributed more."(p. 3)

Pearson then moves on to suggest that the Education Reform Act is strong confirmation of Miller's opinion. The key areas she cites are as follows:

- Our psychological knowledge of assessment, learning and management has been ignored or never offered in an intelligible way

- As advocates of children with special needs our efforts have failed

- Whilst we indicate in survey data that influencing policy is a major role, we do not seem to be very good at it

- As scientists we have failed to convince civil servants, MPs or HMI that evidence, evaluation, or proof of effectiveness are relevant concepts to educational change

- As professional psychologists in education we are not perceived as a core group that LEAs should retain or opted-out schools should pay for (p 3-4).

This damning indictment of the profession is interesting to reflect upon given the continuing pace of change in education in the UK. It is probably true to conclude that we have failed in the areas cited above, but this is likely to be due to the roles to which the profession has been assigned as much as to a direct failure to deliver. A total renegotiation of the traditional role was probably necessary for the profession to move ahead in the manner envisaged by Pearson. However, some of her more pessimistic projections did not come about and it is important to maintain an objective and balanced view of the progress of the profession in order to judge the paths taken.

4.5.4 Other legislative trends and influences

The changing face of the educational scene that was set in motion by the Education Reform Act and strengthened by successive legislation, has also had indirect effects on professional practice. The continuing struggle on the part of LEA-employed EPs to keep a balance in their work and to engage in preventative and systemic work was present throughout this period, but there were threats to this from the prevalent political and educational climate.

One particular threat has been the question of funding and delegation of budgets from LEAs to schools. Gersch, McCarthy, Sigston and Townly (1990) commented that threats to delegate part of budgets to schools could both fragment the work at preventative and casework levels and could also

> "compromise the position of EPs attempting to assert the best interests of individual children that may not fit easily with the immediate interests of those managing schools." (p.123)

This ethical dilemma that faces EPs employed in public service organisations has been in existence since the creation of the profession but has been highlighted by the possibility of power balances changing between schools and LEAs. However, psychologists have their own ethical standards and Codes of Conduct available from the British Psychological Society and it is to the latter that adherence is primarily paid. However, in terms of role definition, the tensions created as a result of the Education Reform Act were and still continue to be far- reaching.

From a more positive standpoint, some notable authors have suggested, (Reynolds cited in Sutton, 1997) that EPs should be urged to give up their concern with individual problems and should 'hang their hats' on the school effectiveness movement. Although there have been some EPs who have made strides in this direction, no real progress has been made in contributing to the debate on school effectiveness and school improvement.

Finally, during this period of time an HMI report on educational psychology services in England, based on a survey undertaken in 1988-9 was produced in 1990. It was generally a descriptive rather than analytic report but nevertheless supported a wider role for EPs. It emphasised efficiency and effectiveness in all aspects of work and stressed the need for a 'reasonable balance between reactive and preventative work'

(p26). Sadly, as with the earlier Summerfield report, it had little impact as the patterns

of work were again governed by contextual factors. Against this background Dessent,

(1994) remarks,

> '"The work of an educational psychologist is linked to the requirements of the
> special educational system. However, EPs have rarely been comfortable in
> confronting this fact of life viz that their purpose is largely to serve social,
> political and economic functions" (p.51).

The last two decades have perhaps been characterised by this overwhelming fact and

the profession has either been unwilling to accept this or has failed to realise that this

has been an overriding agenda.

4.5.5 A sociocultural perspective

The period of time from 1981, when EPs had, for the first time, a statutory function, up

until the present day has been characterised by strong legislative and contextual

influences. Therefore although knowledge and skills have advanced in many areas of

psychology, the local authority context in which most professional educational

psychology takes place, has restricted creative practice to a great extent. A sociocultural

analysis, as depicted in diagram 4.4.

Figure 4.4 Diagram of activity system depicting EP work from 1981 -1998
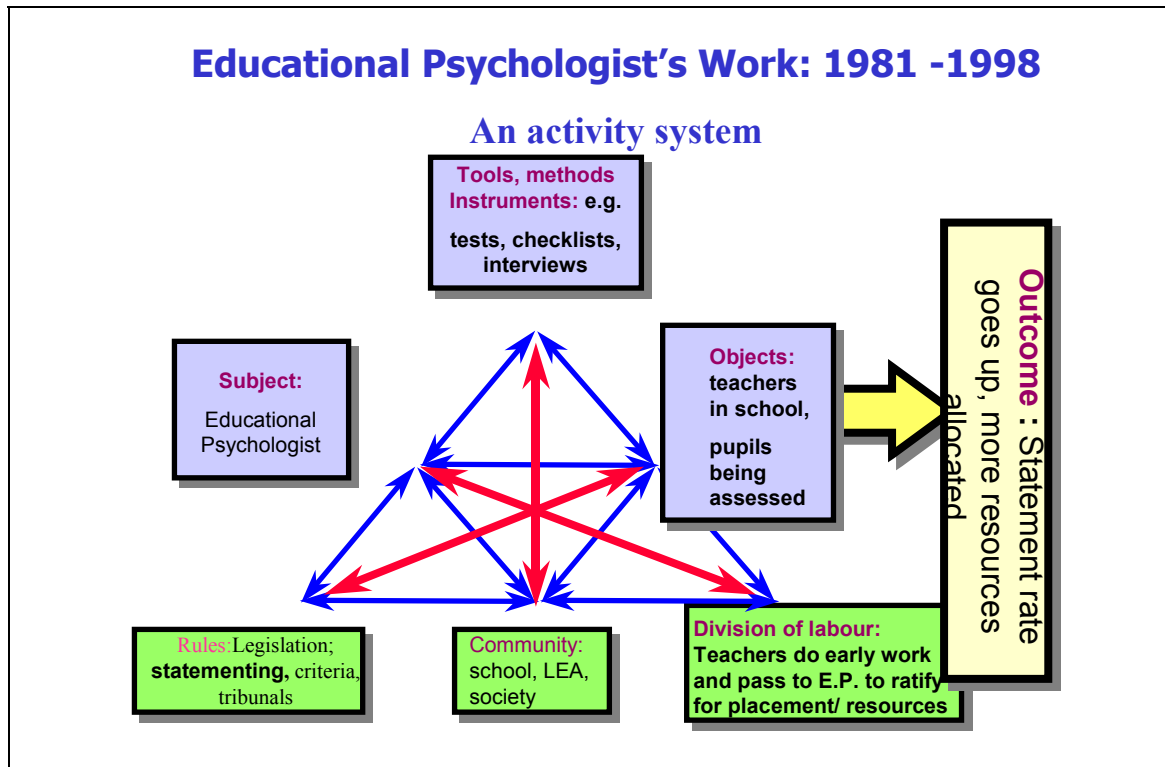
would clearly emphasise the part that the rules e.g. the legislation have played in

shaping practice. There are also changes in terms of the underlying structures and

cultures within education and the wider community. Emphasis on accountability and

value for money has been a key factor that has changed the relationship between

schools and LEAs. Much wider, national guidance and requirements have priority in

areas such as targets, results, OFSTED inspections, exclusions and rates of

statementing. Therefore, this backcloth has played a significant part in influencing the

practice of all support services working within the interface between schools and local

authorities.

This trend has, not surprisingly, influenced expectations and respective roles and so the division of labour has shifted. It is more difficult to portray a clear picture of the changing patterns over the last 20 years because there are radically different approaches being used in different parts of the country. These differences will be highlighted and discussed in later chapters. However, in broad terms, schools have tended to identify children who are failing or have difficulties and EPs have been involved in assessment and placement decisions. Alongside this trend, there have been some prominent examples of systemic work having an impact (Gray, 1997), but in these cases, EPs have often been a part of larger multi-agency teams.

Continuing the sociocultural analysis, the subject remains throughout the educational psychologist, but the objects would be jointly individual children referred for statutory assessment and also teachers seeking advice. The referral base tended to be exclusively through schools during this period and the working environment, in most cases is schools.

The tools and instruments that have been used have tended to support the high levels of assessment work that have taken place during this period and this has resulted in a reversion to psychometric tools in many parts of the country. This resurgence, or re-entrenchment in many cases, has been due in part to fear over litigation, with SEN tribunals and high profile legal cases giving credence to technical test materials, scores and discrepancies. Hence EPs have felt the need to use such approaches to give some dubious assurances to their opinions. Secondly, the sheer volume of cases and strict

time limits have made EPs, often only able to see an unknown child on one occasion, use standardised approaches.

This has not been the case in all parts of the country and there are local factors that account for the differences. Some such factors, e.g. distances travelled, historical precedents, manager's views and locally devised criteria have all played a part in shaping the practice of EPs.

The outcomes, to a great extent, have continued to be assessment and provision for individual pupils, to a greater extent in mainstream schools. This has meant that some EPs have been able to contribute to the monitoring and support of SEN pupils in local schools. However, this has not become a major role and tends to be most successful when EPs are contributing as part of a multi-disciplinary team.

There has continued to be some systemic work but projects have been linked to larger initiatives, such as bullying, disaffection or literacy and in these cases, EPs are largely working as members of larger teams.

4.5.6 Summary of psychological paradigms underpinning practice

Given that a high proportion of EP work over the last twenty years has been directed towards the individual assessment of pupils, the range of paradigms that have been used is likely to be somewhat limited. However, there is still a quest, on the part of many EPs and in many EP services to continually develop and to draw upon new approaches

and there is still, as was noted earlier, marked regional differences in practice across the country.

In undertaking statutory assessments, ranges of methods are used with psychometric approaches being fairly commonplace. However, other non-psychometric approaches, based on assessment-through-teaching and curriculum-related assessment are also used and are in many places, the preferred option, (Williams and Mallon, 1997). This leaning towards instructional psychology has developed in many places from interest in behavioural psychology and the use of behavioural objectives within curriculum development and individual programme planning, (Ainscow and Tweddle, 1979)

During this period of a heavy focus on individual work necessitated by role demands, there has also been a growing interest in systemic approaches to school situations that has its basis in social psychology and family therapy. Coming from an interactionist perspective, many EPs have sought always to consider the child in a range of contexts and to look at the importance of school, classroom and teacher factors. Thus, the work of Dowling and Osborne (1994) and Stoker, (1987 and 1992) demonstrate the importance of EPs in crossing boundaries and making connections between systems at a number of levels. This work has more recently been extended to concentrate upon the environment as a primary focus and for interventions to be geared towards changing the environment to improve the situation for all pupils, not only named pupils experiencing difficulties, Daniels and Williams, (2000), Williams and Daniels, (2000).

EPs have also maintained an interest in therapeutic aspects of their role and in particular have developed approaches to support inclusive practice in schools, such as 'Circle of Friends' work, (Newton, Taylor, Wilson 1996), (Shotton, 1998). They have also turned their attention to anti-bullying strategies and have been instrumental in developing approaches that are widely used in schools, (Sharp, 1996), (Duncan, 1996). All these approaches draw heavily upon a range of psychological models and theories but in particular are founded in social psychology and humanistic psychology. They provide examples of the innovative and valuable practice that can develop when some time or space is made within the EP role.

4.6 Concluding remarks

Practice is constantly changing in response to role demands and also to new knowledge and skill development within the profession. The recent past has also been characterised by a move towards a different model of engagement between schools and educational psychologists and this is characterised by the development of consultation in many EP services. This has not been considered in any depth here, as it is the subject of a separate chapter that examines the move towards consultation and the philosophies and methodologies that are behind the move.

Links can also be made to Chapter 5, which describes a recent survey of EPS practice, (Leadbetter, 2000). Here, consultation is a clear theme that is becoming more and more prevalent and its ramifications are described and discussed later in this thesis.

From a sociocultural perspective, using activity theory analysis, it is perhaps the case that the subject and object are still the same as in the earlier analyses; namely, the EP and the teacher in school. The underlying factors have also not changed a great deal as the legislative frameworks are still in place and the expectations from schools and communities are similar. However, the division of labour has moved towards a relationship where teachers outline concerns or problems and EPs offer advice or conjointly solve problems. Outcomes could be described in terms of the success of the interaction in facilitating teacher actions that result in improvements in pupil performance or behaviour. These factors will be explored in more detail in Chapter 6 on consultation.

One development is evident in that there are more tools or instruments currently at the disposal of EPs and in more common use. There is now much more talk about the discourses that take place between EPs and teachers, (Bozic and Leadbetter, 1999) (Macready, 1997) and of the tools which can facilitate discussion, (Kerslake and Roller, 2000). Again this area of development will be considered in greater detail in the concluding chapters.

It is clear from this account that much can be gained form a historical-genetic analysis of practice. The profession of educational psychology has pursued a varied and somewhat rocky course over the past hundred years and it is interesting to note that in many cases, key directions have been taken due the views, wishes and expectations of other involved parties, not as a result of decisions made by the profession. The

fundamental fact that most EPs are employed as public servants has perhaps been

underestimated during the perpetual struggling with role definition that has taken place

within the profession. Hence, Leyden's (1999) comment that,

> "Like it or not, the EPS is now an instrument of LEA policy to an extent
> unthinkable 30 years ago." (p.227).

This thesis is concerned with the development of professional practice of educational

psychology and in particular the role of EPs working in schools and with teachers. A

sociocultural perspective is adopted and as part of this account a historical-genetic

analysis has been presented here. The value of this overview cannot be over-rated as it

sets the scene for much of the following work; a point which was made back in 1978 by

Dessent,

> "….the value of an historical perspective on the development of a professional
> group lies in the extent to which it reveals how carefully aligned the thinking
> and practice within a profession is with the requirements of the social
> /institutional world of which it is a part" (p.33).

CHAPTER 5

SURVEY OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY IN ENGLAND AND WALES. STEP 2B OF EXPANSIVE LEARNING CYCLE: ANALYSING – ACTUAL-EMPIRICAL ACCOUNT OF CURRENT ROLE AND FUNCTION OF EP SERVICES

5.1 Introduction

The expansive learning cycle consists of a series of stages designed to illuminate and understand how activity systems change and develop. A central part of this process is that of analysis. The previous chapter considered professional practice from a historical-genetic perspective but provided an analysis based upon dominant trends from a theoretical basis. This chapter forms the second part of the analysis but is based upon actual empirical data. In order to collect a significant amount of data, with sufficient detail, a national survey was conducted of all Educational Psychology Services in England and Wales. The systems in Scotland and Northern Ireland have markedly different contexts and are subject to their own legislation.

5.2 Context

Throughout the history of professional educational psychology practice there has been very little written about the way that services are delivered to schools. The previous chapter summarises significant events and since the late 1990's there has been more attention paid to issues of practice. In 1998, Cherry gave an account of one EP Service engaging in self-evaluation as part of an LEA inspection. Also, during 1998, Thomson

published a survey of Scottish EPs work practices and perceptions, which provides a thorough account of the professional practice and current issues in Scotland.

Bartram and Wolfendale, (1999), considered issues of quality within EP services, particularly as they related to Service Level Agreements (SLAs). Imich, in two articles in 1999 (a and b), considered service delivery within EP services in relation to the use of time allocation systems. This collection of contemporary articles provides information on specific aspects of practice. However, the research reported in this thesis, conducted as part of the larger study, attempts to cover a wide range of aspects of practice and to survey views of the Principal EPs who lead and manage services.

5.3 Purpose of survey

This survey was conducted at the beginning of the overall research process and sought to address specific aims relating to current practice at the time. Alongside providing an actual-empirical account of contemporary EP professional practice at the time (1998), as part of this thesis, the survey provided relevant data that contributed to the on-going national debate, Leadbetter (2000).

The aims of this part of the research were as follows:
- o To describe current practice in EP services throughout England and Wales
- o To analyse links between chosen models of service delivery and other aspects of service cultures

- To investigate possible correlation between service delivery models and other aspects of service practice

- To ascertain the direction of current and future developments within EP services

- To survey views on possible future roles for EP services

- To investigate the extent to which school visiting / consultation approaches are the subject of discussion and development within services

- To provide information on those services where reflective practice is built into services systems.

The questions included in the survey questionnaire therefore reflected the aims and covered areas detailed below. The questions requested descriptive information from respondents and were focussed upon the process of providing services to schools rather than the content of the work undertaken. Therefore, information was gained about "How" the work was undertaken rather than "Why". No details about "What" was undertaken was requested as the type of psychology delivered, or used was not the subject of this part of the investigation.

5.4 Method

The survey data was collected using a postal questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data and therefore both open and closed questions were used. Nine areas comprised the questionnaire and they were as follows:

1. Models of service delivery

2. Levels of flexibility in models of service delivery

3. Number of monitoring and evaluation systems used by EP Services

4. EP Services using prescribed formats for school visits

5. EP Services using particular styles questions or protocols

6. EP Services and supervision systems

7. Types of supervision

8. EP Services and appraisal /performance review systems

9. Desirable and feasible areas of future practice

Most sections comprised of a direct question followed by open questions. This gave scope for respondents to describe the particular features of their own EP services. A typical example of a question is given below and the whole questionnaire is included as Appendix 1.

Are there any prescribed formats for school visits, which are used by individual EPs within the service? If so, could you describe their function? Any interview routines, tools, menus, feedback sheets, forms or other materials.

5.4.1 Pilot study

The first draft of the questionnaire was sent to a sample of eight Principal Educational Psychologists (PEPs), who were Heads of EP Services in a variety of areas: large and small urban EP Services and County EP Services. Each PEP was asked to complete the questionnaire for their service and also to comment on the ease and clarity of use and to make any other comments. The results of this pilot study were analysed and the comments of the PEPs were utilised. Alongside this, the quality of the data obtained

was considered and as a result, some of the wording and focus of the questions were modified. This was done in order to target more closely the areas of practice under investigation and also to ensure as much consistency in interpretation of the questions as possible, given that the data-gathering instrument was intentionally open-ended.

5.4.2 Response rate

The questionnaires were sent out to the 160 EP Services that were in existence in January 1998 and by the end of the spring term, 92 completed returns were received, representing a response rate of 58%. Table 5.1 shows the responses from different regions. As part of the exercise, those PEPs who responded were promised a copy of the final report in order to facilitate their own service development. This report was written and distributed in December 1998.

Table 5.1 Response rates to questionnaire

	Number sent	**Number returned**	**% return**
English Counties	38	26	66
Metropolitan Areas	37	20	49
New Unitary Authorities	27	13	48
Welsh Authorities	21	10	48
London Boroughs	32	21	66
Other	5	2	40
Totals	**160**	**92**	**58%**

5.5 Analysis of results

Qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were used to interrogate the data.
The data was analysed using key words in the individual responses from PEPs. Often
more than one idea, opinion or description of method was included and so the data was
clustered into categories that conveyed similar information. Each cluster of similar
responses was then analysed for similarities, differences and for any connections.
Entries were coded and an independent reader checked a sample of the data (12%).

The data is presented through a series of tables, elaborated through description and analysis of qualitative information.

The qualitative data provided a rich picture and an amalgam of the qualitative and quantitative data was used to draw conclusions about trends and regional differences. This data was presented in short form in a report sent to all participating EP Services.

5.6 Results

5.6.1 Models of Service Delivery

The first section of the questionnaire asked about the type of service delivery offered to schools and the results, taken from PEP descriptions are given below and are divided into the different locations of EP service.

Table 5.2 Models of Service Delivery

	Service Level Agreements	Locally negotiated	Consultancy	Time Allocation	Multi-professional Team	Other
English Counties	3	1	5	15	1	1
Welsh Authorities	2	3	0	5	0	0
London Boroughs	0	0	2	18	1	0
Metropolitan Areas	1	1	0	16	0	2
New Unitary Authorities	1	1	0	8	0	3

Other	1	0	0	0	0	1
TOTALS	8 9%	6 7%	7 8%	62 67%	2 2%	7 8%

5.6.1.1 General Comment

The data illustrated in Table 5.2 shows the main categories of models of service

delivery as described by the respondents. These formed the groupings and then, in

order to ascertain whether there were any influences relating to geographical factors,

the results were analysed according to specific types of EP Service. As noted in

Chapter 4, issues of local context played a partial role in determining the development

of specific directions and interests for EPs, it is likely that the key elements of

geography and local context are significant in determining how services are delivered.

5.6.1.2 Time allocation

Time allocation was the most prevalent model of service delivery used by EP Services

in England and Wales with 67% of Services saying they employed some form of this

model. Time allocation was also regularly linked to complex formulae and weighting

devices, which were used to allocate total and individual EP, time in many Services.

Systems such as these often included pre-school work, specialisms in specific areas of

practice and research and development work.

The qualitative data indicated that in many cases this was strongly linked to Service Level Agreements with schools and to consultancy models of service delivery. The highest level of usage appears to be in the London Boroughs and in County Services.

5.6.1.3   Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

9% of EP Services indicated that they currently operate SLAs but many more, in their additional comments, indicated that they were currently negotiating over or moving towards SLAs and several talked about "operating agreements" with Heads. It is also possible for EP Services to draw up SLAs with a range of other organisations, including Local Authority bodies and LEAs themselves. A repeat survey might well indicate very different data in this area of practice. Service level agreements indicate a move into a more business-oriented environment where EP activities are negotiated and agreed with client groups and customers. More accountability is therefore built in to the systems that are set up. It is likely that mechanisms such as these will play a significant role in the future development of the profession.

5.6.1.4 Locally-negotiated systems

A small proportion of respondents, 7%, stated that they operated locally negotiated systems where EPs were able to negotiate with schools over delivery dependent on EP style, choice and the needs of the patch. This is similar to earlier times, as described in Chapter 4, when EPs in some areas of the country were able to develop a style of working which they felt met the needs of their clientele but also, presumably, was conducive to their own style and interests. An example of this is the predominance of

psycho-dynamically oriented child guidance clinics that existed in London. Given the current climate of accountability and consistency, it is not surprising that only a minority of EP services are able to operate in this way. Three of the six EP Services that operate in this way are Welsh Authorities. This might indicate a degree of independence currently existing in Wales, which does not exist in England.

5.6.1.5 Consultancy

Although the number of PEPs stating that they used consultancy or operated a consultation (the newer, and now preferred term) service are low at 8%, a qualitative analysis of the comments suggests that this form of service delivery is often linked to time allocation and may not have been stated in such a way that it was selected in the analysis. Many of the EP services who described themselves as using consultancy were very strong advocates of this form of service delivery. Some stated that it was the only way in which they related to schools. Specific statements are quoted below to illustrate the range of responses:

> "…everything we do is consultation….plan-do-review…grounded in an interactionist model of psychology"

> "….consultation based on termly multi-professional meetings"

> "….moving to a clear consultation model..."

> "…..consultative model operates multi-professionally with advisory teachers so some needs identified by teams, not by schools."

As this is the most recent long-term development within the area of EP practice in schools, and, arguably, entails a major change in roles and relationships between EPs

and schools, this theme is developed in the following chapter of this thesis. However, at the time of the survey, it comprised only a small proportion of the various forms of service delivery.

5.6.1.6   Mixed models of service delivery

Several PEPs who responded to the survey described mixed models of service delivery operating within their EP Services. Examples given below illustrate some of the different ways in which service delivery is organised in these services.

> "We have an operating framework with schools and individual choice for EPs within limits"

> "There is a minimal level of commitment to schools…. time commitment to schools is judged by the EP against her/his total demands"

> "…a mixed model, an open referral system runs alongside a time allocation system for consultancy work."

Within this category some respondents also indicated a move towards more multi-disciplinary working within their services. This reflects recommendations made in the DfEE report (2000) on the role and function of educational psychologists as described in Chapter 1.

5.6.2 Levels of Flexibility in Model of Service Delivery

One of the areas of focus for this study is the evolution of EP services in response to local and national imperatives, alongside the development of the profession. Accordingly, Principal EPs were asked about the levels of flexibility that were available to individual EPs, within their services, in terms of how they delivered a service to schools. The data is presented in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3 Levels of Flexibility in Model of Service Delivery

	Very flexible	Some flexibility	No flexibility / Compulsory
English Counties	3	6	17
Welsh Authorities	4	3	3
London Boroughs	1	9	11
Metropolitan Areas	5	8	7
New Unitary Authorities	3	3	7
Other	1	1	0
Totals	17 18%	30 33%	45 49%

5.6.2.1 Comments

18% (17) services were described as very flexible, 33% (30) services said that there was some flexibility and 49% (45) said there was no flexibility and the designated mode of service delivery was compulsory. The results indicated that in nearly 50% of the services, the PEPs considered that there was very little flexibility in terms of the way that the schools were serviced. This was particularly the case in county services and in the London Boroughs. In services where time allocation systems are in operation, there is less flexibility in terms of the ways that EPs can operate. This is not the case for other forms of service delivery where PEPs report either some levels of flexibility or high levels of flexibility. A number of PEPs in services that currently operate a compulsory system reported that they were reviewing this and were looking for more negotiation between EPs and the schools they service.

5.6.3 Monitoring and evaluation systems used by EP Services

In order to investigate the extent to which EP Services monitor their own performance and effectiveness, a question was included concerning the number of monitoring systems in place and the types of systems used. The results detailing the number of monitoring and evaluation systems in place in EP Services are shown in Table 5.4

Table 5.4 Number of Monitoring and evaluation systems used by EP Services

	None / No system	1	2	3	4	5	6+
English Counties	2	4	6	6	4	3	1
Welsh Authorities	3	2	4	1	0	0	0
London Boroughs	1	4	5	4	4	0	1
Metropolitan Areas	1	2	8	5	0	1	1
New Unitary Authorities	2	2	6	2	0	0	1
Other	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	9	16	29	18	8	4	4

Much of the data gathered in this section is qualitative in nature and is detailed below.

5.6.3.1 Comments

The average number of systems in place appears to be 2, but several services have 6 or more systems in place. At the other extreme, 9 services reported that they did not have any monitoring or evaluation in place. This is clearly an important and somewhat disturbing finding in the light of LEA OFSTED inspections, Best Value initiatives and other current national developments.

5.6.3.2 Qualitative systems

The following examples were given which illustrate the types of qualitative measures in place.

a) Visits to schools by managers to check on quality measures

b) County management-partnership groups

c) Quality surveys

d) Use of local focus groups

e) EPs given clear guidance on quality assurance measures, e.g. visiting schools, reports, telephone calls

f) Evaluating the impact of work

5.6.3.3   Client surveys and feedback

Many PEPs gave details of feedback systems which they used in order to gain information about how well their EP Service was perceived to be doing, by main client groups. Some of these are detailed below.

a) Questionnaires to schools

b) Structured interviews with headteachers

c) School/parent surveys

d) Review group includes heads, partnership groups, clients

e) Formative evaluation with every school individually as well as whole LEA   data collected in satisfaction levels

f) Systematic consultation with heads

5.6.3.4   Internal systems

Monitoring and evaluation can be divided into internal and external systems and many respondents described systems that operated within their EP Services which served to provided accountability and review procedures. Some of the most common systems detailed in the data are listed below.

a) Annual data collection with SEP as team consultant

b) Maingrades hold review of programmes every 2 months with direct line manager

c) Via individual supervision systems

d) Monthly meetings with EPs to discuss workload

e) Ongoing monitoring of INSET and report writing

f) EPs all shadowed plus peer evaluation plus head teacher evaluation plus parent feedback

5.6.3.5   Quantitative systems

Complementing the qualitative data, many EP Services collect a wide range of quantitative data; examples of which are listed below.

a) Performance indicators such as, whether each school has received its allocation of EP time,

b) Speed of written feedback to schools, records of all referrals

c) Termly records of work undertaken

d) Statutory data collected as part of wider LEA system

e) Monitoring chunks of time against main headings in our time allocation system

f) Regular monitoring of weekly hours delivered to schools

g) PEP annual report including targets and achievements

h) Service action plan drawn up with performance indicators

i) SLA reviews undertaken annually on basis of statistics

Significantly, services that operate time allocation systems had more monitoring and evaluation systems than those services using other models of service delivery.

5.6.4 Use of prescribed formats for school visits

As a particular focus of this research is the process of school visiting and the processes or activities that take place during school visits, a section of the questionnaire included the use of prescribed formats for such visits.

The results are presented in table 5.5

Table 5.5 EP Services using prescribed formats for school visits

	Yes	(%)	No	(%)
English Counties	17	85%	3	15%
Welsh Authorities	4	50%	4	50%
London Boroughs	16	89%	2	11%
Metropolitan Areas	12	71%	5	29%
New Unitary Authorities	7	58%	5	42%
Other	1	50%	1	50%
Totals	57	74%	20	26%

5.6.4.1 Comments

74% (54) of services reported that they do use specific formats and 26% (20) confirmed they did not. As with many of the questions in the study, the wording was deliberately open-ended in order to allow PEPs to describe their current system, rather than using a forced, multiple choice procedure.

Within these responses, closer scrutiny reveals that the procedures can roughly be divided into tools or strategies used by services before school visits, for example;

a) formats for annual planning visits

b) pre-agreed agendas

c) prescribed formats for reviews at independent schools

d) menu of activities to be negotiated between school and EP

during school visits, for example;

a) formats for all likely scenarios

b) interview schedules and consultation schedules

and after school visits, for example;

a) summary sheets for visits

b) consultation record forms

c) school visit record forms

d) casework consultation forms

e) school action record sheets

In general, many services noted that this was an area that they are currently developing, especially where they are planning to introduce a consultation model. Also of note was the fact that in some areas, e-mail agenda setting was now common practice. A word of caution also came from one PEP who felt that trying to prescribe a format to define what is essentially a relationship was something he would not wish to do. This is an important point, which will be addressed, in later stages of this thesis.

5.6.5 Use of particular styles, questions or protocols

Within this research, a key area of investigation is the conversations between EPs and teachers and the methods for regulating and negotiating the work that EPs engage in. As part of this line of enquiry, a more specialised question investigated styles of delivery, use of standard questions and the use of protocols. The results are shown in Table 5.6

Table 5.6 EP Services using particular styles questions or protocols

	Yes	(%)	No	(%)
English Counties	8	33%	16	67%
Welsh Authorities	0	0%	10	100%
London Boroughs	4	33%	12	67%
Metropolitan Areas	5	29%	12	71%
New Unitary Authorities	4	31%	9	69%
Other	1	50%	1	50%
Totals	22	27%	60	73%

5.6.5.1 Comments

The results showed that only 27% (22) of services have begun to develop practice in this area; 73% (60) have not followed this approach. The highest response was from some county services and the analysis of their comments suggests that they are, in some cases, taking more radical approaches to service delivery. One PEP stated that there was a service style in operation in their EP service but set questions were not used. Teams within the service had worked on common areas of concern and had rehearsed likely scenarios with each other. A second county service is working in this area by role-playing conversations and developing scripts for commonly experienced difficult situations. However, it was pointed out that there was no compulsion for EPs to use the scripts in their daily work.

5.6.6 Supervision systems

The data gathered in this survey covered not only questions relating to how EP services delivered to schools but also how services functioned in terms of staff support. Table 5.7 shows the results obtained.

Table 5.7 Supervision in EP Services

	Yes	No	Other
English Counties	22	0	4
Welsh Authorities	6	1	3
London Boroughs	21	0	0
Metropolitan Areas	14	5	1
New Unitary Authorities	9	3	1
Other	1	1	0
Totals	73 79%	10 11%	9 10%

5.6.6.1 Comments

Results from the current study indicate that 79% (73) services do have a supervision system in place. This suggests an increase in the amount of supervision undertaken within the profession since the last major survey (Pomerantz, 1993) a trend that is also reported by Nolan (1999). An important point emerging is that broad ranges of supervisory practices are being used and a broad definition of supervision is considered appropriate in many services. The data obtained is shown in Table 5.8

Table 5.8 Types of supervision in EP Services

Type of supervision	No. of services
Compulsory; required with performance appraisal etc.	7
Top-down, line manager regular supervision	34
Peer supervision	14
Supervision available on request	5
Practice development or team meetings described as supervision	26
Supervision with set agendas, reflection encouraged	7
Supervision with school visits and conversations a focus	8
Supervision in the process of being developed	12

Although top-down line-management supervision is the most common form of supervision reported, it is interesting to note that several services have peer supervision systems in place. A proportion of services also conduct regular practice development meetings that are considered to constitute supervision. As with other key aspects of EP practice, many services report that this is a current priority area for development within the service.

 More detailed analysis of the data, revealed that those EP services that have more monitoring and evaluation systems in place are, interestingly, less likely to have supervision systems operating for EPs. It was not possible to pursue this line of enquiry any further.

5.6.7 Appraisal and performance review systems

In order to gain more information about management and accountability within services, PEPs were asked about the existence of appraisal and performance review systems and also the extent to which school visits were discussed within such meetings. The results are shown in Table 5.9

Table 5.9 Appraisal and performance review systems

	Yes in place	No, not in place	Other
English Counties	24	0	2
Welsh Authorities	7	3	0
London Boroughs	19	2	0
Metropolitan Areas	13	7	0
New Unitary Authorities	11	2	0
Other	1	1	0
Totals	75 82%	15 16%	2 2%

5.6.7.1 Comments

The results indicated that 82% of services operate appraisal systems of some kind and these varied in terms of their origin, their aims and their operational processes. There were no regional variations in the data. Several PEPs commented that their system was

part of an LEA system and the "Investors in People" initiative was mentioned by several respondents as playing a part in shaping the approach adopted. Many respondents commented that appraisal tended to veer more towards Continuing Professional Development (CPD) rather than focusing on evaluating the delivery of work in schools. Finally, some services use peer shadowing or paired visits (EP and PEP) prior to the appraisal interview.

Of the PEPs who reported that an appraisal system was in place, 59% use the opportunity to discuss the process and content of school visits. The data received was not detailed enough to explore whether effectiveness of practice was a topic within these meetings. It would be reasonable to assume that services that collected detailed information from their monitoring and evaluation processes would tend to have such issues of evaluation on the agenda for these meetings.

