

Effective Solution Focused Coaching: A Q-methodology study of teachers' views of coaching with educational psychologists

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1). Abstract

Stober, Wildflower and Drake (2006) call for coaches to 'begin integrating evidence from both coaching-specific research and related disciplines, their own expertise, and an understanding of the uniqueness of each client...into a coherent body of knowledge that applies to and guides coaching'. This study does this by looking into the work of the Nottinghamshire Solution Focused Coaching team and how teacher coachees view effective coaching. Q-methodology (Stephenson, 1953) is a Quali-quantalogical technique able to describe in detail the range of views around a topic. This research used Q-methodology to examine teacher views on effective Solution Focused Coaching with EPs. By-person factor analysis of the Q-sorts of 27 teachers suggested 3 different viewpoints on effective Solution Focused Coaching (SFC) and some key ideas held in consensus across the views. The viewpoints were found to differentiate across three themes; whether coaching involved developing action plans; where the goals for coaching emanated from; and the coachee's engagement with the confidentiality offered. The consensus statements showed a preference for a focus on strengths, skills, and what is helping at present; of receiving strength-based feedback; and on identifying elements of goals being in place. Working with client strengths has been highlighted in the therapy outcome literature and the study is theorized with reference to this and the concept of "therapeutic alliance". It is suggested that effective SFC might involve the EP constructing a "coaching alliance" and combining this with a focus on client strengths to provide a foundation for SFC. The descriptions of the viewpoints, and consensus ideas, are offered as resources for exploring the practicalities of such an approach. Whilst being the semantic and subjective products of human thought, the views operant in the study can be said to be "as real, as substantial, and as difficult to get around as any thing the natural world puts in our way" (Watts, 2007). Such a linguistic turn is expanded upon through exploration of educational psychology as social construction. Suggestions are made about how EPs could interpret social constructionism in their practice.

2). Contents

1). ABSTRACT	2
2). CONTENTS	3
3). LIST OF TABLES	6
4). LIST OF FIGURES	7
5). INTRODUCTION	8
5.1. THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE.....	9
5.2. THE GROWING CENTRALITY OF WARRANTING EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PRACTICE	9
5.3. THE ROLE OF THE EP.....	11
5.4. THE EP AS PSYCHOLOGICAL COACH.....	12
5.5. THE CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	13
5.6. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	15
5.7. THE FOCUS OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW	16
6). LITERATURE REVIEW	17
6.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW	18
6.1.1. <i>A historical subtext to the changing EP role</i>	18
6.1.2. <i>Conclusion of the Introduction to the Literature Review</i>	19
6.2. THE ROLE OF THE EP	21
6.2.1. <i>The “Traditional” EP role</i>	21
6.2.2. <i>Psychological Consultation</i>	22
6.2.3. <i>A new horizon- the EP as coaching psychologist</i>	25
6.3. COACHING PSYCHOLOGY	28
6.3.1. <i>Background</i>	28
6.3.2. <i>Defining coaching and coaching psychology</i>	28
6.3.3. <i>Towards a psychology of coaching</i>	31
6.3.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	32
6.4. SOLUTION FOCUSED BRIEF THERAPY	34
6.4.1. <i>Background and Introduction</i>	34
6.4.2. <i>The central characteristics of SFBT</i>	36
6.4.3. <i>Psychological Theories Underpinning SFBT</i>	38
6.4.4. <i>Methods used in SFBT- the classical model</i>	41
6.4.5. <i>How the classical model has been augmented over time</i>	41
6.4.6. <i>The Appeal of SFBT as a change tool</i>	42
6.5. SOLUTION FOCUSED PRACTICE BY EPs	44
6.5.1. <i>The Value of SF approaches to Schools</i>	47
6.5.2. <i>Conclusion of the literature review</i>	47
7). THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SFC MODEL	49
7.1.1. <i>Context and background</i>	49
7.1.2. <i>Initiating and coordinating whole school and targeted coaching</i> ...	50
7.1.3. <i>The SFC team</i>	51
7.1.4. <i>The SFC intervention</i>	51

7.1.5.	<i>Conditions for a successful project- key assertions.....</i>	52
7.1.6.	<i>Evaluative Practice</i>	54
8).	<u>METHOD</u>	56
8.1.	INTRODUCTION TO THE METHOD	57
8.1.1.	<i>Ethical Considerations</i>	57
8.2.	A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE RESEARCH- AN OVERVIEW	58
8.2.1.	<i>Traditions in knowledge production</i>	58
8.2.2.	<i>Epistemological dualism</i>	59
8.2.3.	<i>Quantitative and qualitative debates</i>	60
8.2.4.	<i>Deconstructing Epistemological Duality in Psychological Research</i> <i>63</i>	
8.3.	FRAMING THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE STUDY	65
8.3.1.	<i>A discontent with experimental method</i>	66
8.4.	EPISTEMOLOGICAL COMMITMENTS WITHIN THE STUDY	69
8.4.1.	<i>Making the post-modern turn.....</i>	69
8.4.2.	<i>Isomorphism, psychological practice and research method</i>	70
8.4.3.	<i>Orienting principles for social constructionism.</i>	71
8.4.4.	<i>Researcher stance within social constructionism</i>	72
8.4.5.	<i>An illustrative example of a constructionist deliberation</i>	75
8.4.6.	<i>Challenging Conventions of truth</i>	76
8.4.7.	<i>Potential appropriate methodologies</i>	77
8.5.	Q-METHODOLOGY.....	80
8.5.1.	<i>Introduction to Q-methodology</i>	80
8.5.2.	<i>How Q investigates viewpoints.....</i>	81
8.5.3.	<i>Working towards ‘finite diversity’; the P-set, Q-set and sampling in</i> <i>Q-method</i>	85
8.5.4.	<i>Validity.....</i>	88
8.5.5.	<i>Reliability and generalisability</i>	88
8.6.	THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY	91
8.6.1.	<i>Setting social change in motion using the appreciative eye</i>	92
8.7.	Q-METHODOLOGY PROCEDURE IN THIS STUDY	95
8.7.1.	<i>Sampling the concourse and developing the Q-set.....</i>	95
8.7.2.	<i>Piloting the Q-set.....</i>	98
8.7.3.	<i>The person sample or P-set</i>	99
8.7.4.	<i>The procedure for administration of the Q-set.....</i>	100
8.7.5.	<i>Summary of the Methodology Procedure</i>	100
9).	<u>Q-METHODOLOGY RESULTS</u>	102
9.1.	OVERVIEW OF A Q-METHODOLOGY ANALYSIS	103
9.2.	Q ANALYSIS- AN EXPLANATION OF THE HANDLING OF THE DATA	105
9.2.1.	<i>Q analysis- factors, rotation and prototype viewpoints.....</i>	105
9.2.2.	<i>Understanding factors as viewpoints.....</i>	107
9.2.3.	<i>Interpreting the Emergent Factors.....</i>	108
9.2.4.	<i>Summary of the explanation of the handling of the data</i>	109
9.3.	THE TABLES OF RESULTS	111
9.3.1.	<i>A guide to reading the tables of results</i>	111
9.3.2.	<i>The rotated factor matrix</i>	114