5.6.8 Desirable and feasible areas of future practice

Anticipating that the next few years will be extremely significant in terms of the profession taking stock and moving forward, the final part of the study asked for PEPs' views on future patterns of practice. This question was differentiated into *desirable* and *feasible* categories. An assumption had been made that there would be markedly different descriptors in each section with the *feasible* category containing much more restricted, reality-based outcomes. The results from this section were surprising, as the two lists were not significantly different. Many PEPs commented on setting conditions that would need to be in place for significant changes in practice to be made, most

commonly citing legislative changes. However, the seven activities that were mentioned most frequently, with the numbers citing these activities given in brackets, were as follows:

❑ Move to preventative work, resulting in early intervention [27]

❑ Move to a more consultative role with collaborative work with schools [21]

❑ Move to more systems work with schools looking at organisational development and change (Including fixed-term project work and input to policy matters) [20]

❑ Reduction in statutory work [16]

❑ Longer term involvement with some pupils, recognising clinical and counselling skills [15]

❑ Greater use of research knowledge [15]

❑ More psychological approaches to problem-solving and more application of psychology to education [11]

When asked what changes would need to be in place in order for such improvements to come about, the following comments were made:

> "It is all possible, provided that we can shift historically and legally entrenched expectations of the role of the EP"

> "EPs are the biggest obstacle to their own success, since the profession is struggling to agree explicitly its role"

> ""We need school cultures to change their views of EPs"

> "Anything is feasible as long as you have developed your thinking well enough to respond to opinion, bias and criticism"

> "None is feasible unless a clear and visionary view of the way forward is articulated and sold to the government and is then resourced…"

From these comments, it can be seen that there are very disparate views of the potential for the profession to change and develop. Some PEPs were specifically feeling that the profession itself needed to be proactive in shaping a future role, whereas others were feeling that the views of others were most powerful in shaping the future.

5.7   Discussion

The last section demonstrates the frustrations and feelings of the Heads of EP services and is remarkably similar to many of the comments cited in the historical analysis contained in chapter 4 of this thesis. There are key themes which emerge from the data gathered in the national survey and which serve to illustrate the organisational constraints present in contemporary practice and also the systems and structures which have been implemented in order to deliver services.

Within an expansive learning cycle, the second stage is termed "analysing" (Engestrom, 1984 and 1999b). This stage can consist of two types of analysis, the first being a historical-genetic analysis, as undertaken in chapter 4, and the second being an actual-empirical analysis. Such an analysis seeks to understand and explain situations by constructing a picture of the workings and systemic relationships involved. The survey presented here provides an attempt to understand the complexities or organising educational psychology services and delivering services to schools. Although within Engestrom's model of an expansive learning cycle, it may not have been necessary to survey current practice as widely as in the survey presented here, it provided a valuable source of data to the field and profession more broadly at a time when data was rare. It also gives a contemporary and rich picture of the current situation and possible future directions.

5.7.1 Entitlement, access and targeting

The history of the profession has shown that we have progressed from a situation in the 1950's and 1960's where EP time was focused upon individual child-centred problems, bringing with it the paraphernalia of waiting lists, referral systems and professional separatism. Alongside the compulsion to move away from casework has been the relentless increase in statutory duties and therefore, in many areas, one device for controlling this flow has been the use of time-allocation systems.

Many EP services employ complex formulae to allocate their time and there are undoubtedly advantages to this approach (Imich 1999b). However, the longer-term disadvantages may not be obvious as times are continually changing and there are limited opportunities to reflect on what may be lost from the work, perhaps because its value cannot easily be measured. There was not much evidence that EP services have considered time-management systems, which have clear purposes governing them and which are linked to well thought-out principles governing practice rather than sterile time allocation systems where the currency is how long is spent in schools, rather than what impact is made.

One of the key disadvantages to time allocation identified by Imich (1999b) is the lack of flexibility to react to changing situations. This is clearly important when we look at the broader role of EPs within LEAs and within Local Authorities. One example of this is work of EPs with so-called 'failing schools' under the School Improvement approach. Hence in some EP Services, a differential, flexible approach is being used in

order that EPs can be deployed on specific 'High-Impact Projects' very quickly, in response to perceived needs. The notion of schools enjoying an equal entitlement to the same time or the same type of service is therefore being questioned. Not all schools need the services of a regular, visiting EP and in times when EP services are stretched it may be that services should be prioritising and targeting their work in terms of the differential needs of schools and the espoused goals of the LEA.

The findings from this research show that the move towards viewing schools as customers is very strong. By defining the relationship in this way, there are implications for the roles, division of labour and mutual expectations. The activity systems will therefore modify. Another trend seems to be towards more negotiation and equality of partnership. Similarly this is likely to shift the balances within activity systems and change the patterns of interaction. This is reflected in later data collected about the different levels of co-ordination, co-operation and communication involved in EPs work in schools. Finally, as EP Services are forced into a more business-like environment, accountability, value and efficiency must assume greater importance than was previously the case.

5.7.2 EP services as Learning Organisations
Although the information from this study does not provide unequivocal evidence, there were some clear indications that certain methods of deploying services may lead to more or less supportive cultures within EP Services. This is an area that is ripe for further research that may be able to provide examples of how services, working under

127

extreme conditions, may have found ways to protect themselves and strive to develop into a learning organisation. (Pearn Kandola, 1995). One aspect of within- service support is good supervision systems. As Lunt, (1993) notes,

> "It may also be suggested that ..a measure of the extent to which a profession values itself may be the extent to which it nurtures and supports its own members." (p.11)

The data here suggests a steady increase in the amount of supervision being undertaken within the profession. This should contribute to a change of culture where supervision becomes a responsibility for all EPs and a route to personal development rather than an optional extra. An important function for EP service managers is to consider how EP Services can become more supportive to their members, encouraging psychologists to undertake professionally accountable roles without losing the creative thirst for new knowledge and skills. Hawkins and Shohet (1991) argue that loss of interest and apathy about work in mid-career is typical of those who have stopped learning and developing. This increase in support networks within EP Services, is likely to be related in part to the increase in evaluation and accountability referred to in the previous section. Some services have managed to link measures of monitoring and evaluation with support mechanisms, but the results here suggest that this is not always the case. Where EPs are under pressure to perform but are not given adequate support, then the stress in the work is likely to increase. In turn this will affect performance in schools and the relationships that exist with teachers, demonstrated in the activity systems that are set up.

5.7.3 Models and Frameworks for Practice

This study has highlighted the diversity of practice within EP services and the lack of commonality about aspects of work. As mentioned in chapter 4, this is perhaps inevitable given the nature of applied psychology. The fragmented, occasional piecemeal approach to work with schools and others has led to questions being asked both within and outside the profession about defining the value of the service delivered, how it is done, and occasionally, how much time is spent doing it.

Miller and Leyden (1999) highlight a different set of reasons why it might be that the profession has failed to make the impact it could have done. They suggest,

> "..the lack of dialogue between academic researchers, EPs and teachers derives in part from the lack of a coherent theoretical framework." (P.390)

They move on to propose a coherent theoretical framework within which all aspects of EP work can be mapped. This framework can be used to help explain and rationalise the variety of work that is undertaken by EPs in relation to children, families and schools. By attempting to demonstrate multiple levels of working and by making explicit links to theory and research, they suggest that more coherence could be gained and therefore more progress made in cementing the body of knowledge that underpins our professional practice. This model could be used as basis for planning and evaluating work, especially given the call for more multi-disciplinary working and work across a variety of settings in the DfEE report (2000).

Such a framework could be used describe, conceptualise and inform past, present and future work and, in turn, inform decision-making about the way that services are

delivered to schools. A framework or similar tool might then ensure that the data emanating from recent inventions to improve accountability, such as "Best Value" reviews, Performance Indicators, Quality Assurance measures and Bench-marking devices was collected in a coherent and co-ordinated manner. This may then able to provide valid measures of effective, defensible and rigorous practice.

At a specific level, there is evidence, from the data presented here that some EP Services are moving towards an increasing use of prescribed formats, set approaches and the use of scripts to facilitate school visits and in particular the use of consultation. This is interesting, from an activity theory perspective as it suggests that the processes are being analysed and the methods for mediating activities are the subject of discussion. Hence the tools, which are employed both consciously and unconsciously, are changing and the balance between the subject and objects are open to manipulation. This will be discussed further the chapter 11 where various strands within the thesis are drawn together.

5.7.4   The sociocultural context

Although the data gathered in this survey did not answer all the research questions posed at the beginning of this chapter, as fully as possible, it succeeded it providing many answers concerning current practice. The dominant themes can be drawn together and the changing activity systems, illustrated throughout chapter 4, can be seen to

change again, in response to outside pressures, developments within the profession and expectations of those involved. The ever-changing perspective can therefore be captured in the activity system detailed in Figure 5.1.

EPs tend to think of schools, rather than pupils as their customers or partners and the main task, for all those involved in education, is the raising of standards for all: an imperative from the government. Alongside this is the move towards a more socially inclusive policy and so in some areas EP work is focussed more broadly upon helping schools to include more pupils with special needs and to reduce exclusion of pupils with difficult or challenging behaviour. The tools that can be applied are research knowledge and techniques, emanating from psychology. The object has perhaps changed the most, as the focus is now much more on support for the objectives of the LEA, which is to support schools in order to raise standards.

Figure 5.1 Professional educational psychology at the end of the 20th century

Tools:
Research knowledge, psychological techniques and assessments

Subject:
Educational Psychologist

Object:
Broad support for school, SEN, inclusion, achievement

Rules
Some statutory duties, but other potential roles. Government targets

Community:
Social inclusion, schools in a wider context

Division of labour:
EP supports school but school is key player. LEA is support rather than management

STANDARDS RAISED

the authoring and reauthoring of stories, within conversations, (Macready 1997).

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS OF KEY INFLUENCES ON EP PRACTICE IN THE AREA OF CONSULTATION. STEP 3 OF THE EXPANSIVE LEARNING CYCLE: MODELLING THE NEW SITUATION

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine a common response adopted by educational psychology services in the UK, to the problems and issues they have faced over the past ten years. The details of these problems are described and analysed in the previous two chapters of this thesis. In chapter four, the historical-genetic analysis of the professional practice of educational psychologists showed that pressures of various types, emanating from a range of changing sources, have shaped practices since the origins of the profession nearly 100 years ago. Similarly, the empirical analysis of the practice of EP services in the UK in 1998, described in chapter 5, provides a picture of the responses and choices being made by EP services given the pressures, requirements and current prevalent and preferred modes of operation of the late 1990's.

The next step of the expansive learning cycle, as described by Engestrom (1999b), is modelling the new situation. Engestrom explains this as,

> "modelling the newly-found explanatory relationship in some publicly observable and transmittable medium. This means constructing an explicit, simplified model of the new idea that explains and offers a solution to the problematic situation." (p383)

The 'new idea', as shown from the results of the national survey and as implemented in the case study EPS, is consultation, as the main medium for EPs to work with schools. In this chapter, the use of consultation is considered from a sociocultural and activity theoretical perspective. The history of the approach and the main models and frameworks that prevail are outlined and analysed with reference to the key elements of the developmental work research which is contained later in this thesis in chapters seven, eight and nine. In undertaking this analysis, and thereby interrogating the new model, the process of consultation can be clearly understood as a constructed response to a diversity of pressures, problems and preferences.

6.2 Background to literature on consultation

Consultation is a term that is used in a variety of contexts and settings and has a multiplicity of meanings. Various writers and practitioners have developed the term and the practice and have adapted ideas to fit with the environments within which consultation takes place. A starting place for considering models of consultation is the definition offered by Conoley and Conoley (1990) who describe consultation as a problem-solving relationship between professionals from different fields which has aspects in common with both advice-giving and psychotherapy. Differences lie, however, according to Conoley and Conoley, in that the focus is only upon work-related problems – unlike psychotherapy, and a primary purpose is to enhance the problem-solving capacity of the consultee, which does not necessarily mean giving advice or giving solutions to problems. From this initial consideration of consultation, it can be seen that a range of modes and models of consultation is available. Depending

on the context and the aims of the consultation, different approaches are taken. Conoley and Conoley suggest that consultants aim to provide,

> ".. new knowledge, new skills, a greater sense of self-efficacy and a greater sense of objectivity in the consultee." (in Miller, 1996, p113).

In order to differentiate between types of consultation, Conoley and Conoley identify three different strands: mental health consultation, behavioural consultation and process consultation. The first of these stems from work of Caplan (1970) and emanates from work in the field of mental health. The second, behavioural consultation tends to be the main mode by which psychologists working in the USA implement behaviour programmes for children, working through teachers. Behavioural paradigms and behaviour modification are key factors in this approach.

Process consultation, which is strongly linked to the work of Schein (1988) is the approach which is most commonly used within the business world, management consultancy and latterly within school psychology. Process consultation stresses the links between environmental factors and the effects these have on work and working practices. It focuses upon the relationships formed between the consultant and consultee and the ensuing changes that take place for the consultee, in terms of behaviour, attitudes, feelings and views. It is therefore a useful model for educational psychologists to adopt when aiming to work with and through teachers to improve children's progress and learning.

As the roots of process consultation lie in organisational psychology and social psychology, and as most EPs, when working in schools, are seeking to effect change at a number of levels, adopting a model of consultation that is based in process consultation works well. Both within the United States, where this approach is used alongside behavioural consultation and also within the UK where it has been the dominant model, research has been concerned with the relationship between the consultant and the consultee. However, various emphases have emerged and the research has been evaluated in markedly different ways depending on the theoretical orientation of the approaches and the researchers.

Due to these markedly different approaches to consultation that have been adopted, there are methodological issues that are associated with evaluation and outcome research. Some of the research is carried out within a functionalist paradigm, within which,

> " organisational behaviour consists of objectively observable activities that can be classified, labelled, measured and related to other phenomena"
> (Miller, 1996, p120),

Behavioural consultation can be evaluated within this paradigm as the emphasis is on observable changes in the consultee and the client and these positive changes can form the basis of the success criteria. Hence the majority of research studies in the area of consultation in the USA have focussed upon behavioural consultation. (Fuchs, Fuchs, Dulan, Roberts and Fernstrom, 1992).

Process consultation is concerned with effecting change and therefore in influencing attitudes and behaviour. It is an indirect form of service delivery where the skills of the consultant are of paramount importance. The knowledge bases of the consultant are also important as they need to be informed about their areas of expertise, but also be able to communicate with the clients (in this situation, teachers) in such a way that the teachers will feel able and willing to work in particular ways that will benefit their pupils. West and Idol (1987) have provided a useful conceptual framework, which attempts to clarify work in this area, and the model is shown in Figure 6.1

Figure 6.1 Two types of consultant knowledge bases
(West and Idol, 1987)
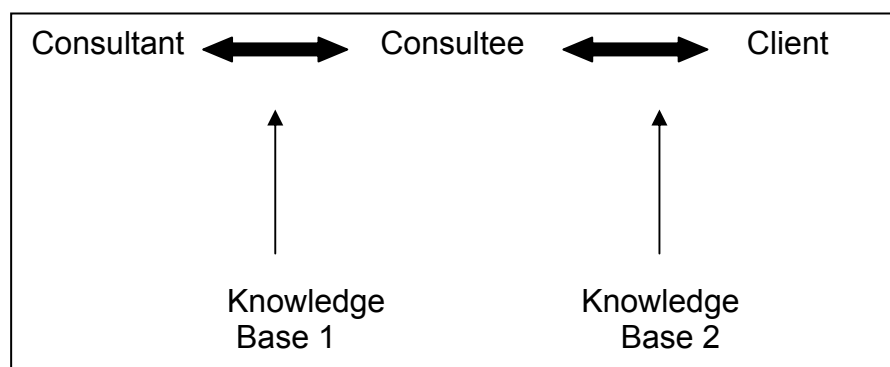
West and Idol attempt to separate out the knowledge base that underpins the interactions between the consultant and the consultee (knowledge base 1) from that which forms the basis of the advice, support, techniques and insights which will be part of the discussions between the consultant and the consultee and will then be employed to help the child or class (knowledge base 2). This distinction is potentially very helpful when analysing interactions within consultations. It can highlight the extent to which the consultant is offering advice (perhaps being more directive) versus when the consultant is using a facilitative, collaborative style. It can also be used as a device to

explore the extent to which there is equality within the consultation and within this whether or not the exchanges can be viewed as co-ordinated, co-operative or communicative, (Engestrom, 1997).

Developments in consultation work in schools in the UK has tended to be conceptualised within the social constructionist paradigm, in which consultants intervene not in the actual phenomena of relationships and group processes but in the consultees' constructions of these phenomena. The consultant would therefore not focus upon providing advice on particular strategies or approaches to the consultee, which could then be implemented and the effects evaluated according to specified criteria, but rather,

> "the consultant collaborates with the client in developing a shared meaning of what kind of behaviours will help the organisation succeed in its missions and goals" (Miller, 1996, p121).

In terms of the analysis presented here, two key strands will be pursued, both rooted within the social constructionist paradigm as this most closely describes the model adopted by the EPS in which the current research was carried out. Selected research from the United States will be investigated and also current developmental work in the UK. Each will be considered using an activity theoretical approach in keeping with the underlying frameworks and theories that inform this study.

6.3 Developments in the USA

6.3.1 Effectiveness research

In 1982, Gutkin and Curtis provided a comprehensive overview of consultation

research in the United States in the 1970s and some of the findings are within the

process consultation domain. They report that:

- ❑ Teachers who have experienced consultation services believe their professional
  skills have improved as a result (Gutkin, 1980)

- ❑ In matched samples of schools, teachers with consultants find problems to be
  less serious than teachers operating without consultants (Gutkin, Singer and
  Brown, 1980)

- ❑ After exposure to consultation services of four to five years, referral rates drop
  dramatically (Ritter, 1978)

- ❑ The gains in terms of teacher effectiveness, following consultation services,
  may generalise to other children (Jason and Ferone, 1978, Meyers, 1975)

- ❑ Teachers who work with effective consultants demonstrate significant
  improvements in their perceptions and understandings of children's problems
  (Curtis and Watson, 1980)

Considering research of this type as a whole, it can be seen that effectiveness can be

judged using a number of different variables. Alongside behavioural outcome research,

(not cited here) teacher perception research and teacher effectiveness research, there is

also a strand of research which has considered models of consultation and effects that

this may have in terms of work between teachers and psychologists. This will therefore be considered in the next section.

6.3.2 Approaches to consultation

6.3.2.1 The role of collaboration

An area of debate between researchers in the USA has centred on questions about the nature of the relationships between consultants and consultees and the roles that are or can be assumed by consultants. In particular the role of 'collaboration' within school-based consultation has been examined by two sets of researchers. As the models that are propounded by researchers and theorists in this area are central to consultation and the research contained in this thesis, the models will be described here and viewed from an activity theoretical and sociocultural perspective.

In 1999, Gutkin published a paper that reviewed the literature surrounding the 'collaboration debate'. The title of the paper summarises the essence of the debate as it addressed, "Collaborative versus directive/prescriptive/expert school-based consultation: Reviewing and resolving a false dichotomy." In this paper he summarises early research and theory supporting collaborative approaches and suggests that collaboration has been a central tenet since the inception of school-based consultation in the US. He suggests that although there has been discussion regarding methods of consultation and techniques employed, there has been a near universal acceptance that any approach needs to be collaborative in nature (Reschly, 1976).

Summarising the situation up until the late 1980s, Gutkin suggests that psychologists

needed to collaborate with teachers to get them to 'buy in' to any plans. However, a

second group of researchers, also in the US, analysed consultations in schools and

noted that their results showed that the consultants controlled the dyadic relationship

across all stages of consultation. Specifically, Erchul, 1987, found that the consultation,

> "is not typified by a coequal, non-hierarchical relationship between
> participants" (p.122)

and their results,

> "appear to challenge a generally held principle of school consultation – that it
> should be collaborative." (p.120).

A second study by Erchul and Chewring (1990) analysed consultation dyads and

concluded that,

> "consultation relationships might have been cooperative, they were not
> collaborative given that consultants controlled the nature and course of the
> consultation relationship." (in Gutkin, 1999, p.167.)

Erchul and his team essentially disputed the notion that consultation was a collaborative

exercise and also queried the relative effectiveness of a collaborative versus a more

directive approach. The use of the term 'cooperative' is interesting within the debate, as

it is a term used by Engestrom, (1997), to describe a level of interaction within an

activity system. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

In an attempt to resolve this apparent dichotomy between collaborative and directive

approaches, Gutkin suggests that they are not opposites of each other. Instead he posits

that the opposite of 'collaborative' is 'coercive' not 'directive' and the opposite of

'directive' is 'nondirective' or 'laissez-faire', not 'collaborative'. He offers a graphic

depiction of how collaboration and directiveness might be conceptualised as

discriminable continua and this is shown in Figure 6.2

Figure 6.2 Two dimensions of consultation (Gutkin, 1999)
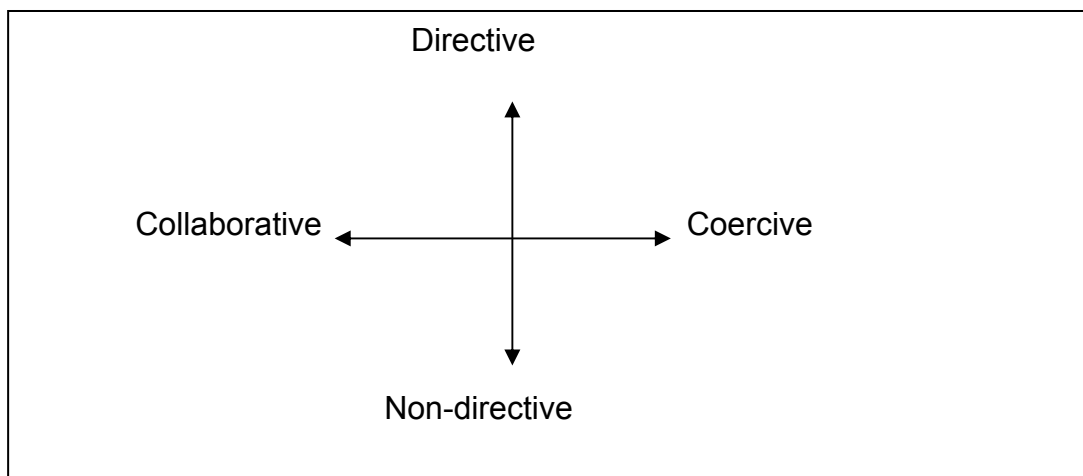
This model of consultation, based on two dimensions, suggests that consultants can

operate within any of the four quadrants and may even move between them consciously

or unconsciously. Gutkin proceeds to illustrate consultations that exemplify work in

each of the quadrants and concludes that such a heuristic device may help in

constructing future investigations and thus

> "learn whether any one of these consultative approaches is generally superior to
> the others or whether the utility of each depends on the specifics of the
> presenting situation and the interaction among consultant, consultee, client and
> problem characteristics." (p.186).

This model is discussed and considered within a sociocultural framework later in this

chapter, however, Gutkin's two dimensional model was further critiqued and developed

by the second team of researchers in the USA, with the following results. In the same journal edition in 1999, Erchul views positively Gutkin's attempt to disentangle the collaborative and directive components of consultant's behaviour but suggests that the model fails to incorporate an interpersonal perspective on the consultant/consultee relationship and the role of social influence on behaviour.

6.3.2.2 Interpersonal factors and positioning within organisations

Erchul, 1999, suggests that 'collaboration' is a 'slippery term' and he therefore chooses not to use it because of its 'multiple and imprecise meanings' (p.194). He does, however, develop his ideas around the appropriate use of the term and refers to work undertaken by himself and Caplan within the field of mental health consultation. Caplan, 1993, suggests that eventually 'mental health collaboration' should replace 'mental health consultation' as the most frequent means of interprofessional communication used by professionals working for the same organisation. Within this argument, importance is given to the position of the consultant in relation to the organisation: whether they are viewed as internal or external consultants.

Caplan, Caplan and Erchul, 1994, describe differences in the functioning of consultants depending whether they are internal or external in a number of key areas; namely,

- ❑ Type of psychological service
- ❑ Consultant-consultee relationship
- ❑ Consultee participation
- ❑ Interpersonal working arrangement

❑ Confidentiality of communications within relationship

❑ Consultee freedom to accept or reject consultant advice

❑ Consultant responsibility for case/ programme outcome.

<div align="right">(Erchul, 1999, p.195)</div>

Against each of these key areas they attempt to define differences dependent on whether the consultant was termed as external to the organisation (seen as mental health consultation) or internal to the organisation (seen as mental health collaboration). Using this conceptual tool, the role of educational psychologists in the UK can be viewed in either of these two categories, and sociocultural perspectives can be employed to clarify and analyse the suitability of this conceptual model. This will be discussed further in the latter chapters of this thesis.

Beyond Erchul's difficulty in using the term 'collaboration' to describe work involving an external consultant he also highlighted the lack of attention paid to interpersonal dimensions and in particular the role of the consultee. Erchul suggests that by considering the interpersonal perspective within consultation, the focus shifts to consider dyadic variables. He states that dyadic variables may be analysed in several ways but that a common characteristic is that the fundamental unit of analysis is the dyad instead of the individual. (Erchul, Hughes, Meyers, Hickman and Braden, 1992). This view is certainly a development from a unitary perspective on consultation, which focuses purely on variables surrounding one party: namely the consultant. However, a dyadic analysis is also lacking, as it does not take into account other factors that undoubtedly impact upon the success of consultations.

These factors include historical and contextual factors, dimensions of power, expectations, role definitions and boundaries and artefacts used within and beyond the consultation. An activity- theoretical analysis includes such elements within a framework that allows consideration of the parts that each of these elements play and this will be used later in the chapter. To conclude this summary of the research and theoretical developments in this area, Gutkin, (1999b) responded to Erchul's criticism that his model did not take into account the consultee dimension by expanding his model to add a third dimension: that of the consultee. The resulting model is shown in Figure 6.3

Figure 6.3 Three-dimensional model of consultation (Gutkin, 1999b)
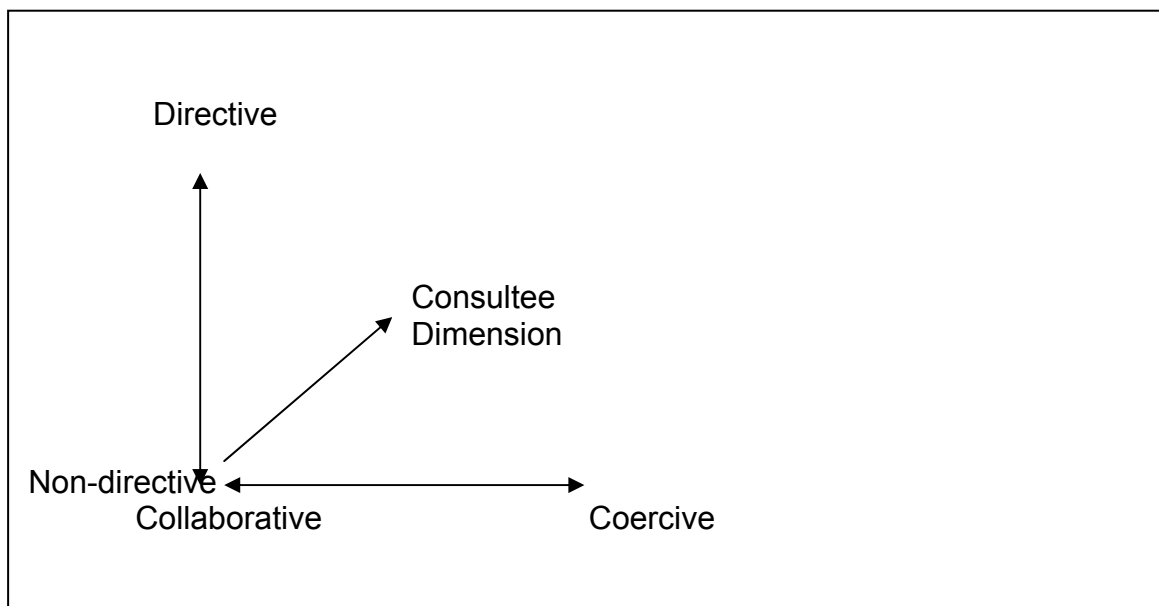
Although Gutkin presents a broader and potentially more useful model, he does not develop the theory much further beyond stating that there is a need to address the issue of how consultants respond in an ongoing way to consultee needs.

6.3.2.3 Social power bases

A final area of debate within this branch of the US literature concerns the place of social power bases within school consultation. Gutkin, (1997) and Gutkin and Conoley, (1990) propose that the success of consultation, delivered by school psychologists and others, depends to a large degree on a consultant's ability to influence another adult. Social power, defined as the potential to influence the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of others has been discussed, again by authors in the USA, in relation to school consultation (Lambert, 1973; Martin, 1978).

Erchul (2000) conducted a study of school psychologists' perceptions of social power bases using a typology derived from work by French and Raven (1959). This typology identified six power bases, namely: Coercion, Reward, Legitimate, Expert, Referent and Information. Erchul defined 'social influence' as a change in belief, attitude, or behaviour of a target of influence, which results from the action or presence of an influencing agent. 'Social power' is defined as the potential for this influence to occur. Clearly social power and influence are important factors for consideration in the transactions that occur between psychologists and teachers, where a consultant's assistance with a pupil-related problem can be viewed as being mediated through another adult, such as a teacher, (Erchul, 2000).

Using questionnaires administered to psychologists to ascertain their perceptions of the power bases they tended to adopt within their work in schools, Erchul found that when psychologists were asked to adopt a social power perspective to analyse

their consulting relationships with teachers, they tended to endorse 'softer' power

bases (e.g. informational, expert, referent) rather than harsh power bases (e.g.,

impersonal coercion, personal coercion, legitimate position).

Interestingly, Erchul links these findings to the debate highlighted earlier in this

chapter in which collaborative versus directive consultation was discussed. He

states that,

> "It has been noted that those who advocate a collaborative approach to
> consultation tend to downplay explanations of behaviour that are based on
> power and influence" (2000, p.13).

However, he states that results from this study tend to suggest that school

consultants do tend to use social power bases but that they tend to draw from soft,

non-coercive power bases. This form of analysis is useful in that it acknowledges

the place of power within school- based interactions. However, it utilises a view of

power that is invested in the individual rather than a more broadly based

perspective whereby power is moveable, differentially constructed and historically

and contextually located. A sociocultural analysis could encapsulate a wider

definition of power within its analysis.

This review of recent, relevant literature emanating from school consultation work

in the United States has necessarily been brief and selective but has described

models which have some direct links to the theoretical underpinnings which have

guided the research outlined in this thesis. It is therefore relevant to consider the US

research from a sociocultural and activity-theoretical perspective.

6.3.3 A sociocultural, activity theory analysis

The models described in the previous section that derive from a large body of research conducted in the USA, suggest some conceptual frameworks for understanding consultation. Some of these ideas are useful as research tools but also as a way of developing skills, techniques and materials for enhancing the quality of consultations that take place in schools. However, the frameworks described are decontextualised and simplistic and so are not as helpful, or accurate as they might be. A sociocultural, activity theoretical approach applied to the same domain of research is able to give a wider and different perspective to some of the theorising outlined earlier.

6.3.3.1 Model 1

The first model described a two dimensional analysis of consultation models depicted in Figure 6.2 (Gutkin, 1999). Gutkin suggests that research exists into consultation modes that could be described as collaborative-directive (the top right quadrant) and collaborative-nondirective (the lower right quadrant). The other two quadrants do not have any research which might illuminate the details of such interactions and it is unlikely that they would be modes of operation which would be promoted by consultants or well-received by clients.

Using activity theory, the first quadrant (collaborative-directive) could be analysed and the *artefacts* used within the consultation might be:

- high content language from the consultant
- providing of materials
- suggestions for approaches or techniques
- citing of previous successes.

The factors that underpin the triangle: the rules, community, division of labour

headings suggested by Engestrom, might include factors such as:

❑ Requirements of school as a whole for advice and support

❑ Certain tasks which need completion and require consultation as part of the
process

❑ Client experience of previous consultants who deliver content e.g. advice,
materials

❑ Client need for new ideas and approaches

❑ Consultant experience of similar teachers who expect high content

❑ Schools knowledge of how consultants usually work

❑ Organisation within which the consultant works and the associated constraints

❑ Client experience of previous consultants who deliver content e.g. advice,
materials

❑ Client need for new ideas and approaches

❑ Consultant experience of similar teachers who expect high content.

This analysis looks at the historical context associated with the consultation,
particularly in terms of the expectations of each party. The division of labour, however
it is construed, will also affect the model of consultation employed. Finally, by viewing
the consultation as an activity system, the artefacts can be predicted and, within this
research paradigm, observed and analysed.

The analysis can be extended to consider the second quadrant, within Gutkin's
proposed model: the collaborative- nondirective consultation. In this situation, the
artefacts might consist of:

❑ Questions

❑ Reflections

❑ Process -oriented conversations

❑ Paraphrasing

❑ Different perspectives and insights being inserted in the conversations

The lower part of the triangle is likely to be fairly similar to that outlined above except that the division of labour might be viewed differently, if a non-directive approach was welcomed and encouraged by the clients. In such a case it is possible that the consultant is viewed as closer to the organisation (school) or even part of the school. Then the division of labour would be construed differently and it may be accepted that the consultant's role was, in a large part, as a catalyst for change. This is clearly linked to Erchul's work on social power bases and the positioning of consultants within or outside organisations.

6.3.3.2 Model Two

The second model of consultation, developed from the first, by Gutkin, encompasses a third dimension relating to the consultee (see figure 6.3). Unfortunately, Gutkin does not elaborate this third dimension or even suggest how it might be validated. However, given that the interaction between a consultant and consultee is a two-way process, where the consultant is not entirely operating in a single didactic, directive mode, then it is likely that there will be dimensions of consultee behaviours alongside those of the consultant.

A useful model, proposed by Schmidt and Johnson (1970, cited in Huffington, 1996) includes a dimension of directive – non-directive consultation. This is illustrated by a series of descriptors ranging from 'refuses to become involved at one end' (non-directive) and 'plans intervention' at the other (directive) end. A similar range of

descriptors, perhaps along an active-passive dimension could be devised to describe consultee modes.

A major shortcoming of both of Gutkin's models is that they do not give significant weight to the consultee and therefore to the interactions and interpersonal factors within the consultations. The theme throughout his analysis is that the consultant is in charge of the consultation and can choose to operate in a particular style, thus questioning whether there is any collaboration. Using Engestrom's categorisation of three levels of group activity, which is described in detail in the next chapter of this thesis, a clearer understanding of the relevant roles and positions in relation to processes is allowed.

Engestrom, (1997), uses the terms co-ordination, co-operation and communication to describe successive levels that can operate within activity systems. A key discriminating feature of each stage is the extent to which the key people, or actors have their own 'scripts', a shared 'script' or an ability to identify, externalise, discuss and modify a common 'script'. Using such an analytic tool, it would be possible to examine the scripts and artefacts within consultations and to identify dimensions or positions that are taken up by both the consultant and the consultee in an exchange. Conversely, by examining scripts, or dialogues that seem to be 'non-directive' or 'collaborative' in nature, levels of functioning within activity systems could be analysed. Within Engestrom's approach a strong acknowledgement of the importance of historical context is a factor that contributes to the analysis and understandings of scripts and could contribute to the debate on dimensions of consultation. Thus by

considering the historical precedents that exist concerning how teachers and EPs have worked together over the recent past then some understanding of current role demarcations may become clearer.

6.3.3.3 Social power bases

The literature on school consultation, emanating from the USA, tends to draw upon psychological theories, rather than sociological or sociocultural theories. It therefore focuses upon individual or interpersonal perspectives but does not move beyond these boundaries. The work of Erchul and others (2000) demonstrates this point in that power is acknowledged as an important factor in school consultation, but this is considered from the perspective of the individual consultant's perceptions of the value and use of power and the different types of power that are used. The typology referred to earlier in this chapter, (French and Raven, 1959) has been updated by Raven, (1998) and produced as an inventory which measures 11 power bases: the Interpersonal Power Inventory (IPI). These are:

1. Informational
2. Expert
3. Impersonal reward
4. Referent
5. Legitimate dependence
6. Personal reward
7. Legitimate reciprocity
8. Impersonal coercion
9. Legitimate equity
10. Personal coercion
11. Legitimate position

Using a sociocultural analysis, these 11 power bases could be viewed as emanating from and existing within, different parts of activity systems. However, within the scope

of this investigation it has not been possible to do this. Additionally, artefacts

representing different power bases could be identified and clarified. An example might

be; 'legitimate position power base' existing within the 'rules' which govern the

activity system. Legitimate is defined by French and Raven (1959) as:

> "B's obligation to accept A's influence attempt because B believes A has a
> legitimate right to influence, perhaps because of A's professional role and
> position." (in Erchul, 2000 p21).

This example illustrates one way in which sociocultural approaches can enrich an

analysis of power within school consultations. However, a wider understanding of

power and influence, which can be gained from historical-genetic analyses and a wider

sociocultural perspective, is likely to provide a more realistic and pragmatic modelling

of a situation from which developments and improvements can be planned.

6.4 Developments in the UK
6.4.1 The context of public sector changes
Although consultation is widely used within the business sector and as part of the

traditional protocols of medical services, within the public sector more generally within

the UK, it is less widespread. Huffington, 1996, in writing about consultation and

service development, suggests that the huge changes to public sector services that have

occurred over the past fifteen years required that the professionals operating within

these organisations and systems had time to reflect upon the changes and explore the

consequences of them at a local level. Instead they are required to accommodate the

changes and subject themselves to the constraints that new roles often bring. (p.103).

She suggests that as a result of this, quality of services suffer, practitioners lack a sense

of wider perspective on the tasks they undertake and there is a lack of thinking and

short and long term planning.

Huffington then suggests that one way that organisations and individuals within

organisations can 'take stock' and reflect on the changes is to use consultants who are

internal to the organisation. She suggests that this,

> "presents the possibility of local, tailor-made solutions to the problems created
> by applying national policy at local level. The value of internal consultation of
> this kind is that these solutions come from the 'ground floor'; … they facilitate
> the growth of a broad base of support for change and often
> the potential for ownership of the change effort by the organisation itself."

This type of organisational change consultation can be seen as describing at a meta-

level how educational psychologists are trying to work with schools; all of them

constituting parts of the larger organisation of the LEA. It also resonates with the views

of Erchul, (2000), described earlier in this chapter, who suggests that collaborative

work can only be undertaken by consultants who are part of the same organisation as

the clients.

This large-scale view of professional consultation within the public services is not

common across the UK and in fact, services have developed at different rates and in

different directions. These are described in the following sections of this chapter.

6.4.2 Developments in consultation work in EP Services in the UK

Chapter four of this thesis provides a comprehensive account of the historical development of EP Services in the UK up to the present day and mentions briefly the move towards consultation. For the purposes of this chapter, 'modelling the new situation' from a range of positions, it is necessary to focus on consultation specifically and to understand its derivations and variations.

Section 4.4.3 of this thesis describes work by Burden and others (1978), that moved the focus of EP work from the individual to more systemic and project-based work. Trainee educational psychologists were encouraged to work in schools, alongside teachers, aiming to solve problems at an organisational and class level. In-service training became a stronger part of the role of EPs and EPs were more concerned with applying psychology indirectly through the main agents of change, the teachers. Although this wasn't termed consultation, it laid important foundations for future developments in educational psychology practice.

In different parts of the country, individual educational psychologists were developing new ways of approaching the work to overcome the key problems of waiting lists and individual, within-child-based referrals. Some EPs targeted specific groups of pupils and looked at creative ways of working with them in order to effect change on a larger basis. Topping (1995) considered a range of work with 'disruptive' pupils, undertaken with individual pupils, teachers, schools and parents and looked at the effectiveness, specifically from a behavioural viewpoint. In the same way that Burden's work cannot be considered as consultation per se, Topping's work does not fit with definitions

referred to earlier. However, it does represent work by EPs that tackles problems indirectly using other key personnel as change agents.

In considering the move towards in-service training as an indirect method, popular with EPs from the early 1980's to the present day, Aubrey, (1987) comments that however effective an in-service programme might be in terms of improving skills or awareness of teachers, the institution within which they work has powerful barriers, which can mean that very little is adapted, used or generalised within the school. She therefore considers consultation as a necessary part of any change package.

Consultation, as a specific technique, within specific circumstances, has been tried by a number of EPs, with some success. Leadbetter, Rose and Tee (1992), used consultation with a whole staff group in a primary school to address problems around whole school behaviour. The deliberate use of an external consultant was felt to be beneficial, in terms of collecting objective data, understanding the local school context and being able to relate the findings in the school to relevant literature and research. Stringer, Stow, Hibbert, Powell and Louw, (1992) also used consultation groups with groups of school staff and Head teachers to facilitate whole group problem solving arising from issues within the work place. This approach was based on the work of Hanko, (1990) and also drew on systemic family therapy work. There are more examples of this type of approach being used by EPs across the country but all tended to be undertaken alongside fairly traditional modes of service delivery to schools.

As the data presented in chapter 5 shows, more EP Services were struggling to cope with the burgeoning numbers of pupils put forward for statutory assessment under the 1981, then 1993 and subsequently the 1996 Education Acts. Under all of these Acts, an LEA educational psychologists' advice was required and this served to reduce the amount of preventative and systemic work as schools prioritised more and more individual children to be assessed by educational psychologists. One way of coping with this ever-increasing number and also slowing down the number of statements being issued was to allocate certain amounts of time to each school. This system, described in chapter 5.6.1.2, known as a 'time allocation model' also meant that less requests were going to LEAs in some areas and eventually less statementing was occurring. This was welcomed by many LEAs who were under imperatives from the government in the mid to late 1990's to control Special Needs expenditure and the number of children with statements.

Alongside moves towards time allocation as a model of service delivery, several EP Services were changing their role and using consultation. Some services did this in a high profile manner, and wrote about their changes in practice, (Dickinson, 2000). Others moved in a more low-key manner from advisory work to consultation, or used consultation as one mode of service delivery alongside other approaches (Leadbetter, 2000). In order to analyse and understand the types of models which are proving popular in the UK it is useful to consider one particular approach which has been in use in one London borough for many years and which, due to its popularity and the

availability of materials, training and published articles, has influenced many other EP

Services around the country.

6.4.3 Consultation as the single mode of service delivery

In 2000, a themed edition of the journal, "Educational Psychology in Practice"

considered the area of consultation and collected together articles from authors in EP

services where practice was considered advanced. In the introduction to the series of

articles, Watkins, (2000) suggests that there are two distinguishing features about the

articles that make this collection different from other articles on consultation. He

suggests firstly that consultation is the comprehensive model for EP service delivery.

Thus,

> "..all aspects of the EP work profile are incorporated into a conceptual and
> relational framework of consultation." (p.5)

Secondly, he says that there is an underlying and often explicit psychological model,

described as systematic, interactionist and constructionist .

Both these features apply to and indeed emanate from an approach to consultation

developed in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. This is described in a

number of places, (Wagner, 1995a, 1995b, 2000). Wagner suggests that,

> "Consultation embodies a way of working with schools which puts
> collaborative work with teachers at the centre of the activities of the EP."
> (1995a, p.22)

She considers the models of consultation outlined by Conoley and Conoley, (1982),

namely, mental health consultation, behavioural consultation and process consultation

and suggests that consultation for EPs in schools might need elements of all of these

but that these elements alone are not adequate. She advocates an approach that considers the EP working within the system at a number of levels: whole school, class level, individual level and with the family.

The training materials, which accompany courses run for EP services, outline the elements of the systemic, interactionist model and then provide a series of frameworks which guide the process of consultation in a number of settings. These include: initial consultation, consultation request, joint family-school meeting, consultation follow-up, planning meetings, annual reviews.

Beyond these frameworks and an outline of the key principles and theoretical bases of the consultation system, there is no prescription of the types of models that may guide an individual consultation session between a teacher and an EP. However, Wagner does list some 'key notions' which she feels are necessary within an interactionist and systemic practice. These are:

- ❑ Problems are not located within individuals
- ❑ Behaviour varies according to the context and the situation
- ❑ "Problems" are relative to contexts
- ❑ Identifying and addressing features of situation and related patterns which vary across situations helps in finding keys to change
- ❑ Belief and meaning systems become linked to patterns of behaviour in a recursive manner

❑ Understanding the link between beliefs, meanings and behaviour is crucial to understanding and changing behaviour

❑ Change is usually quicker when there is a focus on finding solutions

❑ Externalising "problems" can help to create new perspectives and ideas about change

❑ Clear and effective communication is vital for systems workers.

(1995b, p36.)

6.4.4 A sociocultural, activity theory analysis

The dominant model of consultation that has been introduced within many EP services in the UK, as main modes of service delivery, are based on the principles and frameworks outlined in the previous section. There are a number of aspects of this model that bear scrutiny from a sociocultural point of view and it also worth considering this approach using ideas from activity theory. Five aspects have been identified and are discussed in this section of the thesis.

The model used by Wagner and her colleagues, although described and developed with clear reference to underpinning psychological models, was imposed upon schools with little discussion or consultation and was presumed to solve the problems being posed to the EPS and in turn help schools. Although their internal evaluations suggest the model has been well received in schools, (Wagner, 1995a) there is little evidence that the schools have been invited to participate in any discussions about potential changes or developments to the system in place. The frameworks that guide the series of meetings,

do not encourage reflection on the processes that are taking place and so it is possible that many of the meetings could be conducted at the levels of 'co-ordination' and 'co-operation' (Engestrom, 1997). Unless more overt guidance or change in procedures were implemented, then mutually negotiated discussions about modes of working are unlikely to occur.

The actors within the particular dyadic consultations taking place do not appear to be in equal partnership and it is unclear whether discussion of the potential range of outcomes is possible. In terms of the developmental work research model being applied here, at step 3, modelling the new situation, this balance of power and the parameters for negotiation, should be considered by any organisation wishing to adopt this particular model.

A second area of analysis surrounds the fact that the Wagner model does not place great emphasis on outcomes, either for teachers or pupils. It refers to 'effecting change' a great deal, but it is unclear, from the supporting documents, to what extent the outcomes are discussed, negotiated and agreed between the actors taking part. From an activity theory analysis this lack of specificity about outcomes means that there might be confusion between the teacher and the EP about the goals of the consultation meeting. Allied to this confusion, there is little elaboration of the skills involved in the consultation process using this model, (in West and Idol's terms, cited earlier, Knowledge Base 1). Instead the model is embedded within the underpinning

psychological principles and therefore beliefs and understandings are assumed to come from these.

This model, being grounded, as it is, in strongly held beliefs, is likely to effect the conversations that take place and may result in a lack of shared beliefs and understandings with some of the teachers with whom the EPs work. In turn this may lead to contradictions and conflicts that will need to be accommodated and processed within the working practices. How disagreements are dealt with is an area that is not covered in the supporting literature published about this model of working.

From a sociocultural perspective, a third area of interest concerns the use of artefacts and tools within the model. Although Wagner would say that it is frameworks rather than forms or formats that are important (2000, p.15), she suggests that,

> " The frameworks used reflect the psychology chosen, and require explanations and discussion with the people with whom we work. They act as a structure that supports the passing on of our skills and approaches to understanding" (p.15)

This description seems compatible with Vygotskian notions of mediating artefacts that help to guide practices. It undoubtedly relies heavily on linguistic components, both written and spoken, although this is not stated. Therefore an activity system could be drawn up to describe the practises that take place. However, the consultation artefacts appear to be one-sided again as the EP is positioned in a dominant role donating frameworks and ideas.

Although Wagner eschews the notion of forms and formats, others using the model have talked about the use of 'scripts' to aid consultation (Kerslake and Roller, 2000). They describe scripts, in the context of school-based consultation, as:

> " The clusters of key words and phrases that we use to explain the ideas, thinking and principles underlying our practice." (p.25)

Although they state that the scripts are not 'set in stone' they divide the scripts they have devised into three categories: 'role-making scripts, 'in consultation' scripts and review and planning scripts. Used in this way, the scripts can become deliberate words that are used, at specific times, to help move through a particular process. In this way they are very clearly artefacts that are being used to mediate a particular course of action or dialogue. A development of this type of consultation would be to talk to the recipient, in this case, teacher, about the script that is being used and to discuss jointly the significance of the actions being proposed or discussed and even the reasons why an overt 'script' might be needed at specific points.

A fourth area for consideration and critical analysis from a sociocultural perspective pertains to the underlying models in use. A systemic perspective, drawing heavily on models and ideas from family therapy, (Minuchin, 1974, Burnham, 1986) underpins the Wagner model of consultation. Systems thinking is undoubtedly essential when considering the complex, multi-faceted contexts that surround a child in difficulty. It can also provide a useful conceptual framework for extending thinking around an area of difficulty and thereby opening up new possibilities for action. However, a sociocultural approach, whilst acknowledging the importance of contexts, both

immediate and more distant, also includes historical and cultural dimensions of analysis. This depth and historicity encourages a deeper understanding of the genesis of problems and can, in turn lead to possible ways forward. Within the model, at the present time, there is no capacity to consider broader cultural and historical perspectives.

A fifth and final area for consideration is the use of language and the underlying importance of social constructionism within the process of consultation. Wagner notes that knowledge of social constructionism helps to clarify the importance of language in the construction of meaning and she makes a direct link, within the context of EP-teacher consultations, with labelling, problem amplification and pathologising, (2000, p.14). Although the use of language is not highlighted specifically within the model, as it is in the research study reported in this thesis, there is an implicit link, emanating from its theoretical roots and this link is deemed to be important. How meaning is jointly constructed is an important element of activity theory and the consultation model described by Wagner could usefully be analysed from a sociocultural perspective.

6.5 Conclusions: Modelling the new situation

This chapter has provided an overview of some of the recent developments in school-based consultation in the USA and the UK. In doing so it has included a relevant research and theoretical base for the following chapters of the thesis that describe original research into consultation. Within the activity-theoretical paradigm that

underpins the whole area of study reported here, this section is Step 3 of an Expansive Learning Cycle: modelling the new situation.

Through exploration and critical analysis of models used within consultation, a new model, or combination of models can evolve. This is what happened in the EP Service within which the research reported here was undertaken. The managers of the EP Service, when considering the new developments in practice that were to be introduced, were cognisant of the work described in the latter part of this chapter and sought to evaluate which elements were useful to include within the evolving work of EPs in the service.

A difficulty in deciding which parts of the various models to import or modify lies in the lack of evaluative evidence available. Thus, although many of the approaches are conceptually strong, they are weak in terms of evaluation. One reason for this may lie in the number of possible variables existing within consultation processes and systems and also the lack of clarity and agreement over desirable outcomes and goals. An example of this is given by Farouk, (1999) who emphasises the importance of the pre-entry and entry phases of consultation as important in setting the scene. His evaluation contains data on this aspect. Other authors, (MacHardy, Carmichael and Proctor, 1997) collect data on changes in levels of referral to a Psychological Service. One difficulty that pervades this area resides in the issue of deciding the extent to which consultation is viewed as 'fashionable' rather than 'powerful'. Given these difficulties, clearly more

diverse and rigorous evaluative research is necessary and this is discussed in the latter

chapters of this thesis.

It is clearly important for educational psychologists to evaluate the effectiveness of

their work and this increasingly involves consultation. However, it is not only EPs who

are using consultation in schools, many other support services and professionals are

choosing to, or being forced to adopt consultative styles of working through changes in

legislation and particularly in funding arrangements. Therefore, issues over models and

styles, outcome and evaluations are equally pertinent for other groups.

Similarly, within schools, particularly larger and more complex schools (perhaps with

designated special provisions for pupils with special needs), key staff are being forced

to consider alternative ways to support individual teachers and pupils. Thus, Special

Needs Co-coordinators (SENCOs) may use consultation as a means of providing

support to form tutors, specialist teachers or learning support assistants, for the growing

numbers of pupils, identified as having special educational needs. Friend and Cook,

(1996) address the whole area and in particular state,

> "Special service professionals are providing consultation or technical assistance
> to classroom teachers…. Adult-adult interactions are an essential part of their
> responsibilities" (p.4).

In reviewing the developments in consultation, it is interesting to note the extent to

which the styles of consultation that are advocated reflect the dominant, underpinning

psychological frameworks. Thus a behaviourally based service uses a fairly behavioural

approach to consultation and conducts its evaluation in traditional behavioural terms. A system that is based within a social interactionist paradigm concentrates on elements that are concerned with processes and social interaction in all its guises. A social constructionist framework would place emphasis on the construction of joint and shared meanings. Finally, an approach, which draws heavily on a discourse or conversation analysis approach, might focus upon elements of dialogues, stories and All of these approaches have a potential place in the menu of approaches available to schools. However, it is important that the professionals involved are aware of the approach that they are taking and are reflective about their practice and about their own learning. Schon (1987) refers to the reflective professional's ability to see other points of view by 'switching frames'. Jennings, (1996) describes Schon's work thus:

> "Schon illustrates how professionals at various levels of their development tend to operate on the basis of incorporating the perceived needs of a situation within their own existing system of beliefs, attitudes and values." (p.19)

Jennings suggests that developing these skills requires frameworks and settings where professionals can discuss, 'their own subjective dilemmas' with other supportive colleagues. There are clear implications for supervision and support of professional staff and this parallels the discussions and issues identified in chapter 5 of this thesis.

A final point to address within this chapter on consultation is to emphasise that the focus has been on the dyadic process that occurs, in the main between consultant and consultee; in this context EP and teacher. Earlier in the chapter, criticisms have been levelled at conceptualisations that do not pay sufficient regard to the characteristics and role of the consultee and also to the lack of regard for sociocultural variables. That

consultation takes place within a complex, multi-layered context with changing

personnel playing transient roles in the life of a child (sometimes totally indirectly) is a

fact. Therefore, more sophisticated models are perhaps necessary to understand,

account for and develop working practices.

 A possible approach, emanating from activity theory and sociocultural approaches,

looks at co-configuration and 'knot-working' as concepts that have clear relevance in a

range of modern work settings. Engestrom, Engestrom and Vahaaho, (1999c) describe

a case study using the terms 'knot-working' and co-configuration. They describe the

type of work contexts within which these terms have relevance and use as,

> "work that requires active construction of constantly changing combinations of
> people and artefacts over lengthy trajectories of time and widely distributed in
> space" (p.345)

Therefore, when considering the work of EPs in schools in a wider context, as part of a

larger group involved in optimising the learning and development of children (or a

particular child), such a model could be employed.

Engestrom et al, 1999c, describe knot-working as,

> " a rapidly pulsating, distributed and partially improvised orchestration of
> collaborative performance between otherwise loosely connected actors and
> activity systems" (p.346)

Such a definition and the studies that have, so far, employed these conceptualisations,

share similarities with studies of consultative practice. Additionally, as professionals

working to support schools and families are subject to ever-changing requirements and

legislative and financial strictures, a dynamic model, with a capacity to encapsulate

actions over disparate periods of time could prove a valuable conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 7
ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS' NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS OF SCHOOL VISITS AND EP-TEACHER MEETINGS: STEP 4 OF EXPANSIVE LEARNING CYCLE: EXAMINING THE NEW MODEL

7.1 Overview of chapter

This chapter considers accounts written by EPs about typical visits undertaken to schools on a regular, routine basis in order to perform the duties required of EPs and to provide a service to schools. In terms of the expansive learning cycle outlined in Chapter 2, this can be viewed as part of "Step 4 - Examining the new model". The data was collected on two separate occasions, a year apart and represents one third of the data gathered at that time. The following two chapters consider the second two parts of the data and together they form a detailed analysis of the activities and attitudes of a group of EPs working within a changing EP service.

7.2 Context

The data were gathered from one of the largest EP Services in the UK, situated in the West Midlands. Data were collected in 1999 and 2000 and therefore represent a service functioning approximately one year and two years after the results presented from the national survey conducted by the writer and reported in Chapter 5. The national context forms an important backdrop as during this time a national working party, convened by the DFEE, was gathering its findings and reporting on the role, function and training of educational psychologists (DfEE 2000).

The local context for the EPS was similarly important in understanding changes that might impact upon the findings. In March 1999 a new appointment of Assistant Director for Special Educational Needs was made to the Education Department, changing the line management structure of the EPS. This person was an ex-educational psychologist and had a keen interest in developing the role of the EPS and changing patterns of working. In particular, a move to a more consultative way of working was advocated very strongly for the EP service and the Education Department also voiced commitment to more inclusive education for the LEA.

In March 2000, a new appointment of Chief Psychologist was made to manage the EPS and this person also had a strong history of working in a consultative manner. The period of time under focus in terms of this investigation is therefore characterised by high levels of change and uncertainty both nationally and locally. The data were collected during the summer term of each academic year, which could represent specific activities in the EP-school calendar (for instance more annual reviews of statements than usual). However, most EPs recorded that they felt that the visits described were fairly typical of the routine work with which they were engaged.

7.3 Aims and methodology

This part of the research process was designed to provide an open-ended account of typical school visits and the types of activities that EPs engage in with schools. Therefore, few direct questions were asked and the participants were encouraged to describe and explain their activities. In using this approach, which was then followed

by more structured questions relating to work with schools, it was anticipated that the data could be analysed, categorised and clustered and thus a pattern of illuminative data would be gained.

7.4 Pilot study

The materials used in all three sections of this research were piloted on a group of five trainee educational psychologists, about to begin work as EPs. They were asked to complete all three parts of the questionnaire and the instructions given are as detailed in Appendix 2. On the basis of their comments and responses, the materials were amended in order to make the questions clearer and to avoid unnecessary ambiguity. However, as the majority of the questions were open-ended there were only minor amendments.

7.5 Method

During the latter part of the summer term of 1999, all EPs (n= 35) were sent a research questionnaire, which they were asked to complete. The task involved three parts; the first of these parts was a narrative account of a typical school visit they had undertaken during the term.

The instructions given were as follows:

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS' WORK WITH TEACHERS

Think back to a school visit that you have undertaken over the past few weeks, which was full and varied and as typical as possible of the type of work regularly undertaken, by yourself over the past 12 months. (If this is not possible, please think further back until you can recall such a visit). In not more than a side of A4, describe what you did during the visit, giving details, where possible and including the reasons why you undertook the activities you did. Please comment also on how satisfied you were with the work undertaken in school.

At the end of the account, each EP was asked to comment on how long the visit was, how the time was spent, according to 9 possible categories, and how typical this visit was compared with their general work in schools.

EPs were then requested to answer Sections 2 and 3.

The process was repeated using the same materials in 2000. However, the number of EPs circulated was 34.

7.6 Method of analysis of results

The accounts were read through by the writer a number of times and were coded, in order that a rich picture of the data could be assembled before more detailed analyses were undertaken. This way of working draws upon some of the techniques more commonly used within a grounded theory approach although a grounded theory was not adopted. However, one aspect of grounded theory research is a close and detailed inspection of specific problem domains where attention is paid to participants' own accounts of social and psychological events, (Richardson, 1996, p76). To this extent, there are similarities between the two approaches.

The first analysis considered the actual activities that were undertaken during the visits, as described by the EPs. The second analysis then looked at the activities undertaken, in more detail, alongside the intentions and purposes of the EPs, where recorded, and the extent to which external requirements and strictures governed the

activities undertaken and therefore shaped the context. A third analysis focussed

particularly on informal EP-teacher meetings within the visit, where descriptions gave

some insight into the interactions, activities and perceptions of those involved. This

latter set were then analysed using Engestrom's model of different levels of co-

ordinated activities, (Engestrom, 1997). Engestrom's definitions, described in detail

later in this chapter, were used as a template and the texts received from each

respondent were read and categorised, if they fitted the descriptors, or were not

categorised at all. Out of 51 accounts of activities, identified from the texts completed

in 1999, 20 were felt to fit within Engestrom's definitions. In 2000 there were 13 out

of 27 that fitted within the three categorisations. The other parts of the narrative were

used to provide an overall picture of activities undertaken.

A limitation of the research study relates to the design and execution of this part of the

data analysis. The categorisations and sifting that comprised the levels of analysis were

undertaken solely by the researcher and there was no other independent rater involved

in checking or comparing the decisions made. Therefore, this lack of reliability checks

constitutes a weakness in the data set and the conclusions that can be drawn from these.

7.7 Results

7.7.1 Number of returns

During years 1 and 2 of the study, there were different numbers of returns for each

section of the research exercise. Therefore, it appears that some EPs had looked at all

three sections and decided only to complete certain sections. However, most EPs who

returned the task had completed all three parts.

In 1999, there were 20 narrative accounts returned (out of a possible 35) which represented a 57% return. In 2000 there were 16 narrative accounts returned (out of a possible 34) which represented a 47% return. Therefore across the two years, more than half the EPs in this very large EP service gave narrative accounts of typical school visits.

7.7.2 Typicality and timing

At the end of their accounts each EP was asked to comment on how typical this visit was compared with their usual patterns of work. From the data collected in 1999, 70% of EPs reported that the visit was typical and in 2000, 62% said that they felt that the visits were typical. It is therefore safe to assume that the sample is not skewed by factors such as the time of year, specific instructions or requests to EPs from the LEA or EPS or particular pressures on schools at the times in question.

EPs were asked at the end of the accounts to estimate how much time the visit took overall. The average amount of time for the 1999 visits was 3.2 hours and for the 2000 visits was 3.1 hours.

7.7.3 First level analysis of data

7.7.3.1 Coding

The first analysis considers the numbers and types of activities undertaken during the school visits. The following codes were devised based on an overview of the data.

- Number of separate activities undertaken during the visit

- Meetings involving parents

- Statutory or formal reviews

- Observations in class

- Individual work with pupils

- Informal meetings

- Other

These categories were imposed upon the data in order for proportions of time to be estimated and because different roles, rules and skills are employed in each context.

Some meetings involving parents took place outside of any formal review procedure and these usually involved school staff with the EP and a parent but sometimes involved just the EP and parent, using the school as a base for the meeting. Clearly the dynamics of meetings where parents are involved will be different and therefore it was decided to categorise these separately.

Statutory or formal reviews, either focussed upon a child with a statement of special needs, or a child at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice, (DFEE, 1994) are likely to be constituted differently and conducted in a slightly different manner and so these meetings were also categorised separately.

A regular activity for EPs was to observe within a classroom, usually a named child who was the cause for concern. Again this is a very different activity, and is therefore analysed separately.

It is also a common occurrence for EPs to work with children individually for a range of purposes, and this activity is also analysed separately.

Informal meetings, which account for a proportion of the time, were noted separately and are the subject of further detailed analysis. Finally, a category of 'other' was available but was, in fact, only used once.

The results for 1999 are shown in Table 7.1 below.

7.7.3.2 Narrative accounts of school visits: Summer term1999

Table 7.1 Narrative accounts of school visits: Summer term 1999

Visit number	No. of separate activities	Involving parents	Statutory or formal reviews	Observations in class	Individual work with pupils	Informal meetings	Other
1	5	2	0	1	0	2	0
2	4	1	0	1	0	2	0
3	4	1	1	0	0	2	0
4	6	2	0	0	1	2	1
5	7	0	1	1	1	4	0

6	4	0	1	0	1	2	0
7	6	1	0	1	1	3	0
8	4	1	1	0	1	1	0
9	5	0	1	0	0	4	0
10	10	0	0	3	2	5	0
11	4	2	0	0	1	1	0
12	3	0	2	0	1	0	0
13	5	0	1	1	0	3	0
14	4	0	0	1	1	2	0
15	6	0	0	1	2	3	0
16	4	0	0	1	0	3	0
17	6	0	1	1	0	4	0
18	3	0	0	1	0	2	0
19	5	0	2	0	1	2	0
20	5	0	0	1	0	4	0
Totals	100	10	11	14	13	51	1
% Totals		10%	11%	14%	13%	51%	1%

7.7.3.3 Comments

The table shows that within the 20 visits described a total of 100 separate activities were undertaken. This suggests that on average 5 separate activities were undertaken during the average 3-hour visit (see section 7.7.2) However, one particular EP seemed

to employ several short activities and so recorded 10 different activities during the morning, which skews the data slightly. Therefore, if this entry is excluded, the average is lowered slightly to 4.7 activities per visit.

Not all of the various categories of activity are undertaken on each visit by any single EP. However, all bar one EP does engage in some informal meetings during their visit. This is important to note, as it is this area of activity that becomes the focus for more detailed analysis.

Meetings with parents constitute 10% of the activities. This could be considered within the wider remit of EPs work with parents, as many EPs still prefer to meet with and work with parents in their own homes or in more neutral environments than their child's school. The focus of the meetings reported in this study tended to be directly related to the child's educational progress, rather than broader issues such as the child's behaviour at school and / or at home.

11% of the activities related to formal reviews held within school. Given the time of year, when many schools tend to review their Individual Education Plans (IEPS) this figure seems lower than might be expected. However, for any child where a change of school or provision was in question, the review meetings would have been held earlier in the school year.

Observations in class comprised 14% of the activities undertaken and 12 of the 20 EPs undertook at least one observation. This would suggest that this is a commonly occurring activity for EPs in this EP service, which would not necessarily be replicated in all EP services. The explanations given within the text suggest that very often the observational activity is part of a process and is linked to individual work with a specific child, sometimes a meeting with parents and usually an informal meeting with the teachers.

Individual work with pupils accounts for 13% of the activities and analysis of the narratives suggests that most of this is based around assessment of individual children's skills and abilities. Very few EPs appear to be engaged in any types of interventions or therapeutic work.

Informal meetings are the majority activity accounting for 51 % of the activities undertaken. These meetings are sometimes described in the EP accounts as 'Discussion with teacher re...' or 'conversation about...' or ' met teacher to...'

Sometimes they involved meeting the same person at different points during the visit with different topics for discussion. These were categorised as separate meetings.

The 'other' category was only used on one occasion, to note one EP meeting with a group of pupils to review a social skills programme which they had been working on.

7.7.3.4 Narrative accounts of school visits: Summer term 2000

The data gathered from the replication of the questionnaire, 12 months later is

presented in Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2 Narrative accounts of school visits: Summer term 2000

Visit number	No. of separate activities	Involving parents	Statutory or formal reviews	Observations in class	Individual work with pupils	Informal meetings	Other
1	2	1	0	0	0	1	0
2	5	0	2	1	0	2	0
3	8	0	0	4	1	3	0
4	6	2	0	1	1	2	0
5	3	1	0	0	0	1	1
6	4	0	0	2	0	2	0
7	5	1	2	0	1	1	0
8	3	0	2	0	0	1	0
9	4	1	0	1	0	2	0
10	4	0	1	0	0	3	0
11	5	1	0	1	1	2	0
12	6	0	1	1	1	3	0
13	5	0	2	1	1	1	0
14	3	0	0	1	1	1	0
15	3	0	0	2	0	1	0
16	1	0	0	0	0	1	0

Totals	67	7	10	15	7	27	1
% Totals		10%	15%	22%	10%	40%	2%

7.7.3.5 Comments

The table above shows that during the 16 school visits recorded, 67 separate activities took place. This gives an average of 4.2 activities per visit. This figure is slightly lower than the figure for 1999, but the average length of visit was also slightly shorter in 2000 than 1999: 3.1 hours compared with 3.2 hours.

Similar to the 1999 data, not all the possible activities were undertaken by any one EP on one visit. However, all EPs engaged in at least one informal meeting with a teacher per visit.

The percentage of time spent in meetings with parents is the same in 1999 and 2000 at 10%, but the time spent in formal reviews rose slightly from 11 % in 1999 to 15% in 2000. There is no clear indication in the texts why this might have occurred. The time spent observing in class rose in 2000 from 14 % in 1999 to 22% in 2000. Alongside this, the time spent undertaking individual work with pupils dropped from 13% in 1999 to 10% in 2000.

In terms of informal meetings, the number of these meetings dropped from 51% in 1999 to 40% in 2000.

7.7.3.6 Comparison of 1999 and 2000 data

The coding process was the same for the data obtained in both 1999 and in 2000.

As the analysis of the data from the narrative accounts was undertaken in a

number of stages, it is useful to consider the findings across all three types of

analysis, against the background of the changes in context. This will therefore be

addressed in the final section of this chapter.

7.7.4 Second level analysis of data

The second level of analysis takes a more qualitative perspective in that it involved

interrogating the data for significant statements concerning the nature of the work

undertaken, the intentions and purposes of the EP, where stated, and also the

restrictions and customs and practices which dictate the types of activity undertaken,

where these became apparent. Using such an approach, it is possible and indeed likely

that the categories and the themes that emerge will change as the data becomes richer

and more open to scrutiny.

7.7.4.1 Key factors emerging from 1999 data

Discussion of the implications of these factors will be included later in the chapter.

However, a high proportion of the narratives made reference to the number of

discussions that EPs became involved with which centred on special needs legislation.

In particular, teachers ask for EPs help in terms of understanding the criteria which

need to be met in order for a child to proceed through stages of the Code of Practice

(DFEE 1994) and especially to move on to a request for statutory assessment by the

LEA. Both in the narrative accounts and in the reflections, which EPs were asked to make at the end, many commented that a high proportion of the discussions centred on statutory procedures and that this was one of the most unrewarding aspects of the job.