9.3.3.	<i>The factor arrays of the 3 factors.....</i>	<i>117</i>
9.3.4.	<i>Factor Q sort values for each statement</i>	<i>122</i>
9.3.5.	<i>Consensus vs. disagreement statements.....</i>	<i>124</i>
9.3.6.	<i>Distinguishing statements and statements that do not distinguish 126</i>	
9.3.7.	<i>Descending array of differences between each factor</i>	<i>129</i>
9.4.	CONCLUSION OF Q PATTERN ANALYSIS.....	133
9.5.	REFLECTIONS ON THE METHODOLOGY	134
10).	<u>DISCUSSION OF THE Q-METHODOLOGY STUDY RESULTS</u>	<u>137</u>
10.1.	THE CONSENSUS STATEMENTS	138
10.2.	HOW THE COACHEES VIEW EFFECTIVE SFC – DESCRIBING THE FACTOR VIEWPOINTS	142
10.2.1.	<i>The Factor 1 viewpoint</i>	<i>143</i>
10.2.2.	<i>The Factor 2 viewpoint</i>	<i>145</i>
10.2.3.	<i>The Factor 3 viewpoint</i>	<i>147</i>
10.3.	FACTOR DEMOGRAPHICS	150
10.4.	SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION OF COACHEES VIEWPOINTS	153
10.5.	THEORIZING THE FINDINGS	155
10.5.1.	<i>The centrality of clients strengths and resources</i>	<i>156</i>
10.5.2.	<i>The co-construction of a “coaching alliance”</i>	<i>157</i>
10.5.3.	<i>A reflexive stance- from prescription to co-construction.....</i>	<i>158</i>
10.5.4.	<i>Summary of theorisation.....</i>	<i>161</i>
10.6.	APPROPRIATENESS OF METHOD.....	162
10.6.1.	<i>Q-methodology as perturbation and social de-construction</i>	<i>162</i>
10.6.2.	<i>Q-methodology as a ‘disciplined inquiry’</i>	<i>162</i>
10.6.3.	<i>Q-method as emancipation</i>	<i>163</i>
10.7.	ETHICAL ISSUES	166
10.8.	BRINGING THEORY, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE TOGETHER	167
10.9.	IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	171
10.10.	FINAL THOUGHTS.....	172
11).	<u>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....</u>	<u>174</u>
12).	<u>REFERENCES</u>	<u>177</u>
13).	<u>SECONDARY REFERENCES</u>	<u>198</u>
14).	<u>APPENDICES</u>	<u>200</u>

3). LIST OF TABLES

TABLE-1 TEN QUESTIONABLE PRACTICES IN SOCIAL RESEARCH- ROBSON, 2002	58
TABLE-2 SUMMARY OF THE STAGES OF THE STUDY DESIGN AND THE KEY ACTIVITIES WITHIN EACH STAGE	101
TABLE-3 THE ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX SHOWING HOW EACH PARTICIPANT'S Q SORT MAPS ONTO THE 3 EXTRACTED FACTORS, WITH SIGNIFICANT LOADINGS MARKED WITH A X	116
TABLE-4 FACTOR 1 ARRAY SHOWING THE SINGLE FACTOR EXEMPLIFYING Q SORT	119
TABLE-5 FACTOR 2 ARRAY SHOWING THE SINGLE FACTOR EXEMPLIFYING Q SORT	120
TABLE-6 FACTOR 3 ARRAY SHOWING THE SINGLE FACTOR EXEMPLIFYING Q SORT	121
TABLE-7 SUMMARY OF HOW EACH OF THE THREE FACTORS VALUES EACH OF THE STATEMENTS	123
TABLE-8 STATEMENTS PLACED IN RANK ORDER, WITH THOSE WITH HIGHEST CONSENSUS FIRST, AND THE STATEMENTS WITH MOST DISAGREEMENT LAST. HOW EACH FACTOR VALUES EACH STATEMENT IS ALSO INCLUDED.....	125
TABLE-9 DISTINGUISHING STATEMENTS FOR FACTOR 1.....	127
TABLE-10 DISTINGUISHING STATEMENTS FOR FACTOR 2	127
TABLE-11 DISTINGUISHING STATEMENTS FOR FACTOR 3	128
TABLE-12 CONSENSUS STATEMENTS: THOSE THAT DO NOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN ANY PAIRS OF FACTORS.	128
TABLE-13 DESCENDING ARRAY OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FACTORS 1 AND 2	130
TABLE-14 DESCENDING ARRAY OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FACTORS 1 AND 3	131
TABLE-15 DESCENDING ARRAY OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FACTORS 2 AND 3	132
TABLE-16 DEMOGRAPHICS OF FACTOR 1- SHOWING PARTICIPANTS GENDER, AGE, EXPERIENCE AND ROLE	150
TABLE-17 DEMOGRAPHICS OF FACTOR 2- SHOWING PARTICIPANTS GENDER, AGE, EXPERIENCE AND ROLE	151
TABLE-18 DEMOGRAPHICS OF FACTOR 3- SHOWING PARTICIPANTS GENDER, AGE, EXPERIENCE AND ROLE	152

4). LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE -1 THEORIES UNDERPINNING SOLUTION-FOCUSED THERAPY (P.5 STOBIE, BOYLE AND WOOLFSON, 2005).....	39
FIGURE -2 EXAMPLES OF SOLUTION-FOCUSED PRACTICE BY EPS (P.12 STOBIE, BOYLE AND WOOLFSON, 2005).....	45
FIGURE -3 FIGURE SHOWING TEXT TAKEN FROM THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SFC GUIDING FRAMEWORK ILLUSTRATING KEY DISTINCTIONS WITH REGARD TO 'MAKING SFC WORK	53
FIGURE -4 FIGURE SHOWING TEXT TAKEN FROM THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SFC EVALUATIVE TOOL USED AT THE END OF A COACHING PROJECT, BY ALL THOSE WHO RECEIVED COACHING	55
FIGURE -5 A PARTICIPANT SORTING STATEMENTS IN A Q-SORT. IMAGE COPYRIGHT © WENDY STAINTON ROGERS 2003	84
FIGURE -6 Q-SORT CONFIGURATION	85
FIGURE -7 AN OVERVIEW OF THE Q-METHODOLOGY DATA PRODUCED BY PQMETHOD AND USED FOR FACTOR INTERPRETATION.....	113
FIGURE -8 EXTRACT FROM THE ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX (TABLE 2) SUMMARISING PARTICIPANTS WHO LOAD ON FACTOR 1.....	115
FIGURE-9 AN EXTRACT FROM THE FACTOR 3 ARRAY	117
FIGURE-10 USING THE FACTOR ARRAY TO CONSTRUCT A FACTOR 3 Q-SORT.....	118

5). Introduction

5.1. The changing context of educational psychology practice

This research is undertaken at a time of radical change for all services working with children in the UK. Recent publications outlining government strategy have created an urgent need to consider future directions in educational psychology that go well beyond those previously discussed. For example, *Educational Psychology Services (England): Current Role, Good Practice and Future Directions* (DFEE 2000) has suggested consideration be given to mapping out the validity of core functions of an Educational Psychology Service (EPS). The most recent Department of Education and Skills review of the role and function of educational psychologists (EPs) (DFES 2006) suggested that any change should place them more centrally within *community contexts* where schools are only one of the settings in which they work. It now seems essential that EPs establish some clarity about the roles they take on; the forms of relatedness they offer, and the psychologies they adopt. It also seems necessary, within the context of the outcome based Every Child Matters (2004) agenda, that educational psychology relates to an evidence base and informs ways of working that mediate improved outcomes for children, which, as Leadbetter (2006) suggests, will require models of practice which are robust yet flexible.

5.2. The growing centrality of warranting educational psychological practice

As the EP role changes it is important to ensure that the models upon which evolving practice is based are able to be warranted, perhaps even broadly evidence based, and definitely robust and flexible. Both the empirical data and the literature have illustrated that 'change' in educational psychology practice has been, and continues as a long-term 'reconstruction' process that is far from complete (Boyle and Lauchlan, 2009). Worryingly, Stobie (2002) suggests that educational psychology is dangerously low on principles of supervision,

accountability, transparency, continuous improvement, best value, ownership and evidence to withstand the external scrutiny.

What is demanded is a clear rationale behind practice decisions that accent particular psychological roles and approaches. Gergen (1989) suggests warranting psychological practice through “furnishing rationales as to why a certain voice...is to be granted superiority...on the grounds of specific criteria” (Gergen, 1989: 74) and educational psychology, perhaps now more than ever, requires clarity through direction.

One form of criteria is evidence-based practice. Evidence-based practice can be defined as the ‘conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients’ (Sackett, Rosenberg, Gray and Haynes, 1996 cited in Ramchandani, Joughin, and Zwi, 2001: p.20). Its corollary is the ‘development of a process whereby new evidence can be found, examined and integrated into the provision of services to populations and the care of individual patients and their families’ (Ramchandani et al., 2001: p. 59).

This can be extended further, with the development of a particular intervention approach, taking place through interplay between field practice and research or, even better, a practitioner-researcher orientation (see also Greig, 2001).

It is this final explication of evidence-based practice that is of particular salience within this study. As we will see, this study rests a focus upon a new form of educational psychology practice, that of Solution Focused Coaching. It aims to provide a warrant for this area of psychological practice; to provide discursive means that resource and constrain particular forms of social actions that might make up effective Solution Focused Coaching.