 A second group of descriptors that emerged from the data concerned the teachers' needs for advice and support, particularly around the planning, development and implementation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Although the requirement to produce IEPs for children with SEN has been necessary for a number of years, many teachers appear to be under equipped, in terms of skills and knowledge, and thus find it difficult to devise successful IEPS. EPs did not comment particularly on whether this was a worthwhile or fulfilling task or on the extent to which it draws upon their expertise in applied psychology.

A significant number of EPs described their role with parents and what they felt they were trying to achieve in joint meetings. In most cases, this was to inform, reassure, empower and work in partnership. However, there were some instances where the EP felt that the school were looking to them to provide support for the school's position against that of the parent. This factor may well be important when considering the nature of EP conflicts in schools later in this study.

 Dissatisfaction was noted by a number of EPs when they could perceive a mis-match between what the school was providing for a child and what the EP felt that the child needed. Depending on the skills of the EP, how they construed their role and the extent

to which they felt able to discuss such matters with the school, or confront the school with alternative possible actions, then the dissatisfaction might remain or be assuaged.

ln a similar way, several EPs commented that visits where there was no conflict were seen as satisfying and worthwhile.

7.7.4.2   Key factors emerging from the 2000 data

The narratives indicate that there was still, in 2000, a strong need for teachers to use EPs to give advice on procedural matters. However, this second set of data makes more reference to conversations about next steps with children, strategies that can be tried, contributions to planning and target setting rather than an overriding focus upon statutory matters.

There were more descriptions of facilitation and joint problem solving in the meetings which took place which suggested more dialogic meetings rather than question and answer sessions where EPs were perhaps adopting a role, for whatever reason, of expert.

EPs made significantly more comments about their awareness of the roles they were taking in meetings and there were several examples of the role of 'consultant being used within the narratives.

However, alongside some shifts in activities, as described above, several EPs commented that the work in schools was still procedurally driven and that they were made to feel like 'gate-keepers' (a role which has been apparent throughout the last 20 years) in some schools. Clearly, the opinion of the EP, whether it is regarding placement or resource allocation, is still viewed as crucial, when schools are seeking to meet children's needs.

7.7.4.3 Comparison of 1999 and 2000 data

A consideration of the trends noted above will be discussed in the later section of this chapter. This discussion will encompass the findings from all three levels of analysis.

7.7.5 Third level analysis of data

7.7.5.1 Rationale for analysis

The data that has been gained from the narrative accounts, gives a one-sided perspective of the school visits undertaken but nevertheless, accepting that this is EPs' perspective it provides a picture of typical work in schools. In order to further understand the nature of the conversations and dialogues between EPs and teachers and how the differing roles, tasks and tools are used, the final level of analysis is focussed upon specific meetings between EPs and teachers which are not formalised by any review procedures and are not constrained in any way by involving a third party, such as the parents of a child under discussion.

Therefore, the 51 activities in the 1999 data which were categorised as 'informal meetings' (51 %) and the 27 activities from the 2000 data categorised as 'informal meetings' (40%) were further scrutinised in terms of the words used, the intentions and purposes (where noted) and the outcomes. Not all of the meetings were sufficiently detailed to provide this level of information and it was only possible to pursue this line of investigation further with 20 activities from the 1999 data and 13 activities from the 2000 data.

A key aim of this research has been to develop an understanding of the patterns of work which take place when EPs work in schools and this has been pursued using models derived from sociocultural work and in particular the developmental work research by Engestrom et al (1997), based on earlier work by Raeithel (1983) and Fichtner (1984). Within this line of enquiry, Engestrom describes three-levels of working which groups adopt. In using this model to analyse the data collected here, it is hoped to illuminate the interactions that are taking place and to further understanding about the nature of the activities, the 'scripts' used and the extent to which shared outcomes are overt.

7.7.5.2 Co-ordination, co-operation and communication: a description

In order to analyse patterns of work, particularly work of a multi-disciplinary nature, where there may be a number of different subjects (in activity theory terms) working to a number of different objects (some shared and some not), Engestrom et al interpret the three levels in the following manner. The descriptions below have been augmented by supplementary material based on the work of Daniels et al (2001).

7.7.5.3   Co-ordination

Figure 7.1 General Structure of Co-ordination

(Engestrom et al, 1997)
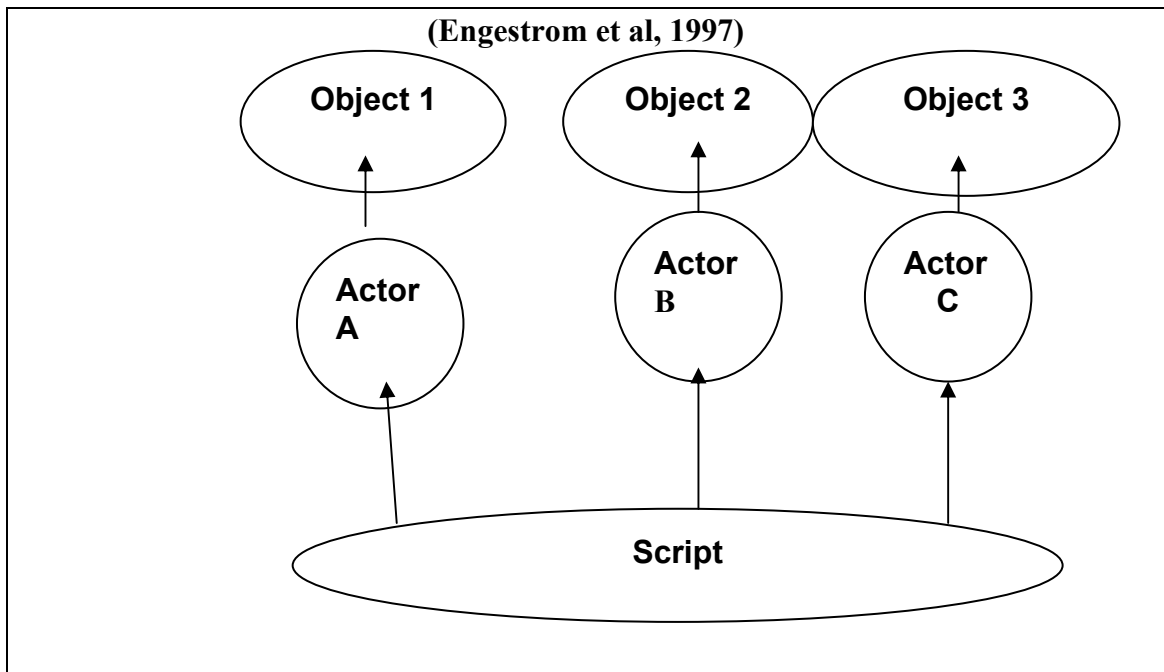
The figure above is taken from Engestrom et al (1997). In interactions that are termed 'co-ordination', the various actors are following their scripted roles and each is concentrating on the successful performance of assigned actions. Engestrom suggests that the script is, 'coded in written rules and places or tacitly assumed traditions. It co-ordinates the participants' actions as if from behind their backs without being questioned or discussed.' (p.372)

In each of the figures depicting the three levels, the boundaries in bold indicate that the entities are within the focus of the actors and are subject to their critical attention. The non-bold boundaries are not the focus of critical attention for the subjects. This interpretation suggests that not only is the script, which is operating behind the actors,

unquestioned and therefore, possibly habitual and unconscious, but the goals are very often unquestioned, in that they are not the 'focus of critical attention'.

7.7.5.4 Co-operation

Figure 7.2 General Structure of Co-operation

(Engestrom et al, 1997)

Shared Object

Script

Actor A
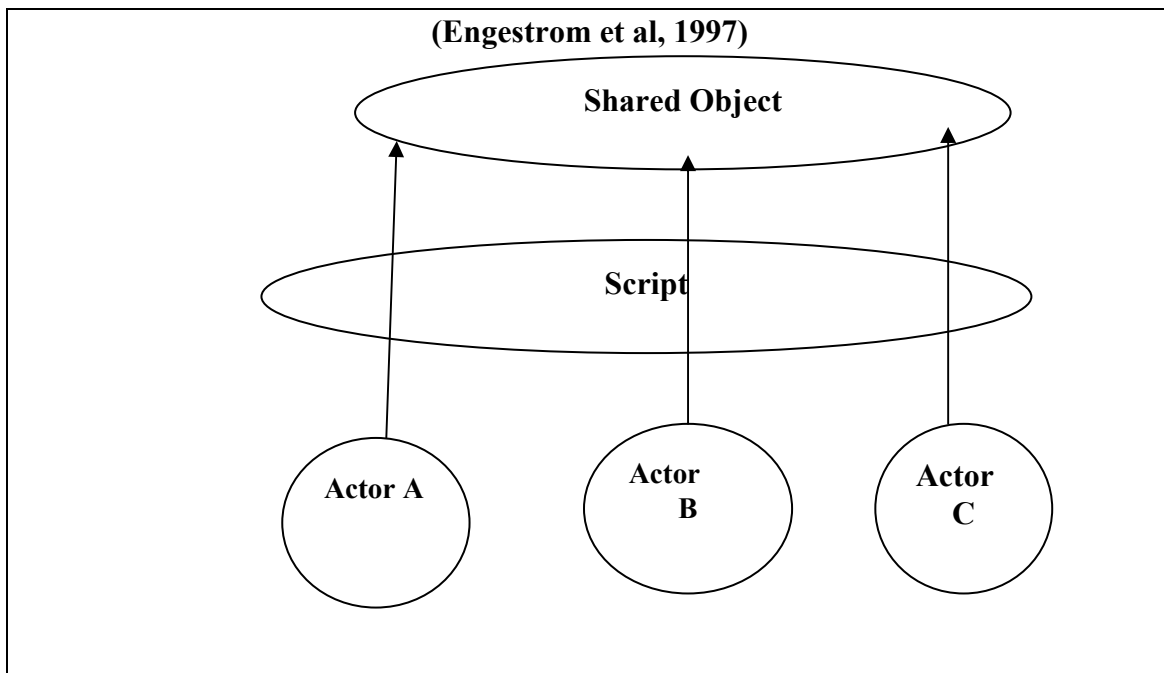
Actor B

Actor C

Co-operation involves different actors focussing upon a shared problem or object and try to find ways of solving it or conceptualising it. They are not so concerned with performing set, assigned roles or presenting themselves. There is a given script, which is shared, but Engestrom et al suggest that the actors can go beyond the confines of the script. However, there is no explicit questioning or reconceptualising of the script. The main focus of attention for all parties (indicated in bold) is the shared object.

7.7.5.5 Communication

Figure 7.3 General Structure of Communication

(Engestrom et al, 1997)
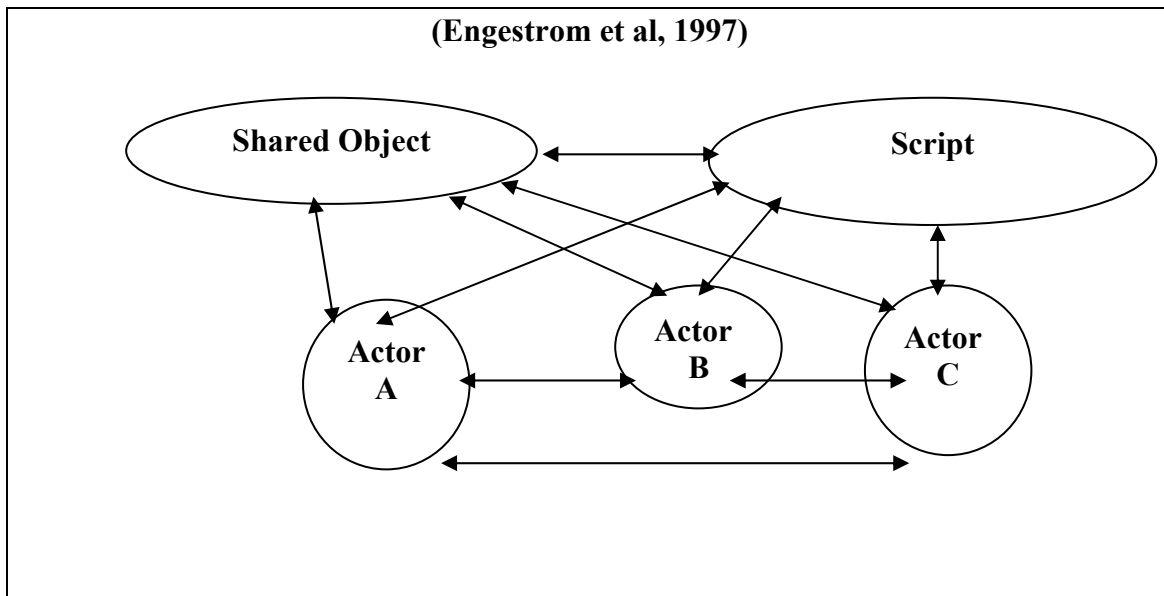
Communication, or 'reflective communication' as described by Engestrom et al, is used to describe interactions in which the actors focus on reconceptualising their own organisations and interaction in relation to their shared objects. All aspects of the activity are explicit and are the focus of critical attention. Thus their own rules, the script that governs their actions and the shared objects can all become subject to discussion and reconceptualisation. Engestrom suggests that transitions to communication are rare in the 'ongoing flow of daily work actions.' (p373). This level of activity can be seen as 'reflection on action' (Eraut, 1994), which is more difficult to attain, as opposed to 'reflection in action' which can occur within activities which are co-ordinated or co-operative.

7.7.5.6 Analysis of informal meetings in 1999

20 meetings were considered and were analysed in terms of the three levels. Out of these, 6 were felt to fit the descriptors of 'co-ordinated' working activities, 9 were co-operative and 5 were felt to be communicative. In order for the model to be explored in some depth in terms of the later section of this chapter, each part of the dialogue is described below using the actual words written in the transcript, by the EP involved.

7.7.5.6.1 Co-ordination (n=6)

> *Example 1 "We discussed the child's response to the last IEP targets at Stage 3. At a previous Stage 3 review, school had not addressed classroom strategy issues on the IEP. 1 had recommended a number of classroom strategies as these were related to the concerns they raised regarding the child's hearing impairment.*"

This is interpreted as an activity that can be termed co-ordination in that the various actors have their own distinctive voices and possibly their own agendas. The context seems to be that the school wants to push for a statutory assessment in order to acquire resources. The EP is suggesting strategies that have not been taken up by the school.

> *Example 2 "Interview at break with class teacher and integration assistant of a Year 5 child with a statement for learning difficulties. Information gathered re rate of progress during year"*

The context was that the school and the parent were asking for the EP's opinion about whether the child should remain in a mainstream school or move to a special school. This is interpreted as an example of co-ordination as different roles and responsibilities are being assigned and the implication is that different parties may desire different

191

outcomes. A possible hypothesis here is that when an EP is asked to take on, or chooses to take on a more 'expert' role, then the activity is less likely to be communicative.

Example 3 *"Feedback session to SENCO /class teacher /SEN teacher on my findings and observations with my professional view as to the next steps l actions that are required. This would include advice on teaching programmes and strategies for actual casework and advisory cases"*

This again is interpreted as co-ordination in that specific views are being sought perhaps from different perspectives. Although it is not possible from the data gathered in this study it would be interesting to consider different types of activity against satisfaction ratings from all parties in involved. Certainly the context of this interaction was that the EP reported at the end of the narrative that they were not satisfied with this visit. It is not clear from the narrative why this dissatisfaction occurred but one possibility is that the roles were not particularly collaborative and each party is working in separate ways along separate paths.

Example 4 *"SENCO prioritised 2 children she wants me to become actively involved with. SENCO requests me to carry out basic skills assessment of their academic profiles to see if the children fall into the criteria for Stage 4 statutory assessment"*

In this example, the background of legislation and local and national procedures is clearly a governing factor and is the script to which each party is adhering. It is possible that the goals of each party could be very different and there is no indication of negotiation or joint planning or working. This example is compatible with comments

made in the second level analysis of the data, which noted that a high proportion of the work centres on statutory issues.

> *Example 5 'Brief chat with child's class teacher to get a brief overview of her thinking on the child's level of ability to cope and to integrate in class"*

This activity can be viewed as co-ordination in that again different voices can be observed and different roles ascribed. Interestingly, in this example, the EP appears to be in 'asking' mode (see chapter on consultation) and is in fact consulting the teacher for information. However, this seems to be in information-seeking mode rather than in order to elicit help.

> *Example 6 "Brief discussion with SENCO about any changes or progress in a child's on-task behaviour since I last saw him, in preparation for up-dating advice already drafted'.*

Again this example should be viewed against a context that is governed by procedural factors; namely the need for the EP to update the advice they are submitting to the LEA. However, the activity is co-ordinated as the EP is seeking information from the SENCO.

7.7.5.6.2 Co-operation (n=9)

> *Example 1 " School wanting me to advise and suggest strategies for children's learning with a view to developing an IEP"*

This example can be thought of as very close to some of the examples given above of co-ordination activities. What perhaps makes this example slightly different is the

possibility that the strategies for the child's learning would be used as a shared script in this case, rather than an outcome or object and the shared object, in this case, as stated, would be the IEP. With reference to the diagram illustrating a co-operative activity (see section 7.4.4 above) it can be interpreted that the script the need to devise common strategies) is shared by all parties and as a result of this co-operative activity a common IEP can be drawn up.

Example 2 "School looked to me for much support and help as parents were very pressing. Meeting aimed to share information and plan approach"

The language used by the EP to describe the activity seems to suggest co-operation rather than merely co-ordination. A feature of co-operative activities is that there is a focus on a common problem (Daniels, 2001) and in this case there appears to be a shared approach, even if this is shared between the EP and the school and not necessarily the parent. One possibility might be that if this interaction continued and the parents became involved in the meeting, then the activity might well become a more co-ordinated rather than co-operative endeavour.

Example 3 "...have a quick chat about children known in an advisory capacity. Really a checking exercise to make sure there were no outstanding issues or concerns.

This is a difficult activity to interpret. The mention of a checking exercise suggests that there is, to an extent, a shared script that helps in the conduct of the meeting. However, because it is not clear whether this is a joint aim or the aim of the EP, it is difficult to adjudge the extent to which the activity is co-operative. Certainly, the words 'no

outstanding issues or concerns' suggest that this is a shared object and a desirable

outcome.

Example 4 "School staff consulted to consider support and effectiveness of interventions put in to place by speech and language therapist and myself (in advisory capacity).

This is another example in which the EP appears to be consulting the school staff over

an issue. It can be seen as a co-operative activity in that the conversation would have

as its main elements, the child's progress and the shared or common object is the

effectiveness of the intervention.

Example 5 "We discussed three children on whom the SENCO had recently conducted annual reviews and decided on necessary courses of action. I was asked re the procedures of the LEA, changing the statement details, other provision etc."

This could perhaps be viewed as co-ordination but the narrative suggests it is a little

more than this. Daniels (2001) suggests that during co-operation, within the confines of

a script, in this case the statutory procedures again, the actors will try to solve problems

in ways that are negotiated and agreed. It appears that this is taking place during this

transaction.

Example 6 "Discussion with SENCO and pupil support worker re three Year 1 children to problem solve a reading problem and discuss the need for referral to EP to assess whether two of the children would meet criteria for statutory assessment"

This example suggests co-operation with some problem-solving taking place but then it seems to move back towards a more co-ordinated approach when a referral to the EP for a specific task is suggested. Interestingly, the language again gives clues in terms of the interpretation as the word 'referral' has connotations of older style practice, and co-ordinated, rather than co-operative or communicative actions.

Example 7 "Meeting with class teacher and SENCO to 'discuss' i. e. put forward various hypotheses and then discuss what further data and actions would be required to move things forward. "

Here co-operation seems to be taking place and a shared script, involving collaborative activities such as hypothesis generation and discussion is in place. It is difficult to know whether or not there is a common object (here described as actions to move things forward) is a joint aim for all participants.

Example 8 "Meeting with SENCO reviewing actions and outcomes and agreeing further actions on three other children"

This statement appears to be describing co-operation. However, there is no indication that the activity is moving beyond the co-operative level.

Example 9 "Brief conversation with head teacher about inclusion and aspects of practice that are working well"

This example is describing co-operation where there is a shared script and shared outcomes. Given more information about the meeting it would have been possible to

note whether there were elements of the dialogue that were becoming more

'communicative', in Engestrom's terms.

7.7.5.6.3 Communication (n=5)

Example 1 "Discussion revolved around how to best implement Framework for Intervention in this particular primary school. During the meeting, we agreed what actions were to be taken over the term. "

Engestrom (1997) suggests that reflective communication involves the actors

reconceptualising their own organisation and interactions in relation to a shared object.

Although the extract above does not fit entirely with this description, it begins to move

in that direction as the shared object ' the best way to implement Framework...' involves

joint discussion about changing the organisation. The shared script can be seen as

comprising the discussion around agreeing what actions were to be taken.

Example 2 "Meeting with SENCO to feedback on work, general 'business' meeting, updates and consultation. The aim was to ensure clear and agreed effective communication, to enable the SENCO to feel supported and positive. "

This example seems to suggest that an awareness of the process is present, at least for

the EP and that a higher aim is to support the SENCO at a broader level, within their

work. Daniels (2001) suggests when 'communication' is occurring within an activity

system, then there can be an element of peers prompting each other dialogically. It

seems that within this example it is possible that this process may well be occurring.

197

> *Example 3 "I went down to the nursery where I was to meet with the Head of Early Years to complete a piece of work on assessment l special needs l appropriate systems for nursery and reception. We talked through this as a flow chart and together adapted a preschool front-sheet and IEP table to meet her purposes for early years."*

This can be seen as co-operation or communication although there is no real reflection on the common script. However, the work has moved beyond the normal bounds of EP - teacher conversation and so it can be assumed that a change in roles has been discussed and agreed.

> *Example 4 " IEP review of child at Stage 4 where parents believe that dyslexia is the cause of the child's behaviour and emotional difficulties. Discussion around these issues took place but with a strong emphasis on working on the positive, 'What's working for him now etc. and moving on'."*

Although this example is not clearly an activity that could be termed 'communication', it seems more advanced than earlier descriptions, as there is some awareness of the process, the approaches being proposed and the reasons behind these suggestions.

> *Example 5 "To discuss management changes next term and the effect of these on SEN. Developing an action plan for the SENCO to protect time and resources"*

This is a similar example to the previous one in that, although there is no overt dialogue about the process, it is clear that the script is shared and the object is also common to both parties. Therefore, in the terms of this model this can be termed communication.

7.7.5.7 Analysis of informal meetings in 2000

The data obtained in 2000 yielded a fewer number of narratives and within this a fewer number of discrete activities. When these were considered (27 40%), there were 13 meetings considered to be 'informal' and these were analysed in terms of the three levels described in earlier sections. Out of these, 3 were felt to fit the descriptors of co-ordination, 8 were co-operation and 2 were felt to be communication. In order to look for any developments or changes in practice and to further illuminate and interrogate the model, each part of the dialogue is described below using the actual words written in the transcript, by the EP involved.

7.7.5.7.1 Co-ordination (n=3)

Example 1 "SENCO came down saying 'what shall we do re the other child?' I'd left them to make a group decision, having expressed my views, so I talked it through with her. "

This seems to be an example of co-ordination, where there is a background script governing the fact that decisions need to be made about children, but that each actor has their own voice within the activity and there are quite possibly differing goals, or objects for each actor.

Example 2 "Consultation over a Year 5 pupil with learning difficulties, the SENCO seeking advice re next steps, particularly with reference to statutory assessment. "

Again this seems to be a similar example of co-ordination, although depending on the context and the relationship between the two parties, if the goals were similar (not clear

from this extract) it could be seen as co-operation. However, it is interesting to note that even when the word consultation is used, it does not mean that there is any more collaborative work taking place.

> *Example 3 "Review of child statemented for behavioural difficulties. Listening, analysing information, donating additional strategies and information. Fighting hidden agenda that is to request additional LSA (learning support assistant) hours. Routine work but stressful role as gatekeeper/ moderator of resources.*

This example perhaps typifies an activity where the context and the prescribed roles are dominant features and thus affect the way that the interactions can proceed. Although the EP has insight into the difficulties of the situation, by referring to the hidden agenda, it suggests that the inherent conflicts in the roles and the situation have not been discussed or negotiated.

7.7.5.7.2 Co-operation (n=8)

> *Example 1 "Had a meeting with visiting teacher who is due to get involved with child. We discussed child's background and planned a further meeting with parents to work together on an IEP. "*

This is similar to the examples above but the description suggests that the script is more explicit and shared and there is some planned activity.

> *Example 2 "Discussion with nursery teacher re strategies being used with child. Reason for activities - to gather information in order to make appropriate contributions to the provision plan for the child, put in place by the school.*

This activity is viewed as co-operative rather than co-ordinated as the EP and nursery teacher are discussing together the information that is needed for an agreed objective / outcome.

> *Example 3 " Consultation with learning support teacher re child not previously discussed (also not known to EP Service). School had concerns re his general learning.*

There is not a great deal of information contained in this example but it suggests that there is co-operation between the actors as two external agencies are consulting together, over the needs of a pupil of concern to school staff.

> *Example 4 "Discussion of ways forward regarding a pupil with behavioural difficulties. "*

Although short, the language used in this extract suggests that co-operation is in place within the activity.

> *Example 5 'Discuss with SENCO possible cases, where we were with present cases and the development needs of the school. Set some broad programmes. "*

Again the language used 'where we were with present cases' suggests that co-operation exists within the dyad.

> *Example 6 "Routine discussion regarding all Stage 3 children, advising, supporting, making additional comments where appropriate. Particular focus on Stage 3 children likely to go forward to Stage 4. Routine work which is relatively unrewarding."*

This meeting is typical of those described above and can either be viewed as co-ordination, (as the extent to which the goals are shared is not clear) or cooperation. Again the use of the word discussion tends to suggest negotiation and therefore a shared script. However, this does not suggest that the process and therefore the script has been addressed or negotiated. Hence dissatisfaction is evident from the final comment.

> *Example 7 "General discussion with SENCO re overview of school requirements (whole school), new CRISP requirements and procedures (an LEA initiative), overview of individual children causing concern and any future action requirements.*

This extract seems to be describing an activity that is co-operative and broad ranging. It may be that this could be described as communication, but as there is no reference to the shared script, it is not possible to assume this.

> *Example 8 "Rolling programme of EP intervention and advice discussed with SENCO and pupil support teacher. Some longer term cases programmed for more direct work. "*

The language used here is suggestive of co-operation, but it is unclear whether the goals or objects are agreed

7.7.5.7.3 Communication (n=2)

> *Example 1 "Meet Year 8 tutors of Stage 3 child with significant literacy and ESL difficulties. Facilitate joint problem-solving re strategies. Also inform perception of teachers re child's potential to learn.*

Although this has been categorised as communication, because the EP seems to be working at the level of join-problem solving, which suggests that the roles and the scripts have been discussed and negotiated, it would be necessary to check perceptions with the other participants involved in order to be clear that all parties were aware of the common scripts being used. However, this is the case for all the examples selected as illustrative of communication.

Example 2 " Half an hour was spent consulting with the SENCO and class teacher, relating my results, problem-solving and devising strategies and agreeing a review date.

This example is considered to demonstrate communication, mainly due to the language used in the text. It is, however, unclear who is consulting with whom and this dilemma relates to some of the discussions contained in chapter 6. However, as there is joint problem-solving taking place, it suggests an activity where communication is good and roles are flexible and supportive.

7.7.5.8 Comparison of 1999 and 2000 data

The numbers of informal meetings categorised within the three levels are summarised below in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Comparison of 1999 and 2000 data

	Total no. of informal meetings	Co-ordination	Co-operation	Communication
1999	51	6 (30%)	9 (45%)	5 (25%)
2000	27	3 (24%)	8 (64%)	3 (16%)

Clearly there is very little difference between the numbers in each section from 1999 to 2000. However, a high proportion of the meetings could be adjudged as co-operative. Those interactions where there was not clear evidence to indicate any coding level are difficult to adjudge. However, having scrutinised the accounts in order to understand what was taking place, it is probably fair to adjudge that those meetings could be said to be co-ordinated in the general sense that the term is used by Engestrom. The themes that emerge from the different meetings are discussed alongside the findings from the two earlier levels of analysis in the final section of this chapter.

7.8   Discussion of results of narrative analysis

7.8.1   The structure and content of school visits

The analysis of the narratives both in terms of the time spent on activities and the themes that emerge give a picture of a busy, varied set of interactions. The range of activities described, including work with parents, classroom observations, meetings with teachers, formal reviews and individual work with pupils are very often a series of co-ordinated activities around a key task. Therefore, in order for an EP to engage in an informal meeting with a teacher about a specific child, certain precursors need

to take place. In terms of understanding the complete nature of EP's work in school, apart from the informal meetings analysed in Section 7.4, these other activities can perhaps be viewed as co-ordinated work. Engestrom's interpretation of this level suggests that each actor follows their scripted role and concentrates on the successful completion of their specific assigned actions. Engestrom also includes the notion of 'tacitly assumed traditions' (p.372) and talks of the actions being co-ordinated as if by someone or something else without the actors realising, discussing or questioning the events. This level of assumption, or habit becomes institutionalised in many working practices and certainly within the changing role of the educational psychologist, it has often been very difficult to shift perceptions and practice away from assumed roles. Thus, a frequently occurring situation for an EP arriving in a school, where the role has not been negotiated, is that a teacher may have arranged for an EP to work with a named child on an individual basis, because the assumption is that that is what EPs do.

However, co-ordinated work may well be very appropriate and effective in certain settings and there are inherent difficulties in over-interpreting from the results presented here. Where activities appear to be co-ordinated and forming a part of a larger whole, it may be that the roles have been discussed and the goals agreed and that the evidence presented within these narratives is giving a partial view. Nevertheless, in terms of furthering understanding about the nature of EP work, it is useful to view elements of the work in this way in order to illustrate the wider context and transactions that take place.

7.8.2 Dominance of the context

Analysis of the narrative accounts of school visits, both in terms of the activities in which the EPs and others engage, and the comments of the EPs demonstrate the dominance of the context and expectations that exist. Using the models derived from sociocultural and activity theory these contextual factors can be viewed as the bottom layer of the activity triangle. In chapter 4 the final section analyses current practice using these models and the narratives reported here give a clear demonstration of the power of these underlying frameworks. This is depicted in the activity system represented in Figure 5.1

The rules that govern the transactions and the script, based on previous histories and expectations are a powerful influence upon the working practices of EPs and teachers in schools. Hence, although the EP may wish to have a broad remit, concerned with applying psychology in schools in creative and preventative ways, they find themselves engaged in work emanating from legislation, (1996 Education Act and the Code of Practice, 1994). Similarly, although the teacher may want to use the EPs time to learn about new methods for enabling a child's learning, they may, instead find themselves needing to check on the local procedural details and the criteria required for a child to proceed to statutory assessment.

The community in which these transactions take place has a similar limiting dimension. Although a child may be experiencing difficulties which may have a clear basis in a home or family based problem, the context within which the EP and teacher can plan,

needs to be focussed upon what can be achieved within the school and within the resources and responsibilities of the LEA.

Thirdly, the division of labour is necessarily compressed and time-limited. EPs have limited time in schools and this has to be justified and accounted for. Hence, frustration appears to creep in, from the evidence in the narratives, as the key requirements need to be prioritised and these tend to be children for whom a statutory assessment is sought. Despite this, some narratives give examples of satisfying interchanges where some constructive problem solving was achieved, from the EPs point of view. Clearly, this is only reflecting EP views and teachers may see the division of labour differently and would want to focus upon different priorities.

7.8.3 Conflict and dissatisfaction

Within the narratives, comments refer to conflict being avoided or possible conflicts arising and alongside this dissatisfaction being experienced by EPs. Disagreements and conflict are the subjects of the next two chapters and so this will not be considered in great detail here. However, one example highlighted a situation where an EP was called upon to reinforce the school's view against that of parents lobbying for a specific course of action. A second example notes the satisfaction an EP gained from successfully negotiating a course of action that was welcomed by school and parents alike when there was disagreement at the start of a meeting.

This type of role, which is not uncommon, requires skills and sensitivity on the part of the EP: an application of psychology reflexively. Achieving success in this way could be due to the EP forming a 'temporary overlapping system' as described by Miller (p.106, 1996). Miller maintains that the EP is in a unique position to interface between parties and to draw people's attention to the child's interests. This temporary system raises the status of the problem and the child at the centre of this and can mobilise resources and interest in order to find a solution. When this happens, it is likely that the EP will feel satisfied with the outcome, as do the other parties involved (Miller, 1996). However, it is not always possible to operate in this way and if school and family take diametrically opposed positions, then the EP may find themselves in a difficult and stressful situation.

This raises issues around training for EPs, to ensure they are equipped with negotiation and mediation skills. It also suggests that the activity systems in place are at the levels of co-ordination. There may be lack of overt discussion about the roles of each party and little reflection on the processes taking place. However, this will be explored in more detail in later chapters as consideration is given to the disturbances that can occur and which can result in movements between the different levels of activity.

7.8.4 Effectiveness across the three levels

The three levels of interaction, co-ordination, co-operation and communication can be seen as successively more sophisticated and more desirable,

depending on how the work environment is viewed and what the objects are. Although Engestrom does not state this explicitly, it is implied within the model he describes,' as in 'reflective communication' there are open discussions about content, process, goals, roles and relationships. To move towards more communicative practice may be one outcome that is advocated for the EP Service involved in this study, as a result of this research. However, there is another way of conceptualising the three levels that does not imply superiority of one level.

It might be the case that within the varying roles of the EP and the range of different schools they visit and the different teachers they work with, that the EPs adopt or achieve different working arrangements. Thus, in some settings a purely co-ordinated role may be appropriate or even desired by all parties. Alternately, within one setting and during one visit an EP and teacher may be working in a co-ordinated way over one piece of work but become much more communicative when engaged in a different task. The data gathered during this study does not provide evidence to establish whether or not this is the case.

However, the data did give evidence that the language used can be misleading and in particular the words 'consultation' and 'consultant' need to be carefully considered. This topic is considered in detail in chapter 6, but there is evidence in the data in this study that consultation can readily be engaged in when the activity is co-ordinated. It is likely also that it is not an appropriate term or relationship to be aspired to if a more communicative activity is desired.

Interactions that can be termed communication are rare, as suggested by Engestrom (1997) and also by the data presented in this study. A clear difficulty in investigating this type of activity further within this study is the fact that the views of only one party are represented. To be sure that communication was in place this would need verification from the teachers involved. However, the glimpses of dialogue described earlier describe situations where changes to organisations are discussed, where role implications are mentioned and where different modes of communicating are purposefully employed. Within many of the consultation frameworks currently used in the UK, an important element is for roles to be made explicit and clear at the outset of the consultation. If the consultation is democratic in any sense, then there should be some room for negotiation in roles, for all parties involved.

7.8.5 Artefacts as enablers

The next chapter of this thesis is concerned with artefacts and therefore the overview of the topic is located there. However, the narratives gave some evidence of specific artefacts acting as enablers to conversations and dialogues. Examples can be seen where a child's IEP (an artefact) provides a focus for discussion and problem solving. The discussion becomes more focussed and shared and there is more likelihood of common goals being agreed.

The 'child's progress' whether or not this is objectified, is often used as a common artefact and again usually succeeds in facilitating discussion. Setting agendas and agreeing on the content of future visits also helps to clarify time allocation and

priorities. However, there may be other artefacts, such as 'criteria for statutory

assessment', which detract from facilitative working and gives rise to potential

conflict. Issues such as these are considered in the next chapter. However, artefacts

make up part of the 'script' that exists within activities and as we have seen in the

diagrammatic representations of the three levels, the scripts are differentially shared

and open depending on the level of the interaction. It may be helpful therefore to

have more common shared artefacts which can be included in scripts and which can

facilitate discussion and dialogue.

The use of narratives as a tool for understanding and examining EP -teacher

interactions has proved useful and illuminative. The activities described are examined

from other perspectives in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER 8

AN EXAMINATION OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SHARED MEANINGS BETWEEN EPS AND TEACHERS ON A RANGE OF ARTEFACTS ASSOCIATED WITH MEETINGS. STEP 4 OF EXPANSIVE LEARNING CYCLE: EXAMINING THE NEW MODEL

8.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the second area of research undertaken with educational psychologists (EPs) where the area of focus is meetings in school between EPs and teachers. As described in sections 7.1 and 7.2, EPs in one EP service completed three-part questionnaires on two occasions, once in 1999 and once in 2000. The context is outlined in 7.2 and is pertinent to the data described in this chapter.

In the previous chapter, narrative accounts of typical school visits are described and are analysed using a sociocultural framework that seeks to understand the actions and conversations that take place within certain activities. Some accounts appear to indicate conversations that were more communicative than others and so in order further to investigate EPs perceptions of their work with teachers, the second part of the research seeks to examine the amount of shared meaning that is perceived to exist between individual EPs and the range of teachers that they work with. In order to facilitate this research, models and tools from sociocultural psychology and in particular,

developmental work research were drawn upon, as they have been successfully used to understand other work related issues and dilemmas (Engestrom et al, 1999).

8.2 Artefacts within sociocultural psychology

Activity theory as described in Chapter Two is strongly based upon the work of Vygotsky (1978) and Leontiev (1981) who pioneered work that focussed upon the nature of learning and the role of social communication and social interaction in learning. As part of this work, Vygotsky focussed upon mediation as a means of facilitating learning and he described ways in which mediation could take place. This idea has been further developed by many researchers and theorists (see Cole, 1996) and has been used as a core concept by Engestrom in his work on activity systems, using the activity triangle (See section 7.8.2) to demonstrate diagrammatically the relationship between subjects, objects and outcomes with mediating artefacts (tools) playing a key role.

Within the context of this research, the mediating artefacts that play a part in the activities (EP-teacher meetings) are mainly language based and consist of commonly used terms, concepts, materials, tasks, processes and decision making protocols. Certainly, given the constraints of the research undertaken here, where data was collected retrospectively and consists of EP perceptions of their work in schools, some measure of attitude, understanding, perception or constructs was needed.

Research undertaken by Engestrom in 1999, which focussed upon innovative learning in work teams, describes artefacts as follows,

> "The mediating artefacts include tools and signs, both external implements and internal representations such as mental models. It is not particularly useful to categorize mediating artefacts into external or practical ones, on the one hand, and internal or cognitive ones, on the other hand. These functions are in constant flux and transformation as the activity unfolds." (p381).

This more flexible interpretation of artefacts offers a useful basis for the construction of a data collection tool for the purposes of the second stage of investigation of this research. It was therefore decided to use Engestrom's definition and subsequent categorisation to structure the data collection. Engestrom moved on to develop his analysis of artefacts by suggesting that rather than categorise the artefact as internal (cognitive and affective) or external (practical) the processes that were involved in the use of the artefacts should be considered and therefore a method was needed for describing and differentiating these processes and the ways in which the artefacts are used.

Engestrom therefore suggests four types of artefact (1990) that can usefully be used to classify a range of artefacts, given that they can readily transform.

8.3 "What", "How", "Why" and "Where to" artefacts

"What" artefacts are used to identify and describe objects. Often talk is used to describe or construct objects, and these objects can be material, co-constructed, conceptual. For the purposes of this research this category has been used to describe a taxonomy of

items that consist mainly of actual objects, materials or processes. They adhere to Engestrom's definition as far as possible in that they describe and identify objects.

"How" artefacts, according to Engestrom (1999, p381) are used to guide and direct processes and procedures on, within or between objects. In Engestrom's typical studies, discussed in earlier chapters, he uses this category to subsume various types of meta-talk, which he says guide and constrain discussion. Given the nature of the data collected here, where retrospective accounts and ratings are given, there is no data concerning dialogue or verbal or non-verbal patterns of interaction. Therefore, this interpretation of "how" artefacts is not appropriate. However, in seeking to illuminate the nature of the shared meanings between EPs and teachers a category that looks at perceptions of processes, procedural rules and understanding of practice, is deemed to be useful and appropriate.

"Why" artefacts, are 'used to diagnose and explain the properties and behaviour of objects', according to Engestrom and he gives examples of specific tools which might be used to generate questions. Questions themselves can be seen as "why" artefacts which may generate more "why" artefacts and probably some "what" artefacts. Given this definition, there were many terms and concepts within EP work that clearly fell within this category.

The final set Engestrom termed "where to" artefacts and he states that these are used to 'envision the future state or potential development of objects, including objects and

social systems.' Very often, these can be vague and ambiguous, according to Engestrom. Within this analysis, "where to" artefacts refer to concepts or objects which have some element of planning or projection contained within them.

8.4 The construction of the taxonomies of artefacts

A key research question addressed within this study, concerns perceptions of shared meaning between EPs and teachers and the effect that any differences have on patterns of communication and joint working. It was therefore necessary to develop a tool that was able to measure perceptions of shared meaning along a number of variables. Given that this study is embedded within a sociocultural framework, the use of mediating artefacts as the variables was felt to be useful and appropriate.

Unlike personal construct psychology, where an early step is to elicit constructs from participants, it was decided that a taxonomy of artefacts would be developed for each of the four categories used by Engestrom. This was undertaken by the author and was developed using a series of systematic notes taken during a series of meetings held within the host EP Service, two months prior to the first data collection exercise. The meetings in question were the management team meetings of the EPS and two regular team meetings of a sub section of the EP service comprising EPs and advisory teachers.

During the meetings the author noted down any terms that were used which pertained to the roles, responsibilities and day-to-day tasks of the groups. These terms were then collated, analysed and divided into the four categories described above. Some were

discarded, as they did not appear to fit within any category. Others, which were unclear, were placed in the most suitable category and the taxonomies were trialled as part of the pilot study described in section 7.4. As a result of feedback, some categories were discarded or collapsed and the resultant taxonomies were used as an integral part of the data collection tool. The four lists are detailed below.

Table 8.1 "What" artefacts

1.1 Special educational Needs
1.2 Assessment
1.3 I.Q.
1.4 Learning potential
1.5 Specific difficulties
1.6 National Curriculum levels
1.7 Environmental factors
1.8 Relative difficulties
1.9 Equitable resource allocation
1.10 Severe and complex difficulty
1.11 Pupil motivation
1.12 Learning style
1.13 Teaching technique
1.14 OFSTED inspections
1.15 Criteria for Assessment and Provision (CRISP)
1.16 Code of Practice stages
1.17 IEPs
1.18 School improvement
1.19 High Impact Projects
1.20 LEA Officer role

Table 8.2 "How" artefacts

2.1 Assessment over time
2.2 Assessment through teaching
2.3 Working in partnership
2.4 Consultation
2.5 Referral process
2.6 Shared responsibility
2.7 Collaborative work
2.8 Recording process
2.9 Completing checklists
2.10 Agreeing priorities
2.11 Allocating time
2.12 Working at different levels within the school
2.13 Giving and receiving feedback
2.14 Critical friend role
2.15 Including all
2.16 Value-added

Table 8.3 "Why" artefacts

3.1 Educational values
3.2 Rights of individual child
3.3 Rights of all children
3.4 Nature of intelligence
3.5 Psychology of learning
3.6 Impact of teaching
3.7 Effects of placements on children (special / mainstream)
3.8 EP role & SEN issues
3.9 EP role & school improvement
3.10 EP role & Inclusion
3.11 Genetic differences in children
3.12 Family influences
3.13 Effective interventions
3.14 Influence of society

3.15 Personal v shared responsibility
3.16 Potential of people to change
3.17 Children's motivation to learn
3.18 Self esteem levels
3.19 Knowledge of social norms
3.20 Evaluating teaching
3.21 Evidence based practice
3.22 Collaborative problem solving
3.23 Shared scripts

Table 8.4 "Where to" artefacts

4.1 Jointly agreeing work allocation
4.2 Pre-arranged agendas
4.3 Reviewing progress towards agreed goals
4.4 Joint discussion of targets
4.5 Consideration of menu of activities
4.6 Agree monitoring and evaluation methods
4.7 Agree priorities for the future
4.8 Effective use of EP time
4.9 Role clarity
4.10 Negotiated objectives

Before asking EPs about the extent of the shared meaning they felt existed between themselves and teachers, they were asked if each term was 'regularly used', 'sometimes used' or 'never used'. Then, in order to measure the extent to which EPs felt there was shared meaning between themselves and the teachers with whom they work, a rating scale was used. A 10 centimetre line was provided for each variable and EPs were asked to mark with a cross to indicate the amount of shared meaning they felt existed, between themselves and teachers with whom they work, ranging from "different" on

the left to "shared" on the right. The instructions that guided the exercise are shown below.

Clearly the use of the 10 cm rating scale line is a very rough measure of any variable and it is possible that the validity of this data is compromised by the use of this method. However, methods using 'forced choices' inevitably mean that data can only be interpreted with extreme caution and care.

During our conversations with teachers, we use a variety of terms, language, methods, materials and approaches, in order to conduct the business of the visit. With reference to your own practice in general, consider each of the following terms/statements and indicate whether it is a term that you use, or which commonly occurs during your conversations with teachers when visiting schools.
For those you have ticked, please indicate with a cross on the line, the extent to which you feel the meanings of the terms are shared between yourself and the teachers you work with

For example, I may feel that in general there seems to be a fair amount of shared meaning between myself and teachers with whom I work in terms of… the Code of Practice stages….item 1.14. I would therefore put a cross towards the right of continuum for that item. However, something such as pre-arranged agendas, item 4.2, I might feel that I often experience different interpretations between what I mean by a pre-arranged agenda and what teachers mean by that term. I would therefore mark the cross towards the left of the continuum.

The items that follow are a range of concepts, constructs, commonly used terms and some specific educational or psychological paradigms/ models of practice. Often they are necessarily vague and will be subjective. This does not matter, in terms of the research method, because I am interested, at this point, in your perceptions of what occurs during your conversations with teachers, in general. Therefore, please try, wherever possible to rate each item, even if the term does not represent exactly what you feel you may talk about to teachers. If the term is "never used", then obviously it will be impossible to rate.

8.5 Method

The questionnaires were distributed to all EPs in the Educational Psychology Service in the summer term in 1999 and again in the summer term of 2000. The second section consisted of the above questions relating to artefacts. Both in 1999 and 2000, reminder letters were sent to all EPs asking them to complete and return the questionnaires. Once the deadline had been reached, the results were analysed, as detailed below.

8.6 Analysis of results

In order to manipulate the data efficiently, each rating scale was measured to the nearest millimetre, which gave a score for each rating for each EP. If the term/ artefact was never used, no score was recorded. The amount of usage of each term was also summarised across each year. The data was then entered using SPSS software and the results were analysed and are detailed below.

8.7 Results

8.7.1 Number of returns and sample

The number of questionnaires completed again dropped between 1999 and 2000. In 1999 there were **25** completions and in 2000 there were **16**. This produced data on 68 separate artefacts arranged in four groupings. There were **11** EPs who responded in both 1999 and 2000, giving 11 matched pairs.

8.7.2 Frequency of usage of terms

For each artefact, the first question asked whether the term was; "regularly used", "sometimes used" or "never used" by the EP. The results are given below. 15 EPs completed this section in 2000.

8.7.2.1 Comparison of use of artefacts in 1999 and 2000

Table 8.5 "What" artefacts in 1999 (n=25)

Term	Regularly used	Sometimes used	Never used
1.1 Special educational Needs	20 (80%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)
1.2 Assessment	20 (80%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)
1.3 I.Q.	0 (0%)	7 (30%)	16 (70%)
1.4 Learning potential	0 (0%)	17 (71%)	7 (29%)
1.5 Specific difficulties	5 (22%)	17 (74%)	1 (4%)
1.6 National Curriculum levels	23 (92%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)
1.7 Environmental factors	17 (68%)	8 (32%)	0 (0%)
1.8 Relative difficulties	6 (25%)	12 (50%)	6 (25%)
1.9 Equitable resource allocation	5 (21%)	9 (38%)	10 (41%)
1.10 Severe and complex difficulty	3 (12%)	17 (68%)	5 (20%)
1.11 Pupil motivation	14 (56%)	11 (44%)	0 (0%)
1.12 Learning style	5 (21%)	18 (75%)	1 (4%)
1.13 Teaching technique	7 (28%)	16 (64%)	2 (8%)
1.14 OFSTED inspections	5 (20%)	18 (72%)	2 (8%)
1.15 Criteria for Assessment and Provision (CRISP)	3 (12%)	18 (72%)	4 (16%)
1.16 Code of Practice stages	24 (96%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
1.17 IEPs	25 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
1.18 School improvement	0 (0%)	24 (96%)	1 (4%)
1.19 High Impact Projects	0 (0%)	10 (40%)	15 (60%)
1.20 LEA Officer role	2 (8%)	13 (54%)	9 (38%)

Table 8.6 "What" artefacts in 2000 (n=15)

Term	Regularly used	Sometimes used	Never used
1.1 Special educational Needs	14 (93%)	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
1.2 Assessment	13 (87%)	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
1.3 I.Q.	0 (0%)	9 (60%)	6 (40%)
1.4 Learning potential	1 (7%)	10 (66%)	4 (27%)
1.5 Specific difficulties	4 (27%)	11 (73%)	0 (0%)
1.6 National Curriculum levels	13 (87%)	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
1.7 Environmental factors	11 (73%)	4 (27%)	0 (0%)
1.8 Relative difficulties	3 (20%)	10 (67%)	2 (13%)
1.9 Equitable resource allocation	3 (20%)	8 (53%)	4 (27%)
1.10 Severe and complex difficulty	5 (33%)	9 (60%)	1 (7%)
1.11 Pupil motivation	10 (67%)	5 (33%)	0 (0%)
1.12 Learning style	8 (53%)	6 (40%)	1 (7%)
1.13 Teaching technique	9 (64%)	5 (36%)	0 (0%)
1.14 OFSTED inspections	7 (47%)	6 (40%)	2 (13%)
1.15 Criteria for Assessment and Provision (CRISP)	12 (80%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)
1.16 Code of Practice stages	15 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
1.17 IEPs	15 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
1.18 School improvement	5 (33%)	9 (60%)	1 (7%)
1.19 High Impact Projects	3 (20%)	8 (53%)	4 (27%)
1.20 LEA Officer role	3 (20%)	11 (73%)	1 (7%)

Table 8.7 "How" artefacts in 1999 (n = 25)

Term	Regularly used	Sometimes used	Never used
2.1 Assessment over time	19 (76%)	6 (24%)	0 (0%)
2.2 Assessment through teaching	16 (64%)	8 (32%)	1 (4%)
2.3 Working in partnership	14 (58%)	8 (33%)	2 (9%)
2.4 Consultation	10 (40%)	14 (56%)	1 (4%)
2.5 Referral process	14 (56%)	10 (40%)	1 (4%)
2.6 Shared responsibility	8 (33%)	11 (46%)	5 (21%)
2.7 Collaborative work	9 (36%)	14 (56%)	2 (8%)
2.8 Recording process	12 (48%)	8 (32%)	5 (20%)
2.9 Completing checklists	8 (32%)	13 (52%)	4 (16%)
2.10 Agreeing priorities	18 (72%)	7 (28%)	0 (0%)

Term	Regularly used	Sometimes used	Never used
2.11 Allocating time	13 (52%)	11 (44%)	1 (4%)
2.12 Working at different levels within the school	2 (8%)	17 (68%)	6 (24%)
2.13 Giving and receiving feedback	9 (38%)	13 (54%)	2 (8%)
2.14 Critical friend role	1 (4%)	11 (44%)	13 (52%)
2.15 Including all	13 (52%)	9 (36%)	3 (12%)
2.16 Value-added	0 (0%)	11 (44%)	14 (56%)

Table 8.8 "How" artefacts in 2000 (n=15)

Term	Regularly used	Sometimes used	Never used
2.1 Assessment over time	12 (80%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)
2.2 Assessment through teaching	11 (73%)	4 (27%)	0 (0%)
2.3 Working in partnership	10 (67%)	4 (27%)	1 (7%)
2.4 Consultation	13 (87%)	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
2.5 Referral process	9 (64%)	5 (36%)	0 (0%)
2.6 Shared responsibility	4 (27%)	10 (66%)	1 (7%)
2.7 Collaborative work	5 (33%)	10 (67%)	0 (0%)
2.8 Recording process	6 (40%)	8 (53%)	1 (7%)
2.9 Completing checklists	6 (40%)	9 (60%)	0 (0%)
2.10 Agreeing priorities	12 (80%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)
2.11 Allocating time	10 (67%)	5 (33%)	0 (0%)
2.12 Working at different levels within the school	3 (20%)	10 (67%)	2 (13%)
2.13 Giving and receiving feedback	8 (53%)	6 (40%)	1 (7%)
2.14 Critical friend role	4 (27%)	7 (47%)	4 (27%)
2.15 Including all	9 (60%)	6 (40%)	0 (0%)
2.16 Value-added	4 (27%)	9 (60%)	2 (13%)

Table 8.9 "Why" artefacts in 1999 (n=25)

Term	Regularly used	Sometimes used	Never used
3.1 Educational values	0 (0%)	14 (58%)	10 (42%)
3.2 Rights of individual child	6 (24%)	18 (72%)	1 (4%)
3.3 Rights of all children	7 (28%)	16 (64%)	2 (8%)
3.4 Nature of intelligence	0 (0%)	15 (60%)	10 (40%)

3.5 Psychology of learning	1 (4%)	23 (92%)	1 (4%)
3.6 Impact of teaching	4 (20%)	14 (70%)	2 (10%)
3.7 Effects of placements on children (special / mainstream)	13 (52%)	11 (44%)	1 (4%)
3.8 EP role & SEN issues	19 (76%)	6 (24%)	0 (0%)
3.9 EP role & school improvement	3 (76%)	19 (12%)	3 (12%)
3.10 EP role & Inclusion	11 (44%)	13 (52%)	1 (4%)
3.11 Genetic differences in children	0 (0%)	13 (52%)	12 (48%)
3.12 Family influences	14 (58%)	10 (42%)	0 (0%)
3.13 Effective interventions	19 (76%)	6 (24%)	0 (0%)
3.14 Influence of society	4 (16%)	17 (68%)	4 (16%)
3.15 Personal v shared responsibility	1 (4%)	17 (71%)	6 (25%)
3.16 Potential of people to change	10 (40%)	14 (56%)	1 (4%)
3.17 Children's motivation to learn	16 (64%)	9 (36%)	0 (0%)
3.18 Self esteem levels	19 (76%)	6 (24%)	0 (0%)
3.19 Knowledge of social norms	5 (20%)	15 (60%)	5 (20%)
3.20 Evaluating teaching	4 (16%)	16 (64%)	5 (20%)
3.21 Evidence based practice	7 (29%)	10 (42%)	7 (29%)
3.22 Collaborative problem solving	12 (48%)	13 (52%)	0 (0%)

Table 8.10 "Why" artefacts in 2000 (n=15)

Term	Regularly used	Sometimes used	Never used
3.1 Educational values	1 (7%)	8 (53%)	6 (40%)
3.2 Rights of individual child	5 (33%)	10 (67%)	0 (0%)
3.3 Rights of all children	4 (27%)	11 (73%)	0 (0%)
3.4 Nature of intelligence	0 (0%)	10 (67%)	5 (33%)
3.5 Psychology of learning	3 (20%)	12 (80%)	0 (0%)
3.6 Impact of teaching	4 (27%)	11 (73%)	0 (0%)
3.7 Effects of placements on children (special / mainstream)	8 (53%)	7 (47%)	0 (0%)
3.8 EP role & SEN issues	12 (80%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)
3.9 EP role & school improvement	5 (33%)	9 (60%)	1 (7%)
3.10 EP role & Inclusion	9 (64%)	5 (36%)	0 (0%)

	Regularly used	Sometimes used	Never used
3.11 Genetic differences in children	0 (0%)	10 (67%)	5 (33%)
3.12 Family influences	6 (40%)	8 (53%)	1 (7%)
3.13 Effective interventions	10 (67%)	5 (33%)	0 (0%)
3.14 Influence of society	3 (20%)	11 (73%)	1 (7%)
3.15 Personal v shared responsibility	2 (14%)	6 (43%)	6 (43%)
3.16 Potential of people to change	5 (33%)	10 (67%)	0 (0%)
3.17 Children's motivation to learn	9 (60%)	6 (40%)	0 (0%)
3.18 Self esteem levels	11 (73%)	4 (27%)	0 (0%)
3.19 Knowledge of social norms	1 (7%)	8 (53%)	6 (40%)
3.20 Evaluating teaching	6 (40%)	8 (53%)	1 (7%)
3.21 Evidence based practice	5 (33%)	8 (53%)	2 (14%)
3.22 Collaborative problem solving	2 (14%)	10 (72%)	2 (14%)

Table 8.11 "Where to?" artefacts in 1999 (n=25)

Term	Regularly used	Sometimes used	Never used
4.1 Jointly agreeing work allocation	15 (60%)	9 (36%)	1 (4%)
4.2 Pre-arranged agendas	9 (36%)	13 (52%)	3 (12%)
4.3 Reviewing progress towards agreed goals	17 (68%)	8 (32%)	0 (0%)
4.4 Joint discussion of targets	18 (72%)	6 (24%)	1 (4%)
4.5 Consideration of menu of activities	2 (8%)	16 (64%)	7 (28%)
4.6 Agree monitoring and evaluation methods	7 (28%)	15 (60%)	3 (12%)
4.7 Agree priorities for the future	19 (76%)	6 (24%)	0 (0%)
4.8 Effective use of EP time	12 (48%)	13 (52%)	0 (0%)
4.9 Role clarity	8 (33%)	16 (67%)	0 (0%)
4.10 Negotiated objectives	11 (44%)	7 (28%)	7 (28%)

Table 8.12 "Where to?" artefacts in 2000 (n=15)

Term	Regularly used	Sometimes used	Never used
4.1 Jointly agreeing work	9 (67%)	6 (33%)	0 (0%)

allocation			
4.2 Pre-arranged agendas	8 (53%)	6 (40%)	1 (7%)
4.3 Reviewing progress towards agreed goals	10 (67%)	5 (33%)	0 (0%)
4.4 Joint discussion of targets	11 (73%)	4 (27%)	0 (0%)
4.5 Consideration of menu of activities	5 (33%)	6 (40%)	4 (27%)
4.6 Agree monitoring and evaluation methods	7 (47%)	8 (53%)	0 (0%)
4.7 Agree priorities for the future	13 (87%)	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
4.8 Effective use of EP time	12 (80%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)
4.9 Role clarity	4 (27%)	11 (73%)	0 (0%)
4.10 Negotiated objectives	7 (47%)	7 (47%)	1 (6%)

8.7.2.2 Comments

This data was collected to ascertain an overview of the types of terms used and to understand the different functions of the separate groups of artefacts. It also highlights at a very basic level whether certain terms increased or decreased in usage over the year. It also served as a 'primer' question, which led onto the individual rating scales and clearly, if the EP had ticked the box indicating that they never used the term, then they would not be able to rate the amount of shared meaning that they perceived to exist between themselves and teachers.

The first group of "what" artefacts demonstrated that there are common terms and concepts that are used by all EPs both in 1999 and 2000. These were as follows:

- o Special educational needs

- o Assessment

- o National Curriculum levels

- o Environmental factors

- o Pupil motivation

- o Code of Practice stages

- o IEPs

For each of these terms, no EPs ticked that they never used the terms. Therefore, all EPs regularly or sometimes used the terms. This is unsurprising in that they form some of the key topics for discussion and provide the basis of the business that is undertaken during school visits.

In 2000, the data shows that all EPs indicated that they used the term 'teaching technique' and 64% regularly used the term whereas in 1999 only 28% of EPs regularly used the term. Given the change of emphasis of work across the year and the hope that more time could be spent in the application of psychology, this is a small indication that some change is occurring. A second change is that all EPs talk about CRISP (a newly introduced system for discussing the criteria for statutory assessment and provision, brought in to the LEA) during school visits whereas this was not the case during 1999. Again this reflects a change in policy and practice in the EPS as the CRISP framework was introduced with a view to it playing a key role in structuring EP-teacher discussions. This change also appears to have taken effect, as indicated by the data presented here.

The second set of artefacts considers **how** work in undertaken between the EP and teacher and the results indicate some commonality between 1999 and 2000. All EPs consistently used the terms 'assessment over time 'and' agreeing priorities in both years.

There were several more terms that were used by all EPs in 2000, which were not used by everyone the year before. These included:

- o   Assessment through teaching
- o   Consultation
- o   Referral process
- o   Collaborative work
- o   Completing checklists
- o   Agreeing priorities
- o   Including all.

These terms have some elements in common and they suggest a change in style of working. Again this is consistent with the policy and practice changes that were implemented during the year within the EPS, when a more collaborative, consultative model was promoted with more consistency in delivery.

New terms, introduced during this time also appear to be used more in 2000 than they were in 1999. Thus, one EP only regularly used 'critical friend' or 'value-added' in 1999, whereas 8 respondents used them in 2000.

In 1999, 'why' artefacts, terms which seek to explain or go beyond the immediate activities showed a wide range of usage ratings. 'EP role and SEN issues' was regularly used by 76% of EPs and 'effective interventions' was also used by 76% of EPs. However, relatively high numbers of EPs never used the terms 'educational values', 'nature of intelligence', or 'genetic differences in children'. Separate research studies might illuminate this area of work as key, underlying constructs might show links and correlation between EPs usage of certain artefacts. However, from the limited data presented here it is difficult to draw any conclusions.

The use of the artefact 'self esteem levels' is rated highly in both years, 76% of EPs regularly used the term in 1999 and 73% in 2000.

The 'where to?' artefacts show consistency across the two years with many of the artefacts being used on a regular basis by all EPs. There is a marked increase in the use of the term 'effective use of EP time' from 1999 to 2000 with 48% of EPs reporting that they regularly use the term in 1999 to 80% in 2000. This increase could be linked to the change in practice that was implemented over the year whereby EPs were encouraged to consider and negotiate the best use of their time with teachers and to move towards more consultation.

8.7.3 Comparison of 4 groups of artefacts and analysis of individual artefacts

8.7.3.1 Mean ratings for 1999 and 2000

In order to gain an overview of the totals for EP perceptions of shared

Meaning in both 1999 and 2000 the means were calculated along with the

minimum and maximum scores and the standard deviation. This data is

presented in Tables 8.13 and 8.14.

Table 8.13 Totals for 1999 and 2000

	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
1999 data all scores	25	36.54	83.38	61.79	12.80
2000 data all scores	16	36.04	89.65	64.95	12.64

8.7.3.2 Comments

The data above shows a slight increase in overall perceived shared meaning between

1999 and 2000 but in both years there is a wide range of scores with EPs differing

widely in the amount of shared meaning they perceive. Hence the standard deviation in

both years is between 12.8 in 1999 and 12.64 in 2000.

8.7.3.3. Analysis of groups of artefacts for 1999 and 2000

Table 8.14 Totals for groups of artefacts in 1999 and 2000

	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
1999 "What"artefacts	25	38.11	82.59	61.11	11.64
2000 "What"artefacts	16	39.45	85.06	66.66	13.32
1999 "How"artefacts	25	29.87	83.36	62.67	14.96
2000 "How"artefacts	16	33.53	91.63	67.13	15.05
1999 "Why"artefacts	25	26.55	81.68	54.83	16.19
2000	16	27.30	91.90	55.78	15.83

"Why"artefacts					
1999 "Where to"artefacts	25	42.57	90.38	68.54	14.54
2000 "Where to"artefacts	16	43.89	90.00	70.22	11.68

8.7.3.4 Comments

The above table shows the differences in mean perceptions of shared meaning across the two years and it highlights some differences between each group of artefacts. The four groups will be considered individually.

The "What" artefacts had mean values of **61.11 in 1999** and **66.66 in 2000**, representing a slight rise (5.55). This perhaps indicates that the content of the meetings is a little clearer and that there is more commonality apparent in 2000. However, in both years a wide range of ratings is evident giving a large standard deviation.

The "How' artefacts scores show a similar but still not significant rise with the mean in **1999 being 62.67** and in **2000 being 67.13:** a rise of 5.46, which is positive but not significant. This perhaps suggests that the processes that are involved in the work and the meetings are becoming a little clearer.

The "Why" artefacts show mean scores of **54.83 in 1999** moving to **55.78 in 2000.** This indicates very little change across the year suggesting that discussions about the reasons behind the work and the nature of the work itself have received very little discussion or increase in levels of agreement.

Finally, the means for the ' Where to" artefacts are as follows: **68.54 in 1999** moving to

70.22 in 2000. Although there is only a small increase in these scores they are the

highest of the four sets, indicating that the greatest amount of perceived shared

meanings exists in this category, concerned with joint planning.