5.3. The role of the EP

As well as existing within a rapidly changing context, Baxter and Frederickson (2005) argue that educational psychology is a profession lacking clarity over how to add value through their work. Debate over the direction of the profession has been evident since the late 1970s (Gillham, 1978). More recent research attests to a continued questioning; for example in a survey of schools Kelly and Gray (2000) found that there were conflicts between what schools were looking for and what EPs want to offer and Stobie (2002) provides evidence that EPs are still finding difficulty in describing their role and that diversity in practice was increasing. Additionally Baxter and Frederickson (2005) argue that this time of radical change for all services brings with it difficult questions about the value added by EPs; questions that can no longer be evaded (Baxter and Frederickson, 2005).

However, although these times of change bring with them challenges they may also bring opportunities. It can be argued that the challenge to define a role can be reframed as an invitation to reconstruct, re-align or transform the EP's role and contribution. This process holds possibilities for constructing and articulating a role that foregrounds practices which, through the application of psychology, have the potential to make a difference for all children and young people, schools and the communities they serve. The parameters, constraints and opportunities for EP work will be likely to be set within the context of the emerging integrated children's services. In the recent review of EPS role and contribution three key contexts were presented for EP work- the SEN arena, multi-agency working and school improvement (Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney, Squires and O'Conner, 2006), and these contexts offer the opportunity for EPs to move beyond the Special Educational Needs discourse and potentially develop new ways of working.

5.4. The EP as psychological coach

The introduction of 'teacher coaching' in the National Behaviour and Attendance Strategy (DfES, 2002) brought attention upon a potentially valuable way of working for EPs. From the professions point of view the invitation to work as a 'teacher coach' offers an explicit opportunity for EPs to work with teachers within the school improvement agenda, with the aim of improving provision for all children. This is in contrast to the traditional EPs role that, as Ledbetter (2006) notes, focused on the special educational needs of individual children and with which there has been long-term dissatisfaction (e.g. Gillham, 1978). Wagner (2001) suggests that there are compelling reasons to take the turn towards a systemic and collaborative way of working which can make a difference to the real concerns of teachers; such an approach could be encapsulated within a psychological coaching model and the coaching role could sit comfortably with the 'consultation' model of educational psychology. Consultation and coaching both put collaborative work at the centre of EP practice and involve the EP working with key adults to work on developing solutions together (Gutkin and Curtis, 1990). In fact the EP adopting the role of coaching psychologist might be able to take their work towards a more systemic focus, as the client- and the target of the work- in coaching tends to be the person the psychologist is actually working with. In consultation the discursive partner tends to be the teacher acting as "the person most concerned" (Wagner, 2001), whilst the target for the work is often explicitly a child. By contrast, in coaching the basis for change is located within the coaching client¹.

The interpretation of 'teacher coaching' as an opportunity for the development of psychological coaching in schools to support school improvement has been supported by (the then) DFES through the dissemination of Devon EPS'

¹ In this thesis the coaching client is often referred to as the coachee, though at times the participants in the study are referred to as "teachers" or "school staff". The term "teachers", as used in this thesis, does not distinguish between Teaching Assistants and Classroom Teachers.

Solution Focused Teacher Coaching approach as part of the National Behaviour and Attendance Strategy (DfES, 2002). Within the National Behaviour and Attendance Strategy pilot Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service has developed a Solution Focused Coaching service, working with schools at individual, group and organizational levels and in partnership with the local School Improvement Service. This work has been built upon, and extended, the EPS' collaborative-consultation model of service delivery. It has given EPs in Nottinghamshire a firm foot hold as participants in the arena of school improvement. Colleagues in the school improvement sector have favourably received this participation. This thesis focuses in on the development of a clearer warrant within this particular form of psychological practice within the context of Nottinghamshire and its community of schools.

5.5. The context for the research questions

Although internationally psychologists have long acted as coaches (Grant, 2006), coaching psychology has only recently emerged as an applied and academic sub-discipline with the advent of *The Coaching Psychologist* (2005)- an international journal dedicated to the development of the theory, practice, and research of coaching psychology. Starker (1990) and Grant (2006) both argue that psychology has a genuine and important contribution to make to professional coaching in terms of adapting and validating existing models for use with normal populations and one of the purposes of this study was to reconstruct Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) for use in a psychological coaching context with teachers.

At the beginning of this research the author was the Lead Coach of the Solution Focused Coaching service for Nottinghamshire County Council. The focus for the research developed in two important ways. Firstly, through discussion with a number of interested parties, in particular the Principal Educational Psychologist and those psychologists delivering Solution Focused Coaching.

They expressed a clear interest in knowing more about what is important in effective coaching- in particular the views of those teachers who have been recipients of coaching support. Secondly, the emerging children's services context has made it important that EPs establish a warrant for psychological practices- a dialogue is thus required to develop models of practice that are robust and flexible (Leadbetter, 2004) and to enable cohesion between what service users are looking for and what educational psychology offers (Kelly and Grey, 2000). In these two contexts vital information that appears to be absent is an understanding of what works in educational psychology practice from the perspective of teachers (Timmins, Bham, McFadden and Ward, 2006).