8.7.3.5 Analysis of individual artefacts 1999 and 2000 data

**Table 8.15 Shared meaning between EPs and teachers, as perceived and
rated by EPs. "What" artefact – 1999**

Artefact "What"	Number of responses	Minimum rating	Maximum rating	Mean rating	Standard deviation
1.1 Special educational Needs	25	17.00	94.00	68.2000	20.8946
1.2 Assessment	25	9.00	94.00	51.6000	25.3722
1.3 I.Q.	11	1.00	46.00	30.4545	16.7354
1.4 Learning potential	16	2.00	93.00	48.2500	26.8812
1.5 Specific difficulties	24	10.00	96.00	58.2500	26.6005
1.6 National Curriculum levels	25	39.00	100.00	86.7600	12.9044
1.7 Environmental factors	25	17.00	98.00	58.6400	22.2802
1.8 Relative difficulties	18	43.00	91.00	62.5000	15.9604
1.9 Equitable resource allocation	14	3.00	83.00	36.8571	26.4542
1.10 Severe and complex difficulty	19	8.00	92.00	51.5789	29.5697
1.11 Pupil motivation	24	40.00	95.00	63.7500	16.4773
1.12 Learning style	25	24.00	90.00	53.1200	15.0785
1.13 Teaching technique	22	25.00	92.00	65.7727	19.5471
1.14 OFSTED	23	30.00	98.00	78.2174	19.3836

inspections					
1.15 Criteria for Assessment and Provision (CRISP)	20	10.00	97.00	42.5000	23.7719
1.16 Code of Practice stages	24	46.00	100.00	84.5000	13.2501
1.17 IEPs	25	45.00	100.00	83.6000	13.5431
1.18 School improvement	23	14.00	92.00	57.8696	21.5708
1.19 High Impact Projects	13	5.00	100.00	42.0000	26.7706
1.20 LEA Officer role	16	11.00	84.00	46.1250	25.5261

Table 8.16 Shared meaning between EPs and teachers, as perceived and rated by EPs. 'What' artefact – 2000

Artefact "What"	Number of responses	Minimum rating	Maximum rating	Mean rating	Standard deviation
1.1 Special educational Needs	16	31.00	97.00	77.5000	17.3705
1.2 Assessment	16	11.00	88.00	57.7500	23.3024
1.3 I.Q.	13	1.00	89.00	48.6154	26.8717
1.4 Learning potential	12	3.00	88.00	56.9167	32.9144
1.5 Specific difficulties	16	25.00	98.00	63.3750	19.6600
1.6 National Curriculum levels	16	61.00	99.00	90.1250	10.9719
1.7 Environmental factors	16	28.00	99.00	65.8750	18.5000
1.8 Relative difficulties	14	19.00	81.00	59.9286	16.1124
1.9 Equitable resource allocation	14	15.00	88.00	43.0000	21.8913
1.10 Severe and complex difficulty	15	13.00	98.00	65.3333	24.6277
1.11 Pupil motivation	16	5.00	98.00	63.1875	28.5148
1.12 Learning style	16	5.00	95.00	57.7500	21.5422
1.13 Teaching technique	15	35.00	95.00	72.2667	19.7573
1.14 OFSTED	15	24.00	99.00	79.8667	21.7416

inspections					
1.15 Criteria for Assessment and Provision (CRISP)	16	24.00	95.00	70.4375	21.9423
1.16 Code of Practice stages	16	65.00	99.00	87.1250	8.6631
1.17 IEPs	16	36.00	96.00	83.6875	15.3176
1.18 School improvement	15	34.00	99.00	69.8667	18.1063
1.19 High Impact Projects	13	19.00	94.00	59.0769	23.5211
1.20 LEA Officer role	16	12.00	85.00	47.1875	20.6695

Table 8.17 Shared meaning between EPs and teachers, as perceived and rated by EPs. "How' artefact – 1999

Artefact "How"	Number of responses	Minimum rating	Maximum rating	Mean rating	Standard deviation
2.1 Assessment over time	25	25.00	95.00	69.2000	20.1246
2.2 Assessment through teaching	24	25.00	96.00	65.5000	21.7995
2.3 Working in partnership	24	27.00	95.00	63.4583	22.3470
2.4 Consultation	23	14.00	94.00	50.3043	24.9425
2.5 Referral process	25	13.00	95.00	57.4400	28.2785
2.6 Shared responsibility	19	15.00	95.00	55.8947	23.5723
2.7 Collaborative work	22	25.00	98.00	62.3182	22.1109
2.8 Recording process	21	28.00	94.00	62.0952	20.1368
2.9 Completing checklists	20	18.00	98.00	71.9500	24.4012
2.10 Agreeing priorities	25	18.00	99.00	73.1600	22.4679
2.11 Allocating time	24	32.00	98.00	68.5000	21.5810
2.12 Working at different	20	19.00	88.00	55.8000	23.4310

levels within the school					
2.13 Giving and receiving feedback	23	32.00	98.00	64.2174	18.0981
2.14 Critical friend role	14	22.00	86.00	57.4286	20.4665
2.15 Including all	21	18.00	98.00	54.6667	20.9841
2.16 Value-added	12	20.00	84.00	60.2500	20.0187

Table 8.18 Shared meaning between EPs and teachers, as perceived and rated by EPs. "How" artefact – 2000

Artefact "How"	Number of responses	Minimum rating	Maximum rating	Mean rating	Standard deviation
2.1 Assessment over time	16	14.00	97.00	71.1875	26.4278
2.2 Assessment through teaching	16	8.00	95.00	65.4375	24.7601
2.3 Working in partnership	15	24.00	95.00	65.2000	22.4824
2.4 Consultation	16	18.00	95.00	56.3125	21.5119
2.5 Referral process	16	21.00	94.00	69.1250	22.7123
2.6 Shared responsibility	16	23.00	95.00	59.4375	22.4528
2.7 Collaborative work	15	37.00	98.00	67.2000	18.8232
2.8 Recording process	15	16.00	98.00	67.3333	22.7586
2.9 Completing checklists	16	38.00	98.00	81.5000	16.5570
2.10 Agreeing priorities	16	64.00	98.00	83.6250	11.9882
2.11 Allocating time	16	25.00	98.00	75.7500	20.4369
2.12 Working at different levels within the school	13	21.00	97.00	58.6154	26.8903
2.13 Giving and receiving	15	31.00	100.00	74.3333	18.7566

feedback					
2.14 Critical friend role	12	16.00	98.00	57.4167	24.4185
2.15 Including all	16	30.00	86.00	56.3125	20.4930
2.16 Value-added	14	41.00	88.00	63.3571	12.4937

Table 8.19 Shared meaning between EPs and teachers, as perceived and rated by EPs. 'Why" artefact – 1999

Artefact "Why"	Number of responses	Minimum rating	Maximum rating	Mean rating	Standard deviation
3.1 Educational values	16	30.00	90.00	57.3125	20.7709
3.2 Rights of individual child	24	20.00	99.00	56.2500	23.0675
3.3 Rights of all children	22	8.00	99.00	52.6818	26.2595
3.4 Nature of intelligence	16	2.00	73.00	38.5625	22.0181
3.5 Psychology of learning	24	18.00	80.00	45.5417	17.8812
3.6 Impact of teaching	23	20.00	90.00	60.7826	17.3728
3.7 Effects of placements on children (special / mainstream)	23	20.00	87.00	50.6522	23.6789
3.8 EP role & SEN issues	25	18.00	86.00	55.4000	22.2036
3.9 EP role & school improvement	23	12.00	79.00	38.9565	21.0378
3.10 EP role & Inclusion	24	18.00	87.00	52.1667	22.9454
3.11Genetic differences in children	16	3.00	69.00	37.8125	20.9959
3.12 Family influences	25	18.00	90.00	54.6400	23.2646
3.13 Effective interventions	24	24.00	96.00	64.1667	19.4594
3.14 Influence of society	21	6.00	90.00	51.4762	24.8548
3.15 Personal v shared responsibility	18	23.00	90.00	56.4444	17.9254

3.16 Potential of people to change	24	10.00	91.00	52.9583	24.3748
3.17 Children's motivation to learn	25	25.00	92.00	59.4400	19.1269
3.18 Self esteem levels	25	21.00	96.00	69.4000	19.5512
3.19 Knowledge of social norms	19	16.00	92.00	57.3684	24.2263
3.20 Evaluating teaching	21	20.00	89.00	59.9524	17.5541
3.21 Evidence based practice	19	25.00	99.00	64.4737	19.6734
3.22 Collaborative problem solving	20	30.00	97.00	64.7000	18.4080

Table 8.20 Shared meaning between EPs and teachers, as perceived and rated by EPs. 'Why" artefact – 2000

Artefact "Why"	Number of responses	Minimum rating	Maximum rating	Mean rating	Standard deviation
3.1 Educational values	11	19.00	98.00	52.6364	26.3335
3.2 Rights of individual child	16	25.00	98.00	56.1875	23.6706
3.3 Rights of all children	16	15.00	98.00	57.1875	23.9812
3.4 Nature of intelligence	13	5.00	75.00	33.9231	20.7021
3.5 Psychology of learning	16	5.00	81.00	41.5625	21.8753
3.6 Impact of teaching	16	35.00	98.00	64.5625	18.7722
3.7 Effects of placements on children (special / mainstream)	16	12.00	89.00	47.8125	24.8414

3.8 EP role & SEN issues	16	30.00	84.00	62.1250	18.8922
3.9 EP role & school improvement	15	18.00	85.00	48.7333	19.6340
3.10 EP role & Inclusion	16	30.00	85.00	56.8125	19.2742
3.11Genetic differences in children	12	2.00	87.00	45.6667	28.1210
3.12 Family influences	16	5.00	98.00	59.7500	25.8341
3.13 Effective interventions	16	25.00	93.00	66.1875	19.1528
3.14 Influence of society	15	5.00	98.00	59.2667	23.9835
3.15 Personal v shared responsibility	9	17.00	99.00	59.6667	23.8956
3.16 Potential of people to change	16	14.00	88.00	49.3125	21.7890
3.17 Children's motivation to learn	16	15.00	98.00	61.0000	21.8754
3.18 Self esteem levels	16	37.00	98.00	68.3125	14.0034
3.19 Knowledge of social norms	11	5.00	97.00	54.0000	28.0214
3.20 Evaluating teaching	16	28.00	98.00	56.2500	18.6351
3.21 Evidence based practice	14	19.00	99.00	49.5000	21.4826
3.22 Collaborative problem solving	14	28.00	99.00	62.0000	17.7764

Table 8.21 Shared meaning between EPs and teachers, as perceived and rated by EPs. 'Where to" artefact - 1999.

Artefact "Where to"	Number of responses	Minimum rating	Maximum rating	Mean rating	Standard deviation
4.1 Jointly agreeing work allocation	24	17.00	95.00	72.3333	21.5178
4.2 Pre-arranged	22	32.00	94.00	67.9091	17.6687

agendas					
4.3 Reviewing progress towards agreed goals	25	38.00	95.00	73.4000	17.3061
4.4 Joint discussion of targets	24	35.00	96.00	73.6250	15.8109
4.5 Consideration of menu of activities	18	7.00	90.00	62.2778	21.9298
4.6 Agree monitoring and evaluation methods	21	18.00	99.00	62.5238	19.9465
4.7 Agree priorities for the future	24	38.00	100.00	78.2083	17.8398
4.8 Effective use of EP time	23	27.00	98.00	63.8261	20.9277
4.9 Role clarity	25	28.00	97.00	59.8400	21.1516
4.10 Negotiated objectives	17	25.00	100.00	75.2353	20.0048

Table 8.22 Shared meaning between EPs and teachers, as perceived and rated by EPs. "Where to" artefact – 2000

Artefact "Where to"	Number of responses	Minimum rating	Maximum rating	Mean rating	Standard deviation
4.1 Jointly agreeing work allocation	16	35.00	92.00	75.1250	14.8588
4.2 Pre-arranged agendas	15	36.00	91.00	73.9333	16.2149
4.3 Reviewing progress towards agreed goals	16	45.00	98.00	74.3125	15.1028
4.4 Joint discussion of targets	16	46.00	96.00	78.3750	14.3196
4.5 Consideration	12	21.00	95.00	67.6667	21.8729

of menu of activities					
4.6 Agree monitoring and evaluation methods	16	18.00	97.00	62.0625	20.8086
4.7 Agree priorities for the future	16	45.00	97.00	78.5000	14.5511
4.8 Effective use of EP time	16	25.00	86.00	64.5625	18.0147
4.9 Role clarity	16	25.00	86.00	56.4375	19.0367
4.10 Negotiated objectives	15	46.00	98.00	73.9333	15.9170

8.7.3.6 Comments

An examination of the individual artefacts shows some widely different ratings in terms of the amounts of shared meanings and also marked changes in ratings of some artefacts over the two years. These are useful and interesting data in their own right but they also contribute to the wider picture of the changes taking place within the EPS over the year. In order to assimilate this information into the wider picture, it is perhaps useful to highlight those artefacts that seemed to have a wide variation in scores and the greatest difference in mean scores over the two sets of data.

"IQ". This artefact scored 30.45 mean rating (out of 100) in 1999 and only 48.61 mean rating in 2000. Although this is a low score, there is an increase in 2000, which indicates a higher perceived increase one year later.

'Equitable resource allocations'. Similarly, this artefact gained a low score (36.81) in perceived shared meaning in 1999 rising to only 43.00 in 2000.

"OFSTED inspections". An artefact such as this, which it would be predicted would have high levels of shared meaning between EPs and teachers did score highly in both years, (78.21 in 1999 and 79.86 in 2000). Similar terms, such as **"Code of Practice stages"** and **"IEPS"** also scored consistently highly in both years: (Code of Practice stages, 84.5 in 1999 and 87.13 in 2000 and IEPs, 83.6 in 1999 and 83.69 in 2000.) These tools, protocols or common short cut terms clearly form a key part of the meetings that occur and the existence of a common language or common understanding should aid collaborative working.

"CRISP" a locally produced set of procedures and materials produced interesting results in that the amount of perceived shared meaning increased from 42.5 in 1999 to 70.45 in 2000. This is a large increase that will prove useful data to those EPS leaders who have provided changes in policy across the LEA and schools and have trained many staff in the new procedures. This data goes some way to measuring the success of their introduction and management of change.

"Nature of intelligence" an artefact that is much less easy to define but nevertheless occurs within EP - teacher conversations, scored consistently low in both years: 38.56 in 1999 and 33.92 in 2000. This is the only artefact for which the score was lower in 2000 than 1999.

"EP role and school improvement", perhaps a concept which is relatively new,

scored low in 1999 (38.96) but increased (48.73) in 2000.

Another area that scored low was **"Genetic differences in children".** The scores in

this area were 37.81 in 1999 and 45.66 in 2000. These

last three artefacts came under the heading of 'Why' and perhaps indicate

fundamental differences in constructs and attitudes in EPs and teachers which may,

in turn reflect differences in training and background.

 Within the grouping of "Where to" artefacts, there were several items which scored

highly in terms of shared meanings as follows: **"Jointly agreeing work allocations**

72.33 in 1999 and 75.12 in 2000, **"Reviewing progress towards agreed goals",**

73.4 in 1999 and 74.31 in 2000, **"Joint discussion of targets ",** 73.62 in 1999 and

78.38   in 2000, **"Agree priorities for the future"** 78.2 in 1999 and 78.5 in

2000 and finally, **"Negotiated objectives",** 75.23 in 1999 and 73.93 in 2000. This

group showed the highest levels of perceived shared meaning and thus indicate that

the planning element of meetings is very important in terms of collaborative

working. Policy changes, which put emphasis on negotiation and agreement, appear

to be beneficial in terms of high levels of perceived shared meaning which in turn

should lead to more collaborative, productive working.

8.7.4 Correlations across 1999 and 2000

Within the two sets of data there were 11 educational psychologists who completed the questionnaires on both occasions. Therefore in order to compare their data, correlations were calculated and are displayed in the table below.

Table 8.23 Correlations for total scores and groups of artefacts across 1999 and 2000

Groups	Correlation level	Significance level
Totals for 1999 and 2000	0.928	Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
"What " artefacts for 1999 and 2000	0.847	Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
"How " artefacts for 1999 and 2000	0.810	Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
"Why " artefacts for 1999 and 2000	0.888	Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
"Where to " artefacts for 1999 and 2000	0.905	Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

8.7.4.1 Comments

The correlations above show significant consistency across the totals for the years and across each group of artefacts. The highest rated group was again the 'Where to" artefacts where the levels of perceived shared meaning are correlated at 0.905. These results suggest that individual EPs did not vary a great deal from 1999 to 2000 and gave

consistently similar ratings even though they did not have copies of their previous ratings when they repeated the task one year later.

8.8   Discussion

8.8.1   The content of meetings and the formation of scripts

The results obtained in both 1999 and 2000 show that certain terms, or artefacts were commonly used by all EPs and were felt to have high, shared meaning, by many EPs. These were terms such as 'special educational needs', 'pupil motivation', 'IEPs'. Terms such as these are indicative of the core business that it is expected will be conducted within the school visits and they therefore make up a significant part of the agenda. In order to make the script, in activity theory terms, more open and explicit these areas of focus can be included in planning meeting, proformas, consultation records and, in some EP Services, actual scripts. This development will be discussed in more detail in later chapters and will be compared with evidence from the national survey conducted and reported in Chapter 5.

The fact that there are certain high-usage, broad-based terms, or mediating artefacts that can be identified and quantified, suggests that they are used across all three levels of working; from co-ordinated, through co-operative to communicative. Further analysis of the content of meetings which were broadly co-operative, might indicate that there is a functional script, containing some of the terms quoted above, but which does not go much further beyond this point. In situations such as these, in order to improve and

progress the activities, it might be possible to make various parts of the script or functions of the script more explicit. Thus, by agreeing content areas ("What"artefacts) beforehand or at the start of the meeting, then more attention could perhaps be paid to process issues ("How" artefacts) and also issues around values, causal relationships, the nature of the activity and the longer term goals.

8.8.2 Policy changes reflected in practice

The results obtained show that in some areas of practice there has been a change both in the level of usage of the terms and the amount of perceived shared meaning. Examples of this are evident both in terms of content areas ('What" artefacts) and process issues ("How" artefacts). The former includes such terms as the CRISP procedures that represent a locally agreed initiative designed to improve communication over statutory assessment and provision.

The process aspects of meetings saw greater changes in that the term 'Consultation' was regularly used by 40% of EPs in 1999 but was regularly used by 87% of EPs in 2000. The amount of perceived shared meaning of this term also rose from 50 in 1999 to 56 in 2000. New terms introduced over the period of time were also used more often in 1999 than in 2000 (e.g. 'critical friend' and 'value-added'). However, the perceived shared meanings did not rise significantly during this time, perhaps indicating a lack of clarity on both sides, in terms of what these terms mean.

The change in patterns of usage of terms provides useful information in terms of the expansive learning cycle as new models are assimilated and put into practice. Changes in organisations are slow and changing the dynamics of interactions, which in many cases are well established, is also a difficult process. By focussing upon the language and the terms used, this study has provided evidence of the extent of the change, over a short period of time. The validity of the tool is supported by the high levels of correlation between the matched pairs, across the two years. It is possible, then that this could be replicated or adapted as a useful evaluative tool for the EP Service to use in the future or for other EP services wishing to evaluate aspects of practice to employ or adapt. Clearly, another purpose for which this could be used would be to begin to explore teacher perceptions of EP practice.

8.8.3 "Why" artefacts and personal constructs

The results obtained from EPs concerning "Why" artefacts, their usage and the amounts of perceived shared meaning produced the most variation in scores both in 1999 and 2000. This is not surprising in that the question 'Why?" is the most powerful in many instances and goes beyond the 'here and now' introducing interesting but sometimes threatening angles into conversations. Within the realm of children's difficulties, discussing "Why" issues, inevitably and quite rightly, leads to wider debates and in some cases this can be productive, in terms of finding a way forward, but it can uncover wider gaps in understandings, beliefs and values. If the investigations reported here were to continue in more depth and were to explore ways and means of facilitating discussion about "Why" artefacts, in order to improve the activity systems operating

between EPs and teachers and to therefore result in more effective outcomes, then other theoretical models and approaches could be drawn upon. In particular, using techniques derived from Personal Construct Psychology, (Kelly, 1955), a sharing of constructs could be facilitated in a non-threatening way. Thus, a teacher and EP might use a series of techniques to discuss their views concerning children, their difficulties and ways of alleviating the difficulties. This may result in improved understanding and even an increased level of mutual understanding or agreement. However, it may clearly expose differences in beliefs and values between the two parties. A challenge then, would be for the pair to accommodate these differences within the working environments and activity systems within which they work. The following chapter, which considers conflicts and disagreements that arise and looks at the role that these might play within activity systems, is relevant to this discussion.

8.8.4 Low levels of perceived shared meaning

The individual artefacts that were rated with low levels of perceived, shared meaning by EPs are interesting as a group and may be indicative of fundamental differences between the EPs and teachers within this study. The artefacts were "IQ" rated at only 30.45 In 1999 moving to 48.61 in 2000, "nature of intelligence" rated at 38.56 in 1999 reducing to 33.92 in 2000 and "genetic differences in children" scoring 37.81 in 1999 increasing to 45.66 in 2000.

There is a similarity between these key aspects of child development and special needs and this concordance links to core constructs and perceptions of core constructs that are

important and influential in joint work undertaken on school visits. Discussion of the nature of intelligence, the validity of IQ as a measure and the effect of genetic differences are part of a wider debate often termed, for shorthand, the 'nature-nurture' debate. Although scientific investigations and in particular advances in genetics can provide knowledge about the extent of genetic, biological and physical influences on development, intelligence and behaviour, people's opinions are not wholly formed on the basis of evidence.

The extent to which psychologists can be thought of as a uniformly coherent group that has markedly different views from teachers is unknown. However, one supposition is that psychologists, by the nature of their training and experience are likely to adopt a more interactionist, environmental approach to children's perceived difficulties and this will, in turn lead to less emphasis on within-child, inherited characteristics. If this is the case, even to a small extent, then this might create tensions in terms of the explanations that are sought and offered, (diagnostic terms such as dyslexia, ADHD, dyspraxia, semantic-pragmatic disorder), assessment methods that are employed, (intelligence and cognitive testing or curriculum-based approaches) and therapeutic interventions that are offered or discussed, (medication, therapeutic inputs or educational or management programmes.)

Disagreements or conflicting views such as these may in turn lead to the pathologisation of children and their difficulties, (see Billington, 1996 and 2000 and McDermott, 1996). This topic has been raised at different points within this thesis, as it

is apparent as a shaping factor in the unfolding role of the EP historically. It also appears as a tension in EP Services nationally as they struggle to rebalance their role, as shown in the national survey results (chapter 5). Finally, in the following chapter on conflict, it can be seen as an underlying tension that results in difficulties in meetings and work practices. Within this wider context, further discussion is included in chapters 10 and 11.

8.8.5 The construction of the role of educational psychologist

The diverse and changing roles of the educational psychologist has been a consistent theme within this thesis and this is echoed within the data produced on shared meanings. Several individual artefacts had low scores for shared meanings indicating lack of understanding or agreement abut the role of the EP. In particular, "equitable resource allocation" scored only 36.86 in 1999 moving up to only 43 in 2000. These low scores confirm many of the comments detailed in Chapter 7 which illustrate EPs frustration about the procedures that necessarily follow the need to engage in debate about equity and resource allocation. Similarly, results reported in Chapter 9 show that a significant amount of conflict is generated due to the perceived or actual role that EPs play in decisions about placement and resource allocation.

A second aspect of EP role scoring low levels of perceived shared meaning surrounds EPs working at a systemic, rather than individual level within schools. The scores for "EP role and school improvement" show this: 38.95 in 1999 and 48.73 in 2000. Although this statement does not capture the whole debate concerning EP work at

different levels within organisations, it is echoed in comments made by EPs about the frustrations inherent in the work noted in Chapter 7.

The historical overview of the development of the profession, presented in Chapter 4 depicts a profession attempting to reposition itself both in terms of other key actors but also against a backdrop of powerful influences, expectations and legislation. The external pressures and other sociocultural determinants are discussed further in Chapter 11.

CHAPTER 9
RESEARCH EXAMINING DISAGREEMENTS AND CONFLICTS ARISING IN EP-TEACHER MEETINGS AND THEIR RESOLUTIONS. STEP 4 OF EXPANSIVE LEARNING CYCLE: EXAMINING THE NEW MODEL

9.1 Introduction

The investigation of patterns of interactions between EPs and teachers during regular EP visits to schools provides a rich source of data in a number of areas, as reported in the previous two chapters. A natural extension leading from the study of 'shared meanings' as defined in chapter 8, is to consider which of these areas of interest and conversation are topics that actually cause difficulties in the meetings and can be sources of conflicts. The study of conflict is important whether analysed from a sociocultural point of view, (Engestrom, Brown, Christopher and Gregory, 1997) or from other perspectives. For the purposes of this study a sociocultural analysis is employed as systemic changes are considered important and within Engestrom's analysis, conflict and disturbances can be an important source of change.

Within developmental work research paradigms, the area of transitions between activities and transitions between levels of working is of interest because it can provide information about the interactions taking place and therefore expand collective understanding in this area of study. Detailed theorising in this area is sparse but Engestrom et al, (1997) consider mechanisms of transitions between the three levels of co-ordination, co-operation and communication and provide suggestions of ways of viewing some of the possible transitions. As this model of conceptualising work

situations and conversations at work has been used as a key tool in the design and analysis of this study so far it is appropriate to continue to use the model to study the data collected in the third part of this research and to subject it to analysis in a similar form.

Engestrom et al (1997) suggest that transition between the three levels can occur through the mechanisms of disturbances, ruptures and expansions. They define disturbances as,

> "unintentional deviations from the script. They cause discoordinations in interaction, which in turn may lead to (a) disintegration (e.g. confusion and withdrawal), (b) contraction (e.g. by authoritative silencing of some actors, or by softer evasion), or (c) expansion (i.e., collaborative reframing of the object by moving to co-operation or communication)." (1997,p. 374)

In order to investigate disturbances, it is important to be able to analyse interactions from a number of perspectives and therefore is important to be present and to have video-analysis techniques available. However, Engestrom and his group see ruptures, which occur during interactions as;

> " blocks, breaks or gaps in the intersubjective understanding and flow of information between two or more participants of the activity." (1997, p. 374)

Ruptures, they suggest don't necessarily disturb the flow of the work but may lead to disturbances (as defined above). They can therefore be identified through interviewing or observing participants outside or after the performance of work actions. Clearly this conceptualisation lends itself to the methods used to collect data in this research and therefore it is possible to interrogate the data using the ideas presented in Engestrom's research.

Although these models were used to analyse work within legal settings, the authors suggest that transitions, ruptures and disturbances are interesting as they can be viewed as 'manifestations of the zone of proximal development of the activity system', (p.374). Thus, through investigating points of conflict, as viewed by EPs, we can begin to illuminate areas where ruptures, disturbances and possibly some expansive transitions can occur.

Clearly, in terms of positive developments in working practices, it is important to understand where and how conflict arises but also what methods can be used to reduce conflict in the future or to adapt it in a positive way. Within the analysis used here, ruptures can lead to expansive transitions, which may result in the form of activity moving up a level towards co-operation or communication. In order to investigate whether this has occurred at all within the sample presented in this study, the solutions that were donated by EPs can be studied. This is undertaken later in the chapter. The research cited above, although conducted under very different conditions and in radically different settings, sought to understand what facilitates expansive transitions. The interests of those researchers, in common with the research questions central to this study, included the types of linguistic and other tools that might be invented to initiate and complete expansive transitions and also how these might be institutionalised. Therefore, these areas will be considered in the analysis of the data presented in this chapter.

9.2 Links with other stages of data collection and research design.

This part of the study forms the third and final part of the questionnaire distributed to all EPs within the EP Service during July 1999 and again in July 2000. The three sections of the enquiry form a natural progression moving from narrative accounts of typical school visits and information regarding time spent (see chapter 7), to an analysis of the shared meanings between EPs and teachers as perceived by EPs, (see chapter 8) and finally a more detailed study of conflicts which arise (according to EPs) and their methods of dealing with or resolving the conflicts. This final section can be examined alongside the data gained in chapter 8 as it is possible that conflicts or disagreements that arise will be linked to the topics (or artefacts) identified by EPs as having little shared meaning.

However, the questions were also designed to include a section asking EPs what methods they commonly employ to deal with potential or actual conflict and this provides information that can be used in two ways. First, it extends the information given in chapter 8 about the areas of common concern that give rise to differing expectations and perceptions and this is important data in terms of the overall research questions addressed in this thesis. Secondly, as this is an example of developmental work research, the information gained can be fed back into the EP service as it provides a rich source of evidence of the areas that cause difficulty in daily working life. Used as discussion issues or as the basis of in-service training, EPs can share practice, discuss issues and then move on to considering alternative ways of structuring or

conducting meetings. Using a solution-focussed approach, (de Shazer, 1985) a range of

successful solutions has already been generated for discussion within the EPS.

9.3 Method

The questions were piloted as part of the overall questionnaire and this is described in

chapter 7 (section 7.4).

EPs completing the questionnaire were given instructions as follows:

> **Disagreements, Conflict and Conflict Resolution**
> During our work with teachers, there are sometimes tensions, disagreements and
> misunderstandings. These can manifest themselves in open conflict but more often stay
> below the surface and can be detected sometimes via subsequent actions or comments or the
> feelings that participants are left with.
> Please return to the previous 4 taxonomies and note any items that regularly result in tension,
> conflict or cause unease in your work with teachers. For each one, note below any specific
> aspects that you feel contribute to the conflict and also any methods for resolving or dealing
> with the disagreement which you have found to be successful.

An example might be:

Number	Item	Specific aspects	Method of resolution (if any)
2.6	Shared responsibility	Teacher tends to feel that once a pupil is referred, the problem shifts from me	- Joint record keeping - Rehearsing what Code says re responsibility

9.4 Results

9.4.1 Number of returns

The returns for this section of the questionnaire were lower that the previous two

sections, possibly because EPs completing this section ran out of time, enthusiasm or

energy. However, the numbers of returns were as follows:

Table 9.1 Number of returns

	1999	2000
Number of returns	23	12

9.4.2 Number of conflict areas identified within each set of artefacts in 1999 and 2000

Table 9.2 Number of conflict areas within each set of artefacts in 1999 and 2000

Type of artefact	1999	1999 (percentage of total for year)	2000	2000 (percentage of total for year)	Total per artefact group
"What" artefacts	20	35%	10	29%	30
"How" artefacts	13	23%	5	15%	18
"Why" artefacts	14	25%	13	38%	27
"Where to" artefacts	10	18%	6	18%	16
TOTALS	57		34		91

The number of items that were selected as causing conflict, in the views of EPs, varied from 1999 to 2000. The lower number in 2000 is clearly due to the fact that less EPs completed the questionnaire in 2000. In terms of the actual figures, in 1999, most conflict arose from the "What" artefacts: the business of the meetings. This constituted 35% of the total for 1999. In 2000, however, the highest percentage of conflict was generated by artefacts in the "Why" group; namely 38%. This is an interesting progression, which may indicate that the conversations were covering more fundamental issues concerning the nature of the work, one year on.

However, what is clear is that conflict can arise from each type of artefact and that

certain artefacts produced higher levels of perceived conflict. This data is displayed in

the next four sections.

9.4.3 Analysis of sources of conflict in 1999 and 2000 for "What" artefacts

N.B. Items not listed were not mentioned as causes of conflict.

Table 9.3 Analysis of sources of conflict in 1999 and 2000 for "What" artefacts

SOURCE OF CONFLICT	1999	2000	Total per Item	Specific aspects (how/why conflict arises)	Method of resolution, if any
1.2 Assessment	3		3	Teacher uses this term to mean either 'routine assessment' or 'statutory assessment'	Ask why they want an assessment What are the expectations What will they do with the information
				Some teachers see it as 1:1 testing carried out by the EP	Emphasise the role in on-going assessment over time
				Limited at times to a normative assessment, not crediting their own previous work	Draw out what the school and parents have done Emphasising school's contribution and giving credence to this (using psychology)
1.3. 1.Q.	1	2	3	EPs belief systems and some teachers' beliefs regarding "IQ" can present difficulties in school problem solving	Beliefs difficult to resolve. Returning to problem solving approach can help a little
				Still meet teachers who have a strong concept of IQ equating with educational achievement	Talk about having realistic expectations Talk about wide individual differences Talk about multiple intelligences
				Teacher has a stable internal construct of child, therefore not changeable	Discussion of what is in the teacher's control, rather than stable construct
1.4 Learning Potential		1	1	Teacher sees learning ability or potential as related to some children and not others, e.g. 'he is limited'	

1.6 National Curriculum Levels	1		1	Teachers often claim to know where child is on NC for English and Maths, but when pressed don't know. This affects their judgement re statutory assessment criteria, yet they are requesting statutory assessment	Look up statutory assessment criteria with teachers and discuss its relevance to the child in question. Defer discussions to next visit if teacher has little idea re child's NC levels
1.7 Environment factors	1		1	Lack of understanding about classroom organisation and management and how this might impact on child's learning	Talk through issues Feedback observations Ask them to keep log of behaviours, ABC chart Discuss observations they've made
1.8 Relative difficulties	2		2	School feel that a school down the road may only view a child as a low priority, the child is number 1 priority for them Our city-wide perspective leads us to evaluate a child's level of difficulty and need for resources differently from the teacher	Focussed time on schools differentially according to need, set in context of LEA/CRISP criteria Acknowledgement of teacher's perspective and of "a difficulty" Attempt to joint problem solve, in context Inter-agency liaison with other support services
1.9 Equitable resource allocation	4	6	10	Often most difficult in schools that have more advantaged intake, where one of two SEN pupils may stand out more Very few of my schools accept the LEA criteria for moving a child to stage 4/5. They continue to say that the LEA under spends on SEN School's drive for LSA's despite huge school SEN budget and 1 LSA Some Heads don't feel this should be EP's concern. Up to each school to fight its cases and EP to support Many schools seem to be very greedy and look after only themselves	Try to use CRISP and SEN audit Talk about whole city issues the 'one pot of money' idea, less for SEN in schools if more goes into statementing I tell them that the LEA spend more on the SEN budget for its population than any other metropolitan borough I say that I must look at the criteria objectively Made school aware of my awareness of their budget Suggested/offered problem solving re resourcing Talk in terms of equal opportunities. Refer to local criteria Talk about notional SEN budget Talk of level of need in other parts of the city

				Schools want more resources based on own perception of need	Refer back to CRISP and criteria Talk of 'slice of the cake' analogy
					Talk about number of children on SEN register
				Schools with less SEN feel other schools get all resources. Lack of LEA resource to fully support school's view of inclusion i.e. LSA support for a child	Talk about needier school populations across the city Individual rights/equal opportunities
				As an EP you are seen as a block to resources	Try to use joint problem solving Discussion re Code of Practice and zones of help, not stages
				Teacher tends to be concerned with pupils on roll at their school an not aware of broader picture of shared general school's budget	Educate regarding equal opportunities issues Educate regarding all monies coming from one aggregate school budget
				Our city-wide perspective leads us to evaluate a child's level of difficulty and need for resource differently from the teacher	Acknowledgement of teacher's perspective and of "a difficulty" Attempt to joint problem solve, in context Inter-agency liaison with other support services
1.10 Severe and complex difficulty	3		3	Teacher's definition based on knowledge of mainstream population. Unaware of levels of difficulty in MLD/SLD	Reminder of 2%/20% distinction in SEN Encourage mainstream/special links
				Teachers feeling that the problems they face with pupils are at the severe end when in fact they are relative to the setting	Provide examples of severe difficulties some children do face and discuss the possible intervention. Scale down so that teacher chooses own action plan
				Our city-wide perspective leads us to evaluate a child's level of difficulty and need for resources differently from the teacher	Acknowledgement of teacher's perspective and of "a difficulty" Attempt to joint problem solve, in context Inter-agency liaison with other support services
1.11 Pupil motivation		1	1	Disparity between pupils who can't access the curriculum and those who won't access it	Talk about making the curriculum more accessible and appealing

1.16 Code of Practice stages	1		1	Schools still feel that unless an EP says Yes (rubber stamps decision), SEN will not consider statutory assessment request	Schools need to have an understanding that when a request is made for Stage 4 a whole multitude of paperwork is looked at and not just the form from the EP
1.18 School improvement	1		1	Don't ask much of this as seen as advisor's role	Meet with advisor and head teacher regularly
1.20 LEA Officer role	3		3	Schools sometimes confuse EP role with SEN caseworker role and see EP role as extending into the latter EP seen as access to resource and placement Some teachers seeing EPs as the LEA rep who decides rather than who gives a professional opinion	Explain EP role and that of SEN caseworker Rehearsing EP role as part of multi-disciplinary assessment process and not placement Redirecting placement questions to special needs Restatement of role with individuals or in meetings as necessary
Totals	**20**	**10**	**30**		

The items that were rated highly as resulting in conflict and potential conflict were as follows:

> *1.2*   *Assessment.* This was cited in three instances all in 1999.

> *1.3*   *I.Q.*   This was also cited three times: once in 1999 and twice in 2000

> *1.9*   *Equitable resource allocation.* This was the item that was cited the most often overall and totalled 10 instances: 4 in 1999 and 6 in 2000.

> *1.10*   *Severe and complex difficulty.* This was selected three times in 1999

> *1.20*   *LEA officer role.* Similarly, this was chosen three times in 1999.

It will be important to consider these items in the context of the overall discussion of results from the research and to investigate any links with other themes that emerge.

9.4.4 Analysis of sources of conflict in 1999 and 2000 for "How" artefacts

N.B. Items not listed were not mentioned as causes of conflict

Table 9.4   Analysis of sources of conflict in 1999 and 2000 for "How" artefacts

SOURCE OF CONFLICT	1999	2000	Total per Item	Specific aspects (how/why conflict arises)	Method of resolution, if any
2.1 Assessment over time	3		3	Once school has referred a child to you don't want to wait any longer, feel they've done lots already, no time to leave it longer, no valuing of concept	Ensure early knowledge (before Stage 3) of children causing concern Equal opportunities Recognition that improvement and progress is good and not a block to referring on
				School feeling that they or PSS have already tried suggestions	Meet with PSS beforehand Value what school have done but add extra from psychological perspective
				Teachers often prefer a 'snap-shot' assessment, preferably one that confirms their own beliefs	Painstaking explanation of why assessment over time is used Acknowledgement of the difficulty and taking the teacher seriously Agreeing review dates
2.2 Assessment through teaching	1		1	Teachers often prefer a 'snap-shot' assessment, preferably one that confirms their own beliefs	Painstaking explanation of why assessment over time is used Acknowledgement of the difficulty and taking the teacher seriously Agreeing review dates
2.5 Referral process	2	1	3	Referrals seen as a equivalent to statutory assessment and too many made without recognising the time required	Clarification of what referral means and time involved
				Staff frustrated with time referrals and statutory assessment take and think EPs carry hurry it up	Reiterate procedures and what happens Acknowledge staff frustrations
				Some confusion re EP role following referral and who	Need for EPS notes/guidelines to

				takes responsibility for what	back up what individual EP says Discussion with SENCO noting tasks on consultation records.
2.6 Shared responsibility	1	1	2	Teacher feels once problem is referred, it shifts to EP Teacher feels once problem is referred, it shifts to EP	Joint record keeping rehearse what Code says about responsibility May agree to discuss in an advisory capacity but defer any formal referral until more appropriate or unless priority
2.8 Recording process	1			1	Previous EP made copious notes and gave written feedback. Same is expected from me	Clear message needs to be given that it is the school's responsibility to take detailed noted. We can only agree on the actions on a standard form to be used at all times.
2.11 Allocating time	3			3	Some needy schools or schools with ineffective staff feel we should be sharing their problems and visiting more often Agenda agreed, morning planned but EP gets to school and finds 'crisis or school wanting to change what was agreed to another 'priority' School/SENCO demanded more time	Clarifications that school owns the problem and our role is via consultation to help them to problem solve. Clearer guidelines on numbers of school visits need to be given to schools Reiterate initial agreement and if there is time accommodate wishes Agree time allocation at initial planning meeting Agree and stick to what was agreed for term
2.12	2			2	Work has shifted towards consultation with SENCO so systemic solution less easily put in place Narrow EP role as seen by school and continuing priorities of individual children superseding any other work	Meeting with head teacher regularly Keep on reiterating different types of work Try to work with different groups/teachers within school See if opening arises and take it
2.14 Critical friend role		1	1	Some schools feel EPs should support school whatever and that EP will be uncritical friend	Establish credibility Support school where I can Use Charm!
2.15 Including all		2	2	Some schools want to move certain children against the child's best interest, in EP's opinion	Close some special schools

				EBD is an area commonly causing conflict with respect to inclusion	Start small with small steps. Empathise Constructive and practical suggestions
Totals	13	5	18		

The items chosen most often in this section were as follows:

2.1   *Assessment over time.* This was selected three times in 1999, similar to
item 1.2 above – assessment. Neither of these two items were selected in
2000.

2.5   *Referral process.* This was also selected three times, twice in 1999
and once in 2000.

2.11   *Allocating time*. This item was also chosen three times in 1999 only.

9.4.5 Analysis of sources of conflict in 1999 and 2000 for "Why" artefacts

N.B. Items not listed were not mentioned as causes of conflict.

Table 9.5 Analysis of sources of conflict in 1999 and 2000 for "Why" artefacts

SOURCES OF CONFLICT	1999	2000	Total per item	Specific aspects (how/why conflict arises)	Method of Resolution, if any
3.2 Rights of the child	1		1	Lack of awareness of equal opportunities	Through discussion refer to Code, correct procedures, statutory entitlements
3.3 Rights of all children		1	1	Frequently cited when problems with one child affecting whole class teaching and learning	Discuss strategies to minimise impact on other Stress rights of SEN child too
3.4 Nature of intelligence		1	1	The idea that a problem is within the child	Prove the impact of good and appropriate teaching
3.5 Psychology of learning		1	1	The idea that children learn differently is an anathema to many teachers	Stress that there are different ways.
3.7 Effects of	3	3	6	Teachers don't always	Discuss the implications with

placement on children (special mainstream)				see the implications for a child's home life Often mainstream teachers feel children with learning difficulties would be better in special schools because of ratios, targeting etc. Schools seeing segregated schooling as the best option, especially when backed up by other professionals Staff seeing that a special placement will cater for all the child's needs, including social and will be the answer to everyone's problems Teachers feel that there is lots of mystical expertise in special schools Teachers do not seem to recognise that special school has a self-limiting effect on learning potential and future achievement	parents in front of teachers Point out that this is often not the case and why Looking at school and educational benefits Help with targeting Help to obtain and give support and ideas Need for shift of attitudes in some other professionals, maybe through training Suggest/organise visits to range of provision that may cater for child's needs with the family and with list of questions to ask of the setting Talk about what special schools do, suggest visiting provision Try to make these connections in their thinking and state views as to the limitations. If one has their respect as a professional I think it is possible to influence and change their perceptions
3.8 EP role & SEN issues		1	1	EP seen as the person to fill in Form 3 and to do formal advice instead of doing more preventative work	Highlight role in preventative work through discussion with SENCO
3.9 EP role & school improvement		1	1	Teacher tends to see EP role as child-based, not wider role	Use planning meeting to consider menu of possible work Help school to consider possible projects for EP involvement
3.10 EP role & Inclusion	2		2	Teacher sees EP as person who forces school to cater for pupils with SEN with inadequate resources Many teachers view	Share good practice Remind of own successes Put my view and attempt to

				special school as a magical place that offers the best of everything e.g. teacher expertise, class size, resources.	argue the case for inclusion
3.11 Genetic differences in children	1		1	Genetic impact on behaviour/ability particularly in relation to IQ. Labelling limits expectations	Reflect on individual pupil's strengths and weaknesses Look at IEP and use to measure progress and show pupil can learn
3.12 Family influences	2	1	3	Teacher tends to abdicate responsibility due to home circumstances and the influence they bring Family influence seen as the problem Judgemental, stereotypical comments made and therefore lack of expectation	Redefinition of teacher role and what can be done within school environment Returning to what is in teacher's sphere of control or school control or home factors which can be looked at Discussion through the work is observations done
3.15 Personal v shared responsibility		1	1	Teachers not wanting responsibility	EP never accepts responsibility. It is always the schools
3.16 Potential of people to change	2	2	4	Teachers think that a problem is within a child and immutable Some teachers believe strongly in environmental factors being predominant and they don't believe they can affect change and people can change Some schools have negative view especially of behaviour and 'blame' outside influences or 'within child factors' Teachers seem to believe that the scope for change is very restricted	Prove the impact of good teaching and environmental influences Whenever see positive change make some remark about it and talk about optimum conditions for change Show through effective interventions that over time change can happen Give examples of adult change in response to changing situations and environments Discuss learning potential and point to example/theories that support my case
3.17 Children's motivation to learn	1		1	Teacher sees this as within child problem – child needs to be more	Look at child's learning style Identify times when child works better

				motivated and to make more effort	Collaborate on planning alternative teaching
3.18 Self esteem levels	1		1	Term used by teachers when use is not necessarily clear or appropriate	Ask them to clarify what they mean Give my understanding of the term to see if it's the same
3.19 Knowledge of social norm		1	1	We are all affected by the people we spend time with	Tell staff in some schools what it is like in the communities around other schools Tell staff to look and see what the children have as role models
3.21 Evidence based practice	1		1	Difficulty in getting good, useful data from schools	Providing data collection protocols Training is needed
Totals	14	13	27		

Within this group of artefacts, three items were chosen three or more times. They were:

3.7   Effects of placement on children. This was chosen six times: three times

in 1999 and three times in 2000.

3.12   Family influences. This item was selected twice in 1999 and once in

2000 (Total 3).

3.16   Potential of people to change. This was selected twice in 1999 and twice

in 2000, making a total of four.

9.4.6 Analysis of sources of conflict in 1999 and 2000 for "Where to" artefacts
N.B. Items not listed were not mentioned as causes of conflict.

Table 9.6 Analysis of sources of conflict in 1999 and 2000 for "Where to" artefacts

SOURCE OF CONFLICT	1999	2000	TOTAL PER ITEM	Specific aspects (how/why conflict arises)	Method of resolution, if any
4.1 Jointly agreeing work allocation	1	1	2	Conversations around "We've got 4 children we want to put forward for statementing" SENCOs often over-pressurise the EP	Use planning meetings Repeated conversations around role of EP EP to be specific about time allocation
4.2 Pre-arranged agendas		1	1	Schools sometimes 'dropping EPs in it' at short notice. Putting something different on agenda without negotiation or at very short notice	Telling SENCo why this is not best practice At times not agreeing to go with agenda, (and explaining why) if it is not acceptable
4.3 Reviewing progress towards agreed goals	1		1	Teacher sees it as their job to convince EP that child hasn't achieved goals and needs additional resources	Ensure appropriate targets set and ensure that success is recognised Ensure success is judged against original targets
4.5 Consideration of menu of activities	1		1	School tend to want to make individual referrals largely and some schools tend to 'switch off' when EP introduces INSET or project work possibilities	In discussion re individual children introduce idea of possible project work or INSET to help schools see their relevance and use and to generalise form the specific
4.6 Agree monitoring and evaluation methods		1	1	Some teachers are more concerned with the process, i.e. getting down to the targets, rather than thinking of appropriateness/how to measure/ frequency etc.	In discussion about monitoring of programmes raise issues and clarify what, how and when and success criteria
4.7 Agree priorities for the future	1		1	Not so much misunderstanding but priorities are usually around Stage 3 and 4 statutory work	Use CRISP system Development of consultation approach
4.8 Effective use of EP time	2	2	4	SENCOs and heads seem to think that emergencies can be dealt with regardless of planned work	Point out to staff that new work has not been negotiated and it is up to them to decide if it is more important than planned work

				Teacher wants EP to see child without being clear about the purpose	Discussion of what would be a useful use of the short time available Clarifying purpose
				Sometimes teachers focus on smaller points rather than discussing overview and seeing big picture	Re-emphasise the need for an overview to give direction and effective targeting of time
				EP time used at times as a 'hoop to be jumped through' on the way to Stage 4/5 assessment	Explain role re preventative role and joint problem solving
4.9 Role clarity	4	1	5	Confusion over EP part in the SEN Code of Practice, advice and decision making	Need for EPS guidelines for schools to back up what EP says
				Teacher has certain expectations of EP which don't fit within EP role	Clarify what our role is and what teachers can and cannot expect
				Schools think the only effective work is "hands on" EPs work in different ways and so if a previous EP has done a lot of "hands on" it is even more difficult	Statement from EPS about how, why and what we do
				Schools tend to become confused between the roles of different agencies and thus have an unrealistic expectation from EPs	Clarify of role and remit needs to be made as often schools as often schools have a very vague perception of how we differ from other agencies.
				Belief that EP can do things outside their role	Reiterate role boundaries Consultation model on who might be more appropriate to ask.
Totals	10	6	16		

Finally, the group of "Where to" artefacts, which had the lowest ratings overall, had

two items which were chosen three or more times. They were:

4.8   Effective use of EP time. This was cited twice in 1999 and twice in 2000

4.9   Role clarity. This was highlighted four times in 1999 and once in 2000,
        giving a total of five.

9.4.7 Analysis of methods used by EPs for resolving conflict situations

After EPs had defined specific aspects of the artefacts they selected, in terms of the

areas that cause, or potentially cause conflict, they were asked to note any methods of

resolving or dealing with the disagreement. In some cases this resulted in one

suggestion, but in other cases, several suggestions were offered. These are shown in the

last columns of the previous four tables. In order to investigate any commonalties, the

responses were read through several times and were clustered according to the types of

response they represented. From this scrutiny, six categories were formed and the

responses were then coded according to the categories. The six categories were as

follows:

Table 9.7 Methods used by EPs for resolving conflict situations

Category	Explanation
Ask questions	The EP tends to deal with the difficulty by asking further questions of varying types
Emphasise specific aspects of the topic in question	The EP chooses to discuss further a particular aspect of the debate and emphasises a particular point, view or position
Collaborative reframing	The EP attempts to change the perspective being adopted by the other party or reach a new position for both parties in order to find a way forward
Use specific technique	The EP either adopts a specific strategy for solving a problem, without sharing this with the other party or may suggest the use of a specific technique to move forward
Discuss possibilities	The EP opens up the conversation by introducing other possibilities or reminding the other party of what is possible
Other	Occasionally, suggestions were made which were relevant

	to other parties, activities outside of the scope of the meeting or referred to policy issues

The results of the analysis of the responses are given in the table below

Table 9.8 Methods for resolving conflicts analysed against artefact types

	What artefacts	How artefacts	Why artefacts	Where to artefacts	TOTALS
Ask questions	1	0	1	0	2 (1.5%)
Emphasise specific aspects	20	10	11	8	49 (37%)
Collaborative reframing	7	4	6	1	18 (14%)
Use specific techniques	10	7	9	2	28 (21%)
Discuss possibilities	5	0	5	2	12 (9%)
Other	5	10	3	4	22 (17%)
TOTALS	48 (37%)	31 (24 %)	35 (27%)	17 (13%)	131

9.4.7.1 Comments

This table yields some interesting results both in terms of the artefacts that generate specific types of response to disagreements and also in terms of the overall approaches used. From the table it can be seen that most solutions are offered for the "What" artefacts. As noted earlier, these tend to form the content of the work for EPs and the main business of the meetings or conversations (37%). Second highest (27%), were the "Why" artefacts and the lowest area of solutions (because there is less conflict) was the "Where to" artefacts, suggesting common agreement in areas of joint planning. Analysis of the types of solution chosen indicates markedly different approaches.

'**Asking further questions**' as a way of resolving conflict is only suggested on two occasions. '**Emphasise specific aspects**' is the most common response to potential conflict and solution finding (37%). This is particularly favoured with respect to the "What" artefacts. Therefore such a strategy could be viewed as an attempt at reframing, but it may be suggesting alternative viewpoints or prioritising issues in a different way. Persuasion is a likely skill employed by EPs alongside convincing arguments. In this case EPs might be appealing to the view that teachers might have that EPs have 'professional knowledge' about the situation or they may be deliberately using their professional knowledge to reframe the situation.

A third approach '**Collaborative reframing**' is used on 18 occasions (14%) and it is this area which is of most interest, within the current research, as it is allied to concepts and ideas suggested by Engestrom (1997) and cited earlier in this chapter. This will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter. '**The use of specific techniques**' is the second commonest approach (21%) and this sometimes involves the EP actively suggesting that a particular strategy is tried jointly, but sometimes seems to involve the EP using an approach that they do not share with the teacher.

'**Discuss possibilities**' formed a similar but slightly different category of response from 'emphasise specific aspects' in that there was a more balanced and equal approach to possible outcomes. This approach was suggested in 9% of the examples given. Finally, '**Other**' accounts for 17% of responses as a range of suggestions were made not pertaining to specific actions undertaken within the meeting. The results from this

section of the data will be discussed alongside the other results within the next section of this chapter.

9.4 Discussion

9.5.1 Disagreements, conflict and contradictions

The results from this part of the research study provide a picture of areas of discordance as perceived by the EPs. The data is delineated in that the same sets of donated artefacts were used as a bank of suggestions. However, EPs were asked at the end to note any other areas of disagreement, not contained in the donated objects. None were given. However, the number of EPs indicated potential disagreements for various items suggest that they were able to cover the major areas of dispute within the confines of this data collection tool.

Although EPs were asked to illustrate through description the actual nature of the disagreement or potentials for disagreement, the narratives (actual written responses noted in the tables) suggest that they were recounting actual experiences. It is not the focus of this study to distinguish between disagreement, conflict and contradictions in any depth but it is useful to explore the relationship between these concepts both in terms of every-day language but also in terms of the way sociocultural researchers use the terms. In a study considering the disturbances that take place in court room settings, Engestrom et al (1997) talk about,

" The zone of proximal development in an invisible battleground" (p384).

In the results from this study, the invisible battlefield can be mapped out, in part with reference to the artefacts which cause disagreement and which manifest themselves as ruptures, breaks, gaps or disagreements in the work place meetings.

9.5.2 Areas of perceived conflict and disagreement

Some of the areas that cause conflict are similar to those areas identified as having low perceived, shared meaning in chapter 8. One examples of this is the area of IQ measurement. The possible background to disagreements in this area has been discussed in section 7.8.3. More specifically, EPs noted that the area of assessment and assessment over time were concepts which caused conflict. It is possible that this area of disagreement is linked to fundamental differences in beliefs about the nature of intelligence and how and if that can be measured. Linked to this, the concept of 'severe and complex difficulty' causes some conflict and this may be due to differences in the perceptions of levels of difficulty between children and across settings.

'Equitable resource allocation' is an important area of conflict, as identified in this data and this again links to the findings in chapter 8, where there are low levels of perceived shared meaning on this topic. This is closely linked to perceptions of EP role, on the part of teachers and EPs. Hence feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration on the part of EPs (as reported in chapter 7) but also confusion and conflict as noted in the data presented here. Whilst the legislative structure and Local Authority arrangements require EPs to be significantly involved in decisions about resources, and therefore finances, there will always be an inbuilt level of potential for conflict in the working relationships between EPs and school staff. Although the move towards a more

consultative and preventative role has been promoted within this EPS it seems that arguments, rehearsed over the years, pertaining to EP function are still an important factor in determining the working practices of EPs. Such arguments are also a real restraining force when considering how to improve the EP-school interface.

A final area of conflict, highlighted in the data and reflected in earlier findings, relates to factors such as ' family influences' and 'potential of people to change'. Earlier results showed there were low levels of perceived shared meaning around the term 'genetic differences in children'. Although this may be similar, in principle, to the earlier example given, reflecting differing belief systems of EPs and teachers, it is also possible that it is connected to the attributions that individuals make particularly in relation to the way that people behave. Miller (1996) refers to teacher attributions about pupil behaviour as being a powerful determinant in the formation of their views.

9.5.3 Methods of resolving disagreements

It is interesting to note that many solutions were offered to the conflicts and disagreements that arise during regular school visits and it is important to emphasise again, that this research takes only the EP's perspective. Even if teachers generated the same areas of potential conflict, it is likely that different strategies for resolving the differences would have been suggested. Tables 9.3 to 9.6 report the actual written accounts of how EPs approach such situations but in order to analyse this in more depth it was necessary to categorise and group the responses.

The highest number of solutions was offered within the "What" grouping of artefacts (37% of all solutions). This corresponds with the highest number of conflict situations produced (33%). The second highest group, the "Why" artefacts, accounts for 30% of the conflict situations and 27% of the solutions. The table showing analysis of responses indicates a variety of methods of dealing with difficult conversations. Within the developmental work research model that provides the framework for this research, expansive transitions are an important feature to consider when considering the activity systems in place.

Expansive transitions are a way of describing a change in the relationship between the subject-object and subject- subject within an activity system. (Raeithel, 1983 and Fichtner, 1984). They can help in understanding the instrumental and the communicative aspects of an activity. These conceptualisations are discussed in more detail in chapter 11. In the introduction to this chapter, Engestrom's work on analysing transitions was described and in particular the ruptures in activities, which can more easily be analysed retrospectively. He suggests that the mechanisms of transition between the three levels of co-ordination, co-operation and communication can be seen in different ways: one of which is an expansive transition (defined as 'a collaborative reframing of the object by moving to co-operation or communication'). This is potentially the most positive type of disturbance as it can serve to change the nature of the conversations and activities and move it to a more co-operative or communicative level.

Within the data gathered in this study of solutions, some of the responses can be categorised as 'collaborative reframing' 18/131 (14%). Some examples of this are given below:

'Draw out what the school and parents have done'

"Emphasising school's contribution and giving credence to this'

'Acknowledgement of teacher's perspective and of a difficulty'

'Value what school have done but add extra from psychological perspective'

'Stress that there are different ways'

'Try to make these connections in their thinking and state my views as to the limitations. If one has their respect as a professional I think it is possible to influence and change their perceptions'.

In their research in court room settings in 1997, Engestrom and his team were interested to learn what facilitates expansive transitions and in particular what kinds of linguistic and other tools are employed within the transitions. Although the data presented here is very small and is collected in a very specific fashion, by considering the language used and the tenor of the comments made, it seems that EPs are emphasising;

- o the joint contributions which are necessary
- o viewing situations from a range of perspectives
- o valuing the work of the other party
- o exposing their thinking.

If this line of research were pursued further it would be useful to study in depth the means by which both EPs and teachers can co-construct solutions and thereby, through expansive transition, move the activity system to a different level.

9.5.4 Data collection as a tool within Developmental Work Research and the Expansive Learning Cycle

The expansive learning cycle, which forms the overall model upon which this thesis is based, has as Step 5 "Implementing the new model". More specifically, this is defined as,

> 'concretising the model by means of practical applications, enrichments and conceptual extensions' (Engestrom, 1999. p383).

Within this research, which is contextualised in nature and which has elements of action research ideas embedded within it, it has been important to work with the stakeholders or clients in order to ensure that the research is valid and useful. As part of this process, the results of the research have been fed back into the EPS at a number of stages. This is fully reported in Chapter 10 but it is interesting to note that from a practical point of view it is this final area of the study that has generated interest and development within the EPS.

The details of commonly occurring conflicts and the practical solutions resulting from this have been seen as a valuable resource for other EPs to consider and to develop and potentially modify and incorporate into their own practice. In this way the linguistic tools may become more refined, for instance, if certain lines of enquiry or argument are seen to be effective in improving working practices. Therefore in terms of Engestrom's

enquiry about how such devices become institutionalised, this research might lead to a study of how institutionalisation can be deliberately encouraged but also how this can happen as part of the natural progression and development that occurs within all organisations.

CHAPTER 10

SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS OBTAINED FROM DEVELOPMENTAL WORK RESEARCH CONDUCTED IN TARGET EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

10.1 Introduction

The preceding three chapters describe the research undertaken within a large EP Service experiencing a period of significant change. The EP service was explicitly moving toward a more consultative way of working with schools and therefore the conversations that took place between the visiting EP and key staff in school were extremely important in shaping the work undertaken and the success of the relationships and outcomes for all parties. This chapter summarises the results from each of the three component parts of the research undertaken in 1999 and 2000 in readiness for assimilation within the overall investigation reported in the thesis and discussed in the next chapter. Additionally, the results are further analysed in order to investigate a linkage between different areas of focus. Therefore further exploration of the relationship between the artefacts used in conversation and the levels at which EPs and teachers operate is undertaken. Finally the changes within the EPS, in the area of service delivery to schools, are discussed.

10.2 Summary of results and conclusions from chapters 7, 8 and 9

10.2.1 Narrative accounts and details of school visits

The questions asked of EPs within the questionnaire began as very open requests to provide narrative accounts and give judgements as to the purpose and outcomes of school visits. Within the first part of the questionnaire, the types of activity that EPs engaged in was calculated based on the sample of narrative accounts. A summary of the key findings is given below:

- ❑ During a typical EP visit to a school, an average of 4.7 different activities were undertaken in 1999 and 4.2 in 2000. However, the average length of visit was slightly shorter in 2000 at 3.1 hours, compared with 3.3 hours in 1999

- ❑ 10% of the visit time was spent with parents both in 1999 and 2000.

- ❑ Time in formal reviews rose slightly from 11% in 1999 to 15% in 2000

- ❑ Time spent observing children in class rose from 14% in 1999 to 22% in 2000

- ❑ Time spent in assessing individual pupils dropped from 13% in 1999 to 10% in 2000.

- ❑ The number of informal meetings dropped from 51% in 1999 to 40% in 2000. However, this difference cannot be accounted for by the slightly shorter time spent in schools on average. Therefore, it is likely that each informal meeting lasted longer, perhaps representing more 'in depth' conversations.

These results provide an overview of changing patterns of EP work against which to consider the more detailed results obtained. The results were fed back to the management team of the EPS and the whole service as data that indicated some

broad changes in the balance of work and time spent engaged in different activities. On a wider scale, all EPs now collect this type of data on a routine basis.

Arising from the narrative accounts were some specific comments made by EPs that resonated with data obtained from other questions asked. The key factors, noted in section 7.7.4.1 and 7.7.4.2 are summarised below:

- EPs wrote about the number of discussions that centred on SEN legislation, criteria for statutory assessment and the Code of Practice. They felt that such discussions, focussed as they were on statutory processes, were the most unrewarding part of their jobs

- Teachers regularly turned to EPs for advice and support on IEPs

- The role of EPs in relation to parents was seen as supportive but with a potential for conflict, especially in relation to the school

- The mismatch between the child's needs and the school's ability to provide for their needs was also seen as an area of potential conflict

- When no conflict occurred, the visit was viewed by the EP as satisfying

- One year on, in 2000, advice was still requested about procedural matters, but more conversations were focussed upon the next steps and strategies to be taken with children

- More facilitation and joint problem-solving took place in 2000, with more dialogic meetings and less of the EP in 'expert' role

- EPs were more aware of their various roles in 2000

- However, they still felt like 'gatekeepers' in 2000.

These specific results are reflected to an extent in the broader results obtained from the narratives which are discussed in section 7.8 of the thesis. The extended discussion included at the end of chapter 7 highlights five areas that emerged from the analysis of the various levels of working within school visits. These five broad areas are as follows:

- ❏ The structure and content of school visits in terms of the three levels of working that occur within EP-teacher interactions

- ❏ The dominance of the context in terms the local and national parameters, expectations and legislation

- ❏ The conflict and dissatisfaction felt by EPs due to conflicting demands and expectations

- ❏ EP effectiveness across the three levels of working and the importance of communication and language in terms of progress and transition

- ❏ The role of artefacts as enablers within conversations and dialogues

Clearly the results obtained from the narratives are far-reaching and wide-ranging and need to be considered alongside the results obtained in sections 2 and 3 of the questionnaire. The next set of findings is summarised below.

10.2.2 Analysis of artefacts

A range of findings resulted from the detailed analysis undertaken. A summary of key findings is given below.

- ❏ The detailed analysis of the amounts of shared meaning and the difference in use of the artefacts over the period of time shows variation and development.

What is not clear from this data is whether there is 'more' consultation taking place or 'better' consultation occurring. This is impossible to comment upon, partly because there is no clear definition on the part of the EP service as to what they consider as consultation. A further problem is that perceived, shared meaning might not necessarily lead to more effective consultation. A further study focussing upon the artefacts and their role in the consultation process might provide clearer evidence upon which to base conclusions and recommendations.

- A second finding from the study of artefacts concerns the use of scripts within EP-teacher conversations. Certain artefacts were commonly used by many EPs and formed the basis of discussions and consultations. Therefore, this might allow or suggest the possibility of scripts being constructed in advance and used as organisers within meetings. This is discussed further in the next chapter.

- Low levels of perceived shared meaning between EPs and teachers were recorded on specific artefacts that related to within-child terminology, and disability-based term. This is discussed in relation to the possible over-pathologisation of children's difficulties that might arise in conversations, in order for one party to convince another, either consciously or unconsciously.

- Finally, in chapter 8, relating to use of artefacts, conclusions are reached about the construction of the role of the EP. Differences in perception of role,

evidenced through lack of perceived shared meaning, indicates the conflicts that are present both in the minds of EPs but also, probably, on the part of teachers.

10.2.3 Disagreements and conflict

The final data collected as part of the investigation into EP-teacher meetings concerns disagreements and conflict that arises. Several findings emerged that are discussed in detail in chapter 9 and the key points are summarised below.

- There are particular artefacts that appear to be associated with higher levels of potential disagreement and conflict. In 1999, most conflict (35%) arose around the "What" artefacts, whereas in 2000 a slightly higher percentage (38%) arose from the "Why" artefacts. This could perhaps suggest that more complex discussions were taking place during the visits of 2000.

- The "What" artefacts selected in terms of potential conflict and disagreement were, "assessment", "I.Q.", "equitable resource allocation", "severe and complex difficulty" and "LEA officer role".

- The "How" artefacts selected in terms of potential conflict and disagreement were, "assessment over time", "referral process", "allocating time".

- The "Why" artefacts selected in terms of potential conflict and disagreement were, "effects of placement on children", "family influences", "potential of people to change".

- The "Where to" artefacts selected in terms of potential conflict and disagreement were, "effective use of EP time", "role clarity".

- ❑ EPs used a variety of methods for resolving the conflict. These were summarised into six categories as follows: "Ask questions", "Emphasise specific aspects of the topic in question", "collaboratively reframe", "Use a specific technique", "Discuss possibilities", "Other". Examples of these are given in chapter 9.

- ❑ As a further level of analysis, collaborative reframing was examined and from this it was concluded that collaborative reframing, with its important role in expansive transitions, was achieved using the following methods: emphasising the joint contributions which are necessary, viewing situations from a range of perspectives, valuing the work of the other party and exposing the thinking of the other party.

10.3 Analysis of artefacts used at the three levels of activity systems

There are undoubtedly further detailed interrogations of the data that could be undertaken, in order to learn about the activity systems in place and the changes that occur. However, within the confines of this research study, it has not been possible to extend the investigations much further, except to consider the use of artefacts at different levels of activity, namely co-ordinated activity, co-operative activity and communicative activity. Pursuance of this line of enquiry was undertaken following discussion with Engestrom and subsequent further study of the data. The specific research hypothesis concerned the types of artefact that characterises different activity levels. If at the level of a communicative activity system, there is reflection on the 'script' (in activity theory terms) and the processes and the roles that each person is

undertaking, then it is perhaps likely that there would be higher usage of "Why"

artefacts. At a purely co-ordinated level, there may be more use of "What" artefacts that

form the basis of the business under discussion. Hence, the narrative passages from

each of the three levels were further reviewed and analysed in terms of their use of the

taxonomy of artefacts used within the questionnaire. Where exact words were used, the

phrases were immediately assigned to specific numbered artefacts. Where there were

references to actions or questions that were not exact word, they were assigned to an

artefact sharing the same meaning or they were discarded. The results were combined

for 1999 and 2000 and are shown below in Table10.1.

Table 10.1 Types of artefact against levels of activity

	"What" artefacts	"How" artefacts	"Why" artefacts	"Where to" artefacts
Co-ordination level	9	6	0	1
Co-operation level	7	11	2	10
Communication level	2	5	6	3
Totals	18	22	8	14

10.3.1 Comments

 Given that there are small numbers involved; a total of 62 examples altogether, it is

perhaps worth highlighting the findings in relation to each level. At the co-ordination

level, the highest group of artefacts used was the "What" artefacts with 9 being used.

This result confirms the hypothesis made earlier in this section that conversations at a

co-ordinated level would make most use of "What" artefacts, used to describe and

identify objects.

Within co-operative activity, "How" artefacts are used 11 times and "Where to" artefacts 10 times, suggesting that processual issues are important when activities are co-ordinated and involve working together towards common goals.

Finally, within communicative activity the highest group of artefacts used was the "Why" group with 6. Again this confirms, in a tentative way, the hypothesis in that activities where there is more open discussion about all aspects of role, tend to use more questioning artefacts, widening the discussion to incorporate aspects of role and reasons behind actions.

Although this analysis encompasses only a small amount of data, its potential for enriching and extending theorising in the area is great. This will be discussed further in the final chapters of the thesis.

10.4 Relevant factors within the changing host EP Service

Although this research has not followed the steps of the expansive learning cycle in all aspects, the results reported here were gathered over a period of a year and work within the EP service is continuous in terms of development of skills, policies and models of service delivery. The local context, as outlined in section 7.2, described the important setting conditions of new enthusiastic leaders being appointed within the LEA and EP service. Similarly the national context changed with the issuing of a revised Code of Practice (see chapter 3) and a DfEE working party report on the role of EPs (again

described in chapter 3). These factors have influenced the work of the EP service at the macro-level, but there have been more specific factors that have a bearing upon the development of consultation.

The results of this research have been fed back in a variety of forms: as a report to the management team, as part of an in-service session for all EPs, as the basis for development work in the area of devising scripts. Although there has not been follow-up evaluation conducted within the EP service regarding the implementation of the changes, these interventions and reflections on practice can be seen as similar to the latter stages of the expansive learning cycle, where new models are implemented through practical applications, enrichments and conceptual extensions. The work is on-going as a working group is set up to look at further development of the consultation model as the basis for service delivery and how EPs can be supported to improve their skills in this area.

CHAPTER 11

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS; LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY, FUTURE ACTIONS AND PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

11.1 Introduction

The final chapter of this thesis serves a number of purposes as it attempts to synthesise the salient factors that have emerged throughout the research enquiry described in the thesis. The discussions of these areas of focus and the conclusions arising are grouped together under four headings; namely the four themes explored in the early chapter on contradictions within educational psychology practice. Within each of these four topics, specific findings are discussed and there is inevitably some overlap. When this is the case, the discussion has been placed in the dominant category. An example of this is the area of pathologisation of children's difficulties that could have been discussed under 'different ways of working' or under 'EPs and children with special educational needs'. Throughout the following four sections, conclusions from each part of the expansive learning cycle of enquiry are included.

Having summarised the findings in terms of the subject matter of the investigation; the professional practice of educational psychologists, the second part of the chapter considers the theoretical development within the thesis and in particular how the writer's theorising and thinking has been transformed throughout the process of research and enquiry.

The latter part of the chapter considers the limitations to the study, given the chosen paradigmatic approach taken and then proceeds to suggest further areas for further study and investigation. Finally, personal learning and reflections conclude the thesis.

11.2 Themes within educational psychology practice

11.2.1 Preventative and reactive work in EP practice: Discussion and conclusions

The long-standing dilemma within professional educational psychology of how to strike a balance between preventative and reactive work is explored in chapter 3. This topic has been controversial since the inception of the role of EP. Within the historical-genetic analysis the dilemma is highlighted through the description of the 'reconstructing movement' in the late 1970's as prominent EPs at the time strove to undertake more systemic and interventionist courses of action and move away from the referral treadmill. A second important reflection of this dilemma is exemplified in the paradigmatic shift that took place in the work of many EPs in the 1970s and 1980s when they began to focus more upon teaching and learning, rather than within-child difficulties. This led to a growth in the use of more interactionist perspectives and a raising of the profile of the teacher's role in both the management and promotion of positive learning and behaviour.