In terms of framing the research questions it should be noted that both the psychological coaching model and epistemological commitments of this study draw on a particular philosophical stance- social constructionism. Contemporary social constructionism is largely concerned with the "construction" of the world in language and thus the primary site of construction is not within, but among people (Gergen, 2006). Within this study an emphasis is placed on a social constructionist view of knowledge and in this view knowledge is seen as the by-product of communal relationships; this will be detailed later. A key aim in this study is for the author to bring a "reflexive" stance to the development of Solution Focused Coaching. By foregrounding the voice of those who EPs coach within the social constructionist dialogue the "reflexive" question brings into sharp focus an evaluative analysis of a psychologist's own investments and constructions and the part such investments and constructions play in the phenomena in question, in this case collaborative working between a psychologist and a member of school staff through Solution Focused Coaching. Asserting this stance, and introducing the epistemological basis of the study and the research questions, brings into play terms that, within this study, are used with a particular technical emphasis in mind. Some of these terms are used infrequently, and such terms will be defined along the way. One such term is "construction", or viewpoint, which in this study relates specifically to the methodology employed, Q-methodology, where the data are, literally, what participants make of a pool of items germane to the topic of concern when

asked to rank them; in other words, the pattern they express, and the subjectivity they make operant (Stainton Rogers, 1995). Social constructionists see the influence of the researchers' views as an inevitable part of a social process, which cannot be avoided, and which is best recognised and reflected upon (reflexivity). By making use of Q-methodology, the account foregrounded in this study will give voice to the coachee's views, and act as a spur to the practice of solution focused coaching. A reflexive narrative actively foregrounds the voice of the researchers own constitutive role in the production of knowledge. Although confined within the writing conventions of the discipline of psychology, with its familiar "literature review," "method," "research results" and "discussion" sections that may act against my own reflexivity, the researchers presence will come in the form of an active research voice within the thesis at the point of the discussion of the results.

5.6. The research questions

Stober, Wildflower and Drake (2006) called for coaches to 'begin integrating evidence from both coaching-specific research and related disciplines, their own expertise, and an understanding of the uniqueness of each client...into a coherent body of knowledge that applies to and guides coaching' and Grant (2006), a leading voice in the field of coaching psychology, identified the tenets of SFBT as a potential basis for the emerging field of coaching psychology. The study responds to these ideas, and the research questions are as follows. In respect of school staff that have taken part in solution focused coaching:

1. How do coachees view effective solution focused coaching?
2. In what ways may these views inform psychological coaching practice?

One of the particularly emancipatory aims of this study is to engage "service users", the coachees, in the construction of the very solution focused psychological coaching process they participate in. The hopes of this study are

that coachees' views become operant and, through theorizing what is learnt, that Solution Focused Coaching would become more effective and efficient. The study, therefore, adheres to the notion that the client is, indeed, the expert.

5.7. The focus of the literature review

Within this context the literature review will start by considering a historical overview of the EP role. Within the academic literature two key and differing EP roles have been constructed in the UK; namely 'consultation' and 'traditional' educational psychology (e.g. Gutkin and Curtis, 1990; Wagner, 1995, Ledbetter, 2006). The role relationships and practices within these roles will be detailed and considered.

Secondly the literature review will consider the emerging field of coaching psychology. This contemporary and emergent psychological sub-discipline will be considered and links made between psychological coaching and 'consultation'.

Finally the review will explore SFBT. Grant (2006) identified the tenets of SFBT as a potential basis for the emerging field of coaching psychology and therefore SFBT will be considered in detail. A summary of the history of the approach, and a presentation of its key characteristics, as well as the emergence of Solution Focused EP practice, will be provided. This will also help to clarify the intervention at the heart of the study, Solution Focused Coaching.

6). Literature Review

6.1. Introduction to the Literature Review

6.1.1. *A historical subtext to the changing EP role*

From Chazan, Moore, Williams, and Wright's *The Practice of Educational Psychology* (1974) to the recent review of the functions and contributions of EPs (DfES, 2006), attempts to capture what EPs do (or should do) have been fraught with difficulties. The re-constructing movement in Educational Psychology in the UK in the 1970s proposed a shift from a medically oriented, diagnostic model of educational psychology practice towards intervention and change (Gillham, 1978). Since then EPs have developed various frameworks by which they attempt to understand service users' presenting problems and assist them in a process of searching for solutions and change. Many models have focused on problem-centred or problem-solving approaches (e.g. Cameron and Stratford, 1987; Frederickson et al., 1991; Monsen, Graham, Frederickson and Cameron, 1998; Sigston, 1992, 1996) with later publications integrating such practice into consultation frameworks (Wagner and Gillies, 2001) that have underlying and often explicit models that may be described as systemic, interactionist and constructionist (Watkins, 2000).

Despite these attempts at addressing the call for change, esteemed members of the profession have perceived a need for further reformulation of educational psychology practice (Leyden, 1999) and there is contemporary evidence of a huge variability in EP practice (Stobie, 2002). Indeed constructions of EPs' working practice in the 1990s and beyond seemed united in their perceptions of the nature of EPs' practice: it was varied and lacked consensus within as well as across services (Stobie, 2002).

Whilst contemporary EPs are trained to be systemic thinkers, a constructionist and complex perspective that stands in contrast to a positivist and scientific posture (Kelly, 2006), practitioner researchers have historically reported the impact of changes in academic theory and perspectives on practice as

“imperceptible” (Thompson, 1996). Much more recently, it has been suggested that traditional educational psychology practice- with a leaning towards an implicit, subjective, and child deficit approach- persists despite powerful evidence supporting the ways of working that are holistic, systemic and collaborative (Kelly, 2006). Ashton and Roberts’ (2006) recent study into the EP role articulates an understanding of the construct of a “traditional” EP role which is tacit and related to such notions as individual assessment, the use of closed tests, advice giving and involvement in statutory assessment and very much still in practice. There is further evidence that this role continues, with Leadbetter (2006) suggesting that a “traditional” approach is still apparent in the approach of EPs and, moreover, centres on a child deficit model. This is an approach that has now has been brought into question for nearly 30 years (Boyle and Lauchlan, 2009), and one that still persists.

In summary, whilst distinguished voices have called for ‘change’ through a proactive and strategic application of psychology in the Local Authority context, instead of Local Authority policy directing EPs’ practice (Leyden, 1999) it has been suggested that “tradition may have an iron grip on educational psychology in practice” (Kelly, 2006: 2). Given this context there is a clear necessity for EP research to focus in on these issues.

6.1.2. Conclusion of the Introduction to the Literature Review

The role of the EP is well documented (e.g. Cameron, 2006; Farrell et al, 2006; Scottish Executive Education Department, 2002). Warrants for psychological practice appear to be often locally convened. EPs appear to be taking a contingent approach to how they practice (Stobie, 2002; Kelly and Gray, 2000) and critics of the profession might even suggest that the warrants for practice are often tacit, perhaps even absent. It is perhaps fair to claim “tradition has an iron grip on the profession” (Kelly, 2006: 2).

In recent deliberations it has been suggested that the “traditional” approach to educational psychology will erode even the most sophisticated and effective training strategies that pursue change (Kelly, 2006). Educational psychology may simply be given to self-reflection and be, perhaps, resigned to the continual exploration of the impact of theories and perspectives on efficacy in practice (McKay, 1999). The growing body of literature that relates to the transformation described by Gillham (1978) explores not only the course of alternative perspectives and role development in the profession, but catalogues, it seems, a resistance to change that is steadfast (Stobie, 2002).

6.2. The Role of the EP

6.2.1. The “Traditional” EP role

As the profession of educational psychology moves on within the context of *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004) there is a value in knowing where it came from and the potential opportunities that lie ahead. The history of the profession provides useful insights into the dominant paradigms that have influenced the work of EPs over the years and it is suggested that educational psychology in the UK has been influenced by psychometrics, the child guidance movement, and a central place for behavioural approaches (Leadbetter, 2006), whilst alongside this there has been a long standing discourse within the profession that emphasises a progressive and collaborative model of educational psychology training and working practice (Gillham, 1978).

Looking back at the literature, Chazan et al's *The Practice of Educational Psychology* (1974) reflects a period where the EP role was as expert assessor of the *individual child*, and moreover expert assessor of what was wrong “within” the individual child. The development of special educational facilities and the associated mental testing movement provided the initial impetus for the development of the profession of educational psychology (Dessent, 1978). Accounts of the historical development of school psychological services also note that the child guidance movement led to the location of the EP in a psychiatric clinic setting, and contributed to the further constriction of the role to that of tester and the prevalent psychological model one of individual pathology (Dessent, 1978).

The profile of EP work which was associated with that position was identified in the Summerfield Report (DES, 1968) and listed as a preponderance of individual clinical, diagnostic and therapeutic work, and a relative absence of advisory, preventative or in-service training work.

The Summerfield Report identified such a profile as a “problem”, and yet 10 years later, Gillham (1978) described the very same profile of professional activity. Gillham proposed a re-structuring of educational psychology to promote work at a systems level and the trend since then appears to be one of broad confusion (Stobie, 2002) with echoes of history easily detected in the present, despite the questioning of the relevance of the traditional model of educational psychology.

Cameron and Monsen (2005) suggest that at the beginning of the twenty first century many EP practitioners appear to be experiencing something of an identity crisis, and the distance the profession have travelled since the late nineteen seventies, when there was a clarion call for the transformation of educational psychology practice, seems debatable. Legislation in relation to education, and especially to special educational needs, has continued to embody a focus on individual assessment (Wagner, 2000) and there has been suggestion that EPs have, to some extent, colluded with this for a range of reasons. For example, Wagner (2000) argues that the statutory assessment role has provided EPs with a degree of professional security that EPs have, to some degree, taken comfort in.

6.2.2. Psychological Consultation

These professional difficulties that have beset educational psychology have not been entirely without a cohesive response, with the collaborative and systemic ways of working that have featured in the profession for many years emerging as models of whole-service delivery, often referred to as a consultation model. Leadbetter (2006) suggests that the adoption of a consultation model often appears to be interchangeable with the notion of moving on from the “traditional” model. Similarly, Clarke and Jenner (2006) suggest that the agenda for moving away from the “traditional” paradigm of child deficit, and the various

activities that reflect that paradigm, to one of problem solving and finding solutions, is what consultation is trying to achieve.

Indeed, the DfEE (2000) review of educational psychology practice strongly commends consultation as an appropriate model for practice. Watkins (2000) looked at the emergence of consultation, and describes how colleagues in large numbers of services have run “in-house” development sessions on consultation and how the majority of initial training courses address the development of consultation.

Given that consultation appears to be an attempt by EPs to define a new role, the understanding of the term “consultation” has significant implications. However this is not always clear. Some use the term consultation in contrast to “direct work” with individual children (DfES, 2006), for example, work concerned with organisational aspects of schools. Sometimes consultation is included as part of a menu of activities an Educational Psychology Service can offer, or conversely it is presented as being the entirety of what an Educational Psychology Service does (Wagner, 2000).

Conoley and Conoley (1982) outline four models of consultation: mental health consultation; behavioural consultation; advocacy consultation; and process consultation. They describe what is involved in each model, its realisation in practice and ethical considerations. It has been suggested (Wagner, 2001) that educational psychology consultation may have some elements of the four models described by Conoley and Conoley (1982), however, as Wagner (2000) notes, no individual model is adequate for the EPs context, that of the local authority, due to the multi-faceted nature of the EP role.

It is important therefore to outline consultation as understood in the context of this study. Firstly, it is important to note that the terms “collaborative consultation” and consultation are considered as being interchangeable. In the simplest sense consultation is a *‘special kind of conversation- one which facilitates solutions’* (McNab, 2009 in Hick, Kershner and Farrell, 2009). Others

in the profession have considered working definitions of consultation as it relates to the delivery of an EPS. The work of Wagner (1995, 2000) on school consultation has provided much practical direction around what a model of consultation as service delivery might well look and there are a number of articles, written by EPs, using and developing a consultative approach in their respective services (Dickinson, 2000; Kerslake and Roller, 2000; Munro, 2000). Hanko (1999) stresses the potential value of a psychotherapeutic underpinning to collaborative consultation with teachers, whilst Wagner (2000) foregrounds a collaborative consultative model of EP practice, which is a voluntary, collaborative, non-supervisory approach, established to aid the functioning of the system and its inter-related systems that provide the context for the issue or contexts at hand. Wagner (2000, p.11) describes consultation thus:

Consultation in an Educational Psychology Service context aims to bring about the difference at the level of the individual child, group/class or organisational/whole school level. It involves a process in which concerns are raised, and a collaborative and recursive process is initiated that combines joint problem exploration, assessment, intervention and review.

The term consultation can therefore be interpreted as an attempt to encapsulate constructs, actions and processes that make up a discourse of professional EP practice. It can be the basis for organising, leading, developing and evaluating the work of an EPS. Consultation can therefore address problems at any level: individual children, classes or groups of children, aspects of the organisation or functioning of schools, staff development. Consultation can be used within an EPS, or to address problems facing Local Authorities. If an Educational Psychology Service uses this model of service delivery, everything the service does could be accurately described as collaborative consultation.

This understanding of consultation contrasts with the recent use of the term in the DfES (2006) review of the functions and contribution of EPs in which consultation is presented as being a part of a menu of activities that an Educational Psychology Service may offer. This locates consultation as part of *what* EPs do; in contrast, the definition proposed above appears to be firmly

seated within a discourse of *how* to “do” educational psychology. That would mean that consultation is a term for describing how EPs go about bringing about change- the confidence to assert this is derived from explications of the basis of consultation being a psychological perspective that is systemic, interactionist and constructionist (Watkins, 2000) and the assertion by EPs who practice consultation that these models relate to the psychology of bringing about beneficial change *in whatever context and at whatever level* (Wagner, 2000).

EPs who work in this way may use, in the process of consultation with the relevant adults (Gutkin and Curtis, 1990), methods derived from therapeutic systems such as solution-focused brief therapy, personal construct psychology, and narrative therapy (Wagner, 2001). Consultation therefore can possibly be described as a process more akin to therapy than to mere discussion (Hanko, 1999). It will even allow for EPs working therapeutically to sit in the same theoretical framework as those involved in organizational change at Local Authority level. The power of such an approach, where activities at all levels and contexts are underpinned by shared psychologies, is clear to see.

6.2.3. A new horizon- the EP as coaching psychologist

As the theory, practice and research of consultation has developed a focus has been on the role the psychologist takes in relation to concerns that schools and other hold about their work with children (Gutkin and Curtis, 1990). As aforementioned it has been suggested “tradition may have an iron grip on educational psychology in practice” (Kelly, 2006: 2). The long held view that educational psychology can only reach its full potential through a turn towards a holistic, systemic and collaborative way of being (Gillham, 1978) stands in contrast to the evidence that whilst EPs may be wishing to move on from the “traditional” role, and the deficit discourse and limitations it brings with it, there exists a regressive current that maintains such ways of working (Stobie, 2002).

Whilst McNab's (2001) elegant description of the EP hosting a "special kind of conversation- one that facilitates solutions" may capture the practice of effective consultation many EPs will identify with the challenge of establishing consultation. A departure from a focus on within-child causes that are associated with the traditional EP role would be a welcome change for many – as the traditional role is an approach that has left both teachers, parents and EPs dissatisfied (Lewis, 1997).

It is the authors view that a coaching psychologist role may bring the "appropriate professional values, service structures and individual opportunities for developing new knowledge and skills" (Leyden, 1999: 227) that have been seen as pre-requisites to the turn towards a systemic orientation and final deconstruction of the "traditional" EP orientation.

Coaching has now been recognised as a powerful model of teacher professional development (Hallam, Rhamie and Shaw, 2006) and to the EP it offers an invitation to work holistically, systemically and collaboratively with teachers, connecting problems to the system. Recently teacher coaching has been articulated within the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Strategy. Nottinghamshire was one of the 25 pilot Local Authorities as one part of the school improvement strand of support for schools. A number of EPS' have engaged in this work through the development of a psychological model of coaching, and moreover the application of a solution focused coaching model (for example Devon (REFERENCE) and Nottinghamshire (REFERENCE). The pilot, its aim and framework will be considered in due course, though the detailed evaluation of the pilot which was undertaken by Hallam et al (2006) is worth noting at this point, as it begins to provide the justification for the EP giving consideration to the coaching role and the benefits it can bring. Hallam et al's (2006) evaluation found the coaching provided through the pilot was highly successful and valued by teachers. It was reported that the "supportive, collegial, non-judgmental model gave teachers confidence to admit to problems and be open and reflective about finding solutions to them" (p.6). The majority of head teachers believed that the coaching had improved the skills and

confidence of teachers in promoting positive behaviour and 95% of teachers believed that it had improved their skills and 100% their confidence. There was a perceived positive impact on children's behaviour, the working climate in the school, children's well-being, confidence, communication skills, social skills and control of emotions. Some impact was reported on learning and home-school relationships.

Overall, the teacher coaching was highly valued:

'The fantastic thing is that they want to do it themselves now. Staff are going to have a training day to train them in teacher coaching so that they can do it for each other - peer support. The teacher coaching has been the bit that has been the most highly evaluated. People love this, as it is so refreshing not to have an OFSTED style interview and to have something that is solution focused and supportive. The pay off for someone's self esteem improvement is enormous. I don't know how you would measure that. The feedback from the teachers is great. We need to develop this after the project has gone, we can't just let it go.' (LA co-ordinator p.51, Hallam, 2006)

Such a model and way of working is the concern of this thesis, though more specifically it is the use of a SFBT approach in a coaching-psychologist role. The solution focused field, its development, tenets and application by EPs and in schools will be discussed later in this literature review and the Nottinghamshire Solution Focused Coaching intervention will be detailed at the end of this literature review. Firstly though the emergence of psychological coaching and the coaching psychologist role will be outlined.

6.3. Coaching Psychology

6.3.1. Background

Psychologists have been involved in coaching for many years (Filippi, 1968) and the notion of using validated psychological principles to enhance life experiences and work performance in normal, non-clinical populations goes back to at least Parkes (1955). The 1996 special edition of *Consulting Psychology Journal: Research and Practice* dedicated to executive coaching and consultation was a landmark publication on coaching in the psychological academic literature. Contemporary coaching psychology as a specific academic sub-discipline can be considered to have come into being with the establishment of the Coaching Psychology Unit at the University of Sydney in 2000 and the offering of the first postgraduate degree in coaching psychology (Grant, 2006). In 2005 City University, London, established a Coaching Psychology Unit, which has been another important step in further developing the academic underpinnings of coaching psychology. Calls for the development of a specialised systemised body of psychological theory and practice go back some years (e.g. Sperry, 1993). This had cumulated in the establishment of *International Coaching Psychological Review* in 2006. The ICPR has provided a unified psychological voice informing the current development of the coaching arena.

6.3.2. Defining coaching and coaching psychology

The roots of coaching psychology stretch back to the humanistic traditions of psychology (e.g. Maslow, 1968) and are related to the factors underpinning the emergence of the Positive Psychology Movement (Grant and Palmer, 2002). The work of Anthony Grant, such as the seminal work "Towards a Psychology of Coaching" in 2001, offers a comprehensive backdrop to any review of psychological coaching. Grant distinguishes coaching from therapy, mentoring

and training, and is clear that coaching is not about the remediation of “dysfunctionality”; nor is it about telling people what to do or a psychological coach having domain-specific expertise (Grant, 2001).

Definitions of coaching vary considerably (Palmer and Whybrow, 2005) and have been the subject of much debate over the last 60 years (e.g. D’Abate, Eddy and Tannenbaum, 2003; Kilburg, 1996; Mace, 1950) and the different applications of coaching across the context of work and life require a consideration of each. Initially though there are some distinctions to be drawn between coaching and coaching psychology. Palmer and Whybrow (2005) suggest some generally accepted definitions of coaching which can be used to illustrate the difference between coaching and coaching psychology:

- Coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximize his or her own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them – a facilitation approach (Whitmore, 1992)
- Coaching – directly concerned with the immediate improvement of performance and development of skills by a form of tutoring or instruction – an instructional approach (Downey, 1999)
- Coaching – The art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another – a facilitation approach

Whereas coaching psychology focuses on the psychological theory and practice:

- Coaching psychology is for enhancing performance in work and personal life domains with normal, non-clinical populations, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established therapeutic approaches (Grant and Palmer, 2002)

It has also been suggested that the coaching process can be understood as being underpinned by the principles guiding effective adult learning (such as Dailey, 1984; and the seminal work of Knowles, 1970). Such principals bring

into play ideas such as coachees being autonomous, with a foundation of life experiences and knowledge from which they are able to generalise, having a readiness to learn and engage in reflective practice, and the notion that coachees wish to be treated with respect.

Blunkert (2005) suggests that central to most definitions of coaching are the assumptions of an absence of serious mental health problems in the client, emphasising Grant's (2001) notion of a distinction between psychological coaching and therapy. Berg and Szabo (2005), in their application of a solution focused approach to coaching, offer the notion that the client is resourceful, and Hudson (1999) that they be willing to engage in finding solutions. Greene and Grant (2003) suggest that coaching is an outcome-focused activity, which seeks to foster self-directed learning through collaborative goal setting, brainstorming and action planning.

Grant (2001) summarises that coaching enhances aspects of both the clients personal and professional lives through a collaborative, individualized, solution-focused, results orientated, systematic, stretching, self-directed learning dialogue and should be evidence-based, and incorporate ethical professional practice. With these concepts in mind Grant proposed that life or personal coaching be defined as follows:

Personal or life coaching is a solution-focused, results-orientated systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of the coachee's life experience and performance in various domains (as determined by the coachee), and fosters the self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee (Grant, 2001: 8).

Coaching in the workplace, whether for executives or non-executives, can therefore be defined as follows:

Workplace coaching is a solution-focused, result-orientated systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance and the self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee. In summary, the core

constructs of coaching include: a collaborative, egalitarian rather than authoritarian relationship between coach and coachee; a focus on constructing solutions not analysing problems; the assumption that clients are capable and not dysfunctional; an emphasis on collaborative goal setting between the coach and coachee; and the recognition that although the coach has expertise in facilitating learning through coaching, they do not necessarily need domain-specific expertise in the coachee's chosen area of learning. Further, to expedite goal attainment the coaching process should be a systematic goal-directed process, and to facilitate sustained change it should be directed at fostering the on-going self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee (Grant, 2001: 8-9).

Grant suggests that there are some exciting challenges from both within and without the profession of psychology in relation to coaching psychology (2006). Firstly, the issue of distinguishing the work and professional practices of coaching psychologists