The comments from Principal Educational Psychologists taken from the national survey data in chapter 5 clearly indicate a continuing wish to change the balance of work as 27 PEPs wanted to "move to preventative work, resulting in early intervention." (Chapter 5.6.8).

The same tensions can be seen again in the debate surrounding consultation as a method for EPs to work effectively with schools. Some models that have been developed suggest that all aspects of work, at individual, school and organisational and family levels can be conducted effectively through the use of consultation and suggest that the use of a consultation model can lead to more preventative and systemic work. As yet there is no clear evidence to support this view. However, the number of EP services that are moving in this direction suggests that they are still looking for ways of breaking out of the cycle of individual, problem-oriented work.

The research reported here, conducted within one EP service, uncovered tensions on the part of EPs in terms of the types of work they were required to undertake. In particular, the narrative accounts show frustrations for EPs in not being able to undertake the range of roles they feel they are able to undertake and instead being required to engage in fairly stultifying, repetitive work.

To conclude this section, it appears that the difficulties surrounding preventative versus reactive work have been present within the profession since its inception, when Burt was asked to undertake research but also assessment and selection of children within certain categories. This tension has persisted despite many varied attempts to alter the balance and change priorities.

Some success might be achieved by investigations and joint working designed to surface the contradictions that exist within the work, between EPs and their various clients. Engestrom suggests that articulating contradictions takes time and necessitates going back to the data several times, (1999a). Another way forward might be to delineate more clearly the range of roles undertaken, or potentially undertaken by EPs and to include these more openly in planning activities with schools, LEAs and other employers. Therefore, time and resources can be 'ear-marked' for specific activities. More radically, a range of different EPs within one EP service could take on different roles within the same school, as required. This possibility is discussed further, in a later section of this chapter.

11.2.2 Different models and methods of EP work: Discussion and conclusions

A second area of seeming contradictions in EP practice concerns the range of models that EPs employ in their work and alongside the variety of methods that are used. Examples of this can be found throughout the stages of this investigation and, although linked to other dilemmas, can be seen to form a loose grouping.

Chapter three considers underlying epistemologies and methodologies that govern, or perhaps are lacking in EP practice. Lunt and Majors (2000) suggest that it is a lack of clearly defined epistemologies that causes problems in terms of development within the profession, whereas Burden, (1997) and Schon, (1996) argue that adherence to an inappropriate, positivist methodology causes many of the research and practice issues facing the profession. Certainly, both aspects undoubtedly deserve further investigation

and theorising, as there has been very little focussed work in this area. Miller and

Leyden (1999) propose a coherent framework for mapping the work of EPs, which they

claim links theory and practice. However, the model is under theorised and has not

resulted in other researchers using their ideas so far. It is clear that EPs undertake a

range of activities within the course of their work and this is exemplified throughout

this research study. Activity theory, as yet unused as a model for understanding

professional practice, could provide a richer theoretical framework for analysing and

developing EP practice.

Lack of defining epistemology and methodology may be key factors influencing the

range of activities undertaken by EPs. This range is demonstrated through the changes

apparent in the historical-genetic analysis of the profession as new tools and ideas

became available. In this context, flexibility of approach can be seen as an asset as new

ways of working can be accommodated. However, when pressures from changing

expectations and political and legal influences affect work patterns then the lack of a

robust framework encompassing epistemological and methodological aspects is a

definite weakness.

The range of activities undertaken by EPs is further exemplified in the national survey,

where a variety of ways of working with schools becomes apparent. Regional and

geographical factors and also local political influences account for some of the

variation. However, many services operate according to locally agreed priorities and

the views of the managers within LEAs and EP services. An added factor is the amount

of flexibility allowed to individual EPs in terms of the range of ways of practising open to them. Again this varies tremendously across the country, as reflected in the results in chapter 5.

Further evidence of the range and types of work undertaken by EPs comes from the study of the target EP service. Data obtained suggests that within one three-hour visit between 3 and 4 separate activities are undertaken by EPs. Clearly there is a need for further work investigating what EPs do as well as how they do it, but this line of enquiry is beyond the remit of this study.

In terms of developing future working practices for EPs, and given the comments made in the previous section of this chapter, relating to role demarcation for EPs, it would perhaps be useful for EPs to consider ways of working with schools that moved away from models of entitlement and looked more towards targeting work according to need or request, as discussed in chapter 5. Clarification of the tasks that EPs engage in could constitute the initial negotiation and contracting arrangements for work undertaken and then work can be defined within certain parameters and expectations. If this pattern were to emerge, then an understanding of the different levels of activity system that can prevail or be constructed, possibly using Engestrom's three-levels of co-ordination, co-operation and communication, would be of great benefit. Through such analysis, contradictions can be surfaced and appropriate tools and artefacts developed.

The current preference on the part of many EP services to adopt consultation as a method of working with schools is investigated throughout this thesis and its genesis can be traced back to underlying contradictions in the early days of the profession. During the time of the reconstructionist movement, EPs sought to work more systemically with schools and to 'give away' psychology to teachers and others. Although this was perhaps a simplistic notion, its origins lay in the wish to share the application of psychology with those working directly with children and families, rather than EPs acting directly with others. In essence this underpins the use of consultation within educational psychology.

The national survey of practice highlighted a trend for EP services to move towards consultation as an appropriate way of engaging with schools with 21 PEPs saying that they wanted to "move to a more consultative role with collaborative work with schools." (Chapter 5.6.8). The stage of the expansive learning cycle that models the new situation is dealt with in chapter 6 of this study. Here, applications of consultation within school psychology are examined from a sociocultural perspective and some issues emerge from this process. A recommendation from the work of Wagner (1995 and 2000) is that consultation should be the way of working with all schools, for all problems. Further, within this proposed way of working, specific protocols should be followed in sequences. This appears to lead to a paradox as consultation should meet the needs of the client and these needs are likely to be different in each school and variable within school dependent upon the personnel involved, their training, skills specific needs and the problems and situations presenting.

In contrast, the work reported from the US suggests that researchers are beginning to pay more attention to the characteristics and needs of the consultee in the process of school consultation, (Gutkin, 1999). Hence, a customer-led EP service might need to be clearer about flexibility of models of working and the levels of activity that are appropriate. Wagner's model, as pointed out in chapter 6, perhaps covers the first two levels of Engestrom's 3-level model; namely co-ordination and co-operation but does not encourage or permit discussion at level three – communication. However, both the findings in the research undertaken in the target EP service reported here and Engestrom's own work, (1997) suggest that communicative activity systems are very rare.

In conclusion, it has been shown that EPs lack of clear epistemology of practice and the contrasts in methodological approaches used is reflected in the range of activities undertaken and the processes chosen to engage with schools. Although this breadth could be a strength, at the moment, the lack of knowledge and understanding means that a firm basis for negotiation and role development does not exist. Further and more sophisticated analyses of the types of activity, the planned use of specific artefacts and the difference between consultation and collaboration might result in clearer and more successful working practices with fewer unsurfaced contradictions.

11.2.3 EPs work in the area of special educational needs: Discussion and conclusions

The work of educational psychologists has tended, over the years to focus upon children with special educational needs and those in difficulty. Chapter 3 discusses the issues arising from this as there has been a long-standing hope on the part of many EPs (Gillham, 1978) that psychology, as an applied discipline could be used across a broad range of educational settings and with whole school populations, not only those children who are struggling or failing. Historically, through analysis of the literature as shown in chapter 4, EPs have been unhappy with the lack of time and priority given to research and to systemic work in schools. Reasons for this lack of balance in the work also become apparent through sociocultural analyses of the changing legislative and political climates prevailing at different times. Hence the predominance of individual casework and latterly statutory assessment work, that at times has threatened to overwhelm EP services rendering them incapable of undertaking any other work.

The national survey of EP practice demonstrates the frustrations of the contributing PEPs as the focus of work in their EP services has generally narrowed, although some services have managed to maintain some creative, broader-based work (see chapter 5). Similarly, the research into EP-teacher meetings highlights the area of EPs work in special needs in a number of ways. A high proportion of the artefacts used regularly in conversations are SEN focussed and these artefacts are also prominent as those around which conflict may occur. In particular, artefacts that are descriptors of special need or are associated with criteria used to define special needs and thus access to provision,

are causes of conflict (see chapter 9). The area of special educational needs and the disagreements and paradoxes that accompany it are not peculiar to educational psychology. The wider literature that accompanies special needs constantly contains debates about appropriate methods of assessing, diagnosing, educating, teaching or treating different groups of children. In fact, special educational needs is a major growth area in many respects as highlighted by Allan, 1999.

> "…within education, the most significant discourse to develop in the 1990's relates to marketisation, in which special needs labels have been commodified and have become a key to additional resources." (p.10)

This comment highlights a specific development within special needs pedagogy and practice: that of the growth of labelling. This expansion has caused difficulties for many professionals working in education and health but educational psychologists have perhaps been affected more than other groups. The problem is explored in section 3.5 of this thesis but the conclusions reached there are reiterated later in the thesis in section 8.8.4; namely that in order to justify EP time being directed towards certain children or certain activities, there is a tendency on the part of teachers to over-pathologise children's difficulties. Billington (2000) also comments on this tendency and suggests that professionals need to guard against such practices and Bozic and Leadbetter and Stringer (1998) echo these views when using a discourse analytic approach to investigating teacher assessment comments about children.

One of the results of the tendency towards within-child explanations of difficulties is that it pathologises children and often learning and behaviour. A second is that it leads to solutions that tend to reside in required change in individuals rather than in systems

and other individuals acting within systems. Given earlier discussions in previous chapters, it is clear that many educational psychologists have a preference for a more broad-based theoretical perspective that takes full account of all environmental, interactional and sociocultural aspects of situations. This leads to a different conceptualisation of special educational needs that situates children's learning and behaviour on broad-based spectrums where generalist and specific approaches can be accommodated. It also questions whether there are fundamental differences in the types of pedagogic approaches required by groups of children with special educational needs of different types, (Norwich and Lewis, 2001).

In order to move forward within this debate and to enable EPs to work happily and productively with both children with special needs but also more widely with groups, classes and whole schools, a clearer understanding of role and widened remit is required. This does not mean that the role of EPs in working with vulnerable children and the adults close to them should be abandoned or even diminished but rather it should be recognised and celebrated, when successful interventions are achieved or facilitated for others to achieve. Instead, clearer delineation of roles and tasks within EP services and for each individual EP in the course of their work should be an aim for service developers. After this is achieved then it is more likely that clearer dialogue with service users about a broader range of relevant work might ensue.

11.2.4 The positioning of educational psychologists: Discussion and conclusions

The final strand of discussion and conclusions concerning the subject matter of this thesis concerns the changing role of EPs and in particular the employment context as EPs in the UK are mainly employed by Local Education Authorities as public servants. The last section of chapter 3 discusses this issue in detail as it is clear from the sociocultural analysis conducted over time that the rules governing practice, that emanate from government and employers, have a significant effect upon the work undertaken. Similarly, division of labour has shifted over time dependent upon employer needs. The dilemma facing EPs is how to shift expectations and practice to ensure that the skills of applying psychology in daily practice and in undertaking high quality research are recognised and built into the role of EPs.

Historical evidence seems to suggest that as the role of EPs becomes more secure (by becoming a central part of the legislative requirements of the special education system and processes), then the restrictions on practice become greater. Similarly, the national survey results suggest that PEPs would like to expand the role of their services to include more creative uses of psychology. At an individual level EPs in the target EP service also express their frustration with a constricted role and view opportunities when they can act as a problem-solver or facilitator very positively. Their comments in narrative accounts emphasise the dominance of aspects of the context in which they work: specifically the statutory assessment procedures. Here again is a clear link with the activity theoretical analysis of EP role where the lower part of Engestrom's second

generation of activity theory triangles, encompassing division of labour, rules and community, are viewed as fundamental to any sociocultural analysis of activity.

Thus the positioning of EPs is a fundamental issue in terms of the progress and development of the profession. If EPs were to be employed by schools, which is a situation that pertains in some other countries, then role demarcations are likely to change. Certainly, the debates around the possibilities of collaborative or consultative work with schools, as highlighted in chapter 6 would be highly relevant as EPs would be working as 'insiders' within organisations, rather than external agencies (Caplan et al, 1994). However, different limitations might be put on the EPs role and difficulties emanating from working for employers with specific agendas might bring with it more contradictions. An example of this might be a school and a head teacher whose priorities might be to advance the profile of the school in terms of their examination results by the removal of children who are not deemed to be successful. A range of ethical, moral and professional issues would then need to be addressed by the EP working for the school.

To conclude this section, the long-standing debate concerning the positioning and employment of educational psychologists is highlighted by the relatively recent role within statutory assessment of special educational needs and is summarised by Lunt and Majors, (2000)

> "From, 'reconstructing educational psychology' in the late 1970's, through 'developing product portfolios' and debates over their unique contribution following the Education Reform Act of 19888, through increasing anxieties

about the centrality of their role in statutory assessment during the 1990's, the profession has found it difficult to find confidence in its role and contribution." (p. 237).

Thus the uncertainty has existed throughout the latter part of the 20th century and probably before that but it is not restricted to EPs. Skidmore (1996) suggests that it reflects wider difficulties within education.

> "Society places on schools a set of demands and expectations which may in themselves be contradictory, and which find expression in the dilemmas experienced by practitioners." (p.43).

Whether educational psychologists are peculiarly affected by the contradictions present within education due to their background, training or orientation or as a result of their historical positioning through the evolution and development of the profession is unclear. However, the tensions are clear and are ever-present as evidenced in this thesis. Mackay (1997) reaches similar conclusions when he suggests that the level of confidence the profession has in its role and contribution is,

> "… perhaps the most enduring debate within educational psychology" (p.165).

11.3 The development and transformation of theory and theorising throughout the research enquiry

The process of this research enquiry has developed over time and has taken different paths for a number of reasons. Through conversation and discussion with others, the writer's views on the research process appropriately change and develop and this extension is also heavily influenced by directed and serendipitous reading. Secondly, analysis of empirical data leads to further lines of enquiry. This thesis is characterised

by the interplay between theory and research and in this concluding chapter it is important to reflect on how this process has occurred. Kurt Lewin's famous remark that there is nothing as practical as a good theory is perhaps relevant at this point as the discovery and application of rich theoretical models has undoubtedly shaped this research study and therefore the thesis.

A number of areas of practice and lines of enquiry directly relate back to or challenge theoretical lines of enquiry. However, given both the scope of this thesis and the fact that it reflects work and thinking in progress, the ideas are not fully developed. They therefore appear as observations rather than well-thought-out rationales.

11.3.1 The use of a framework encompassing more sophisticated activity systems

Activity theory has been applied in a number of different ways within this research process and has proved to be a flexible approach that has helped to conceptualise and explain many of the research issues and questions under consideration. Within the historical-genetic account of the profession, second-generational models were used to analyse and understand the changing practices. Similarly, the focussed work undertaken between EPs and teachers was viewed through a second-generation activity system lens, although this was clearly a simplification. In both of these applications of activity theory, it is clear that confusion lies around the object in each system and this seems to be a wider concern on the part of many activity theorists. Engestrom, (2001), suggests that researchers should endeavour to 'kick the object' and by this it seems that he means that researchers should challenge, be clear about and move the object of

enquiries. Clearly, objects of activity systems change constantly both for the person who, at the time, is the subject but also as objects are viewed, simultaneously by involved others as different parts of the activity system. Hence, the object of one activity system can be the subject of another or even the artefacts of another system. This complexity clearly signals the need for the use of third generational, in Engestrom's terms, activity systems.

As yet there are few links made in the literature between researchers using activity theoretical and sociocultural perspectives and those studying the practices of professionals supporting work in educational settings. The particular research highlighted in this thesis concerns school consultation work as undertaken by psychologists in the USA (see chapter 6). Here West and Idol (1987) describe two knowledge bases that inform professional practice in consultation. The first they describe a knowledge base that informs the advice given to the consultee concerning the subject matter, the problem, ways of approaching or solving the problem. This they describe as 'knowledge base 2'. They distinguish this from knowledge base 1 which contains the knowledge that the consultant has about the process of consultation and the means of achieving successful outcomes. It is possible that in those settings where knowledge base 1 is high and sophisticated, there is more co-operative activity and even some communicative activity taking place. As yet, as far as the writer is aware there has been no research into this strand of enquiry. A further linkage between these two branches of theorising comes from the idea that within activity systems at different levels there are subject-object relationships that delineate instrumental aspects of the

activity and there are subject-subject linkages that delineate communicative aspects of the activity. Again, there seems to be a possible connection with the two types of knowledge base described by West and Idol and therefore a further analysis, using these conceptualisations would broaden and develop theorising in this area.

The work of EPs within LEAs and EP services is multi-layered and serves a number of masters. This makes it a rich and potentially worthwhile linking and mediating role whereby, home, school and wider community can be brought together to consider the best interests of an individual child or children. Through the application of a sociocultural analysis to this complex situation and using activity theory to understand relationships and influences a more coherent explanatory framework could be achieved. Although such work has not be undertaken within this study, it is a proposal for future study and it is likely that the pursuance of such investigations would result in the further development of the theoretical models and tools.

11.3.2 Levels as analytical tools within activity theory

Within the research design, the use of Engestrom's categorisation of three levels of activity systems is central. Although this is clearly only one way of considering interaction between several actors within an activity system, it provided a structure with high face validity to the researcher. Through the research investigation, this theoretical avenue has been developed further as there has been an attempt made to investigate the nature of these levels through a number of means. Firstly, the analysis of activities that might demonstrate or constitute activity at the different levels has been explored and

further work could clarify the nature of the tasks, activities and expectations that characterise work at different levels. Secondly, the artefacts and conversational tools present at each level have been explored. Through exploration of the meanings attributed to the artefacts and EP perceptions of shared meaning, some understandings have been realised about the power of artefacts and language use in particular. Again, the results obtained through the research have led to further theorising about the nature of artefacts used within different types of activity systems. Theory in this area has been extended, in a very tentative manner to suggest that the types of artefacts in common use vary depending on whether the activity is co-ordinated, co-operative or communicative. Thus there is more use of "What" and "How" artefacts at the co-ordinated level of activity and more use of "Why" artefacts at the communicative levels of activity. Although these are very new findings that need much further investigation, they provide an extension of theorising that adds to the body of knowledge in this broader area of study. Within the developmental work research paradigm, these findings raise issues about considerations of 'fitness for purpose' in that certain types of activity levels might be most appropriate for achieving certain tasks. Therefore, specific use of certain artefacts might be recommended entailing the use of recommended protocols, approaches or questions.

A further line of enquiry concerns the nature of communicative levels of activity and how this might relate to other conceptualisations of work and learning. Argyris and Schon (1978) describe second-loop learning where organisations are able to reflect at a higher level on changes and developments in working practices beyond the superficial

outcomes. This clearly implies communicative activity systems are operating. It would therefore be possible and potentially fruitful to explore Argyris and Schon's conceptualisations about learning in organisations from an activity theoretical and also sociocultural perspective. The development of theoretical possibilities described here has implications for such a study.

11.3.3 The use of artefacts and linguistic devices to create and maintain shared meaning.

Within the research undertaken by the writer and reported here, artefacts play a key role as they are seen as important tools that can facilitate but also hinder work between educational psychologists and teachers. The role that language plays within interactions is closely linked to the study of artefacts and in many cases the mediating artefacts are linguistic devices. There is therefore a very close link between the use and function of language and the role of mediating artefacts. The methodology chosen to underpin this study does not include discourse analytical approaches or tools; however, discourse analysts provide important views and ideas that contribute to knowledge within this area. Billig (1987) has looked at the role of argument and argumentation within situated discourses and the use of rhetorical devices in conversations. There are clear links between the investigation of artefact use in this study, perceptions of disagreement and conflict and Billig's work, and further study of the purpose of different artefacts, using Engestrom's modelling, might yield insights into important aspects of the working relationships between different actors working together. Theory has been developed

through the current research study into the role of artefacts within different types of activity.

The production of artefacts has been subject to little research and is an area worthy of further study. Miller, (1996) cites Nias's work (1985) that considered teacher's reference groups in schools from a number of perspectives. She found that in relation to a common technical language used in schools,

> "teachers construct their views of themselves and of reality within schools via conversations with their own reference groups. Outside these groups they do not share a language with which to attach meanings to their common experience." (Miller, 1996, p.97).

Clearly this view suggests that the study of technical and shared language is important and this is particularly so when different professional groups are conversing and working together to achieve common aims. However, shared meaning does vary, as the study reported here has shown and this could be linked to views of identity and perceived reference groups. The use of artefacts and in particular linguistic artefacts has been explored within this study and deeper understandings about the links to common beliefs and core values, skills and training backgrounds have been made. There is clearly more work that could usefully be undertaken to understand teacher identity issues and how these can be understood and utilised within cross-professional relationships.

To conclude, the research study has shown that contextual factors, both historical and current are highly relevant influences upon the work of EPs and teachers and their

presence cannot be ignored. Macready's work on counselling and conversations arrives at the same conclusions as he suggests that,

> "In all interactions, it is prudent to begin the conversation with a consideration of the possible determining contexts. Maintaining a consensual view of the context of the conversation will help to ensure that each of the participants in the conversation continues to share common assumptions." (1997, p.131).

11.3.4 Developmental Work Research and the Expansive Learning Cycle

Developmental work research is a growing area of interest with applications being documented from a range of settings. The success of its application within the work environment of EPs and teachers is evidenced in the preceding chapters of this thesis and this suggests that it is a useful and relevant practical and theoretical research framework. Although there has not necessarily been an extension of theoretical knowledge in the area of DWR through this study, the demonstration of its application in a novel setting increases the range and potential functions of the approach.

The expansive learning cycle has also been a fundamental underpinning of the study and again this has been applied in a previously untested manner. The use of the cycle to include a historical-genetic analysis spanning 100 years represents a broadening of its sphere of application and this perhaps opens up further possibilities for future researchers. Although the cycle was conceived for slightly different purposes, within focussed settings and change laboratories, its application within a wider context means that there is potential for further development and exploration. In turn it is possible that this type of research will inform developments and elaboration of the theoretical relationships between the stages of the cycle.

11.3.5 Comment

In conducting this investigation over a lengthy period of time, understandings develop and change. Activity theory and sociocultural approaches are gaining in popularity and therefore more people are trying to apply them across a wide range of settings and with many groups of children and adults. The writer's experience has been that activity theory provides a relevant and valid framework through which complex human activity can be viewed. It provides models, tools and conceptualisations that can be used to understand both simple actions and complex interacting systems in very short time spaces and also extremely long time frames. Areas of difficulty arise when understandings about individual functioning are imposed upon activity theoretical analyses. Coming from the background of a trained psychologist, where the individual is arguably the most important starting point for investigation, it has been fundamental to this research to use methods that prioritise the role of individual participants. Therefore methods that seek to understand individual characteristics such as the construction of shared meanings, the role of motivation within the work settings and the use and understanding of language are important. It has therefore been a satisfying process to utilise an approach that provides scope and scaffolding to undertake studies of individuals functioning within complex organisational systems.

11.4 Limitations of the research study

The process of research undertaken in this study is within a specific paradigm and this is fully explained and justified in chapter 2. Therefore, limitations and criticisms of social constructionist perspectives and approaches will not be addressed in this section as some underlying assumptions about the nature of knowledge and scientific enquiry need to be taken for granted. However, within the chosen approaches there are clearly some limitations that must be acknowledged and discussed and these are included in the next sections.

The historical-genetic analysis of the development of the profession that forms an early part of the overall investigation has certain parameters imposed upon it due to the scope of this thesis. Hence, it considers only the development of the profession in the UK and not in other parts of the world. In particular, the path taken by school psychologists in the USA could have provided contrasting evidence and information on differing priorities. Similarly the different courses taken within western and eastern European countries in terms of applications of psychology and formalisation of specific roles within schools and education systems might have provided useful insights into influences on UK practice. The account is therefore constrained by these factors.

The national survey of EP practice undertaken in 1998 is similarly limited to England and Wales as the Scottish system is different and there were no returns received from Northern Ireland. No attempt was made to investigate models of service delivery for professional school psychology in Europe or the United States. The questions included

in the survey deliberately focussed upon service delivery: the "how" of EPs working with schools. At the end of the investigation, having interrogated the data arising from the detailed research in one EP service, it is clear that content and values are important in influencing the way that the service operates. In retrospect, therefore, it would have been useful to include some questions about the types of work undertaken, although this would have made the questionnaire considerably longer. However, evidence about what EPs do is now summarised in the DfEE working party report (2000) that has been published since this national survey was conducted.

The chapter that considers new developments in consultation work in schools is also limited to analysis of a few approaches that seem particularly relevant to this research study. Therefore, prominent US literature is examined in terms of its relevance for consultant-consultee relationships. The wealth of literature that exists concerning types of consultation and evaluation of behavioural consultations has not been included. Similarly, within the UK, priority has been given to an analysis of the most commonly used approach to consultation, acknowledging that this ignores other possible approaches. However, in terms of the expansive learning model this approach represents an attempt to model the new situation. The evidence drawn from this investigation adds to the overall understanding about the activity systems in place when EPs and teachers work together and how these can be improved.

The empirical research undertaken adopts an original design that seeks to investigate activity systems through a number of means. However, the primary limitation is clearly

that only one side of each dyad is represented in the data collection. The research focuses upon EPs perceptions of what takes place during meetings. There is no attempt to gather data for the other involved parties: namely the teachers. This was a deliberate choice in the research design as the focus of the research and the research questions would have been different if teachers had been included. This does not mean that the researcher considers that teacher views are not important. In the next section, possible future lines of enquiry are outlined and this is an important area to research. However, given the scope of the thesis it was necessary to constrain the research and to focus upon key aspects. Hence as the professional practice of educational psychologists is the domain of investigation, it is felt that this justifies consideration of EP views only.

A second major constraint within the empirical research concerns the fact that the data has been collected retrospectively and is based upon EPs perceptions of what happened during the visits, how they view shared meaning around commonly used artefacts and how they view potential disagreement and problem-resolution. Clearly, given the social constructionist paradigm within which this research is conducted, EPs perceptions are valid constructions of reality and in this context they form valid data upon which to analyse activity systems. What is lost, through the methods adopted is the interactive nature and detail that would have been gained from an approach which used a developmental work laboratory approach, (Engestrom, 2001) or through using observation techniques in situ or video-tape analysis of the meetings. All of these approaches would have yielded rich data, but given the constraints of time within this research process, it was decided to sacrifice detailed analysis of a few encounters for

the broader picture gained from higher numbers of responses, given to a range of questions over a longer period of time. This choice has clearly imposed a limitation on the study but in turn leads to a range of important suggestions for future research.

The research tools used, and in particular the taxonomy of artefacts generated from work within the EPS, could be improved following this research study. Although the basic format and idea proved a useful tool, with more data, it would be possible to improve and extend the terms used. Working more closely with the EPs and teachers could do this by using direct analysis of video and audio-tapes to generate a basic set of artefacts in common use. Clearly all research designs within this new research paradigm need to be tailored to the specific situation, as evidenced by the developmental work research projects undertaken by Engestrom and the team based in Helsinki. (Engestrom, 1999).

11.5 Areas for further research and enquiry

The research process is often described as a journey that never reaches its destination. Certainly, the research contained in this thesis represents work in progress and it is always possible both to reflect on other ways in which the investigation might have been better undertaken and also to extend the research into further areas of enquiry. In this section, some possibilities for future research are described and discussed.

11.5.1 Teacher perspectives and interactional analysis

A major area for further research is to consider the work of EPs and teachers from the perspective of the teachers involved. This could be done as a separate and similar investigation to that conducted with the EPs. Alternatively a different design, using video-analysis of meetings and some aspects of change-laboratory methods might provide a richer picture of the transactions that occur, the contradictions that are evidenced and many other factors that play a role in the activities taking place. Both of these approaches have merits and attractions. It would be very useful to compare teacher views about EP practice and areas of potential disagreement and conflict, particularly in terms of forging more productive ways of working in the future. It would also be valuable to focus at a micro-level on the interactions that take place and the process of conversations and decision-making within routine visits. From such work the co-constructing of solutions between EPs and teachers could be facilitated to enable further collaborative reframing to occur. Powell and Solity (1990) propose an encompassing model that includes teachers and educational psychologists as equals in processes of reflection leading to joint action. There is a clear need for more critical research in this area drawing upon suitable research designs.

11.5.2 Analysis of skills

A second possible area for future research considers the skills that are used by EPs and those that are in need of development in order for the work to be undertaken more successfully. Through the use of micro-analysis of activities and by establishing and developing close working relationships between the researchers and the participants,

then the developmental work methods can be integrated into service improvement

practices for EP services. Engestrom, (1999) describes this process as follows:

> "..general ideas of activity theory be put to the acid test of practical
> validity and relevance in interventions that aim at the construction of new
> models of activity jointly with local participants. Such construction can be
> successful only when based on careful historical and empirical analysis of the
> activity in question." (p. 35-6)

He further suggests the use of 'formative experiments' whereby researchers engage in

forming new artefacts and new practices jointly with their 'subjects'. This is clearly an

important area for future research and development that could be undertaken with a

small pilot group of EPs and teachers, in the first instance.

From this work there is likely to be development of more sophisticated artefacts, in the

form of materials, approaches, protocols that might inform and systematise some

aspects of EP practice in schools. If the new working practices are then to become part

of accepted practice, then further research into how these practices become

institutionalised would be beneficial, (see chapter 9.5.5).

11.5.3 Knot-working and third generation activity theory

Some consideration has been given within the thesis to the wider context within which

EPs work. The historical-genetic analysis includes the changing rules, community

factors and divisions of labour that emerged and changed over the history of the

profession. Similarly, the narrative accounts from EPs mention the wider role of the

LEA policy and the effect this has had on practice. However, this wider context and

working environment have not been considered in detail and have not been analysed from an activity theoretical perspective.

Using Engestrom's notion of third generational activity systems (Daniels, 2001) the inter-relationships between schools, the EP service and the LEA could usefully be analysed using activity theory. Such an approach would provide scope for investigation of the different relationships and constraints and contextual factors involved in the complex working relationships rather that the usual nested concentric circle analysis that results from systemic analyses of the different levels at work within interlocking systems. This is clearly an area that is ripe for further investigation from a sociocultural and activity theoretical perspective.

Alongside this, notions of co-configuration, (Engestrom, 1999c) and 'knot-working' as described in chapter 6, provide relevant and useful tools for conceptualising the working practices of EPs and others in support roles within education. Central to this work is the notion that the object of different linked activity systems is different and changes over time. Thus systems are not static and the work develops and changes over the course of a series of interventions or meetings. Therefore, more sophisticated models and tools are needed to analyse what is happening through a series of linked work processes.

Engestrom, (1999c) has described an example of knotworking in terms of work within a specialist hospital department where different professionals are all concerned with the

same client but all have different roles and different perspectives. The combination of all the sequential contributions does not result in the optimal outcome for the client or patient; which should be the overall goal for all participants. This type of approach can be seen to have direct parallels with the work of schools and support professionals in working with a child and their family to achieve the best outcomes for the child. Therefore there would be great merit in applying this type of methodological approach to work around supporting children with special needs in schools.

11.5.4 Positioning and power within support services

Allied to the proposal to use notions of knotworking to investigate EPs and schools and other professionals working together is the possibility of investigating further the positioning of EPs within LEAs and EP services and beyond. The political and financial climates continue to change rapidly and in 2002 some EP services are already being run by private companies or as public-private partnerships as part of LEAs that have been outsourced. What effects this change of employment base will have on the rules that govern practice, and the types of activities undertaken by EPs in such employment settings is unclear but it is likely to effect the working relationships between EP services and their clients.

The types of power base upon which EPs might draw in order to inform their work in schools is described in chapter 6, (6.3.3.3) and this is another important area worthy of further research. Dependent upon positioning and role as well as on training, skills, morale and other factors, then different approaches to consultation work are likely to be

adopted by EPs. However, there is little research and theorising about the importance of power within this area of work. There is a clear link here to organisational and employment issues within EP services and as can be seen from the historical genetic analysis. In the past, the positioning of EPs relative to others working in the field has been critical in defining the core tasks of EPs and thus the development of the profession.

11. 6 Personal reflections and final conclusions

It is perhaps difficult to reflect on a task when the writer is still centrally involved in the process of synthesising, summarising and concluding such a large undertaking as doctoral level research. However, some observations are possible and relevant.Throughout the course of the research, through supervision and reflection, reading and discussion it has become clear that the richness of the chosen methodology is of critical importance to the research object in question. To have chosen a uni-dimensional approach with inflexible required methods of investigation would have stifled creative thinking and research. In choosing sociocultural and activity theory as the research paradigm, the research has been able to be developed in diverse directions, but has been contained within a robust theoretical framework.

Although the early days of reading around a new area of study were profoundly difficult, due to the new conceptual approaches and language that is predominantly used within sociocultural and activity theory approaches, it has been rewarding in the longer term. It has also been important that the tools and approaches developed within

the empirical research have relevance and meaning and validity for the researcher. This has been achieved throughout the enterprise.

Of lasting value will be the realisation of the importance of historical factors in understanding behaviour and activity systems. Through tracing back both through short and long-term time-frames, much can usefully be gained that can inform understanding of current practices and contradictions that occur. Secondly, the importance of systematic questioning as used within an expansive learning cycle has been of great value and this is an approach that will be adopted again in future work.

For the profession of educational psychology there remains, as ever, great uncertainty. A well known quote from Goethe is perhaps relevant for educational psychologists at the present time: "Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least." There is a great danger that factors outside of the profession will continue to dictate the course of the profession to a point where it becomes impossible to, "promote child development and learning through the application of psychology." (DfES, 2000, p.5.)

In order to prevent this from happening, educational psychologists need to have more confidence in their own abilities and become more self-directing in their chosen working environments. Alongside this they need to be prepared to change and adapt and work alongside others in less elitist partnerships. The future of the profession is

uncertain but is full of opportunities for creative and diverse applications as long as it

remains true to its fundamental discipline of psychology.

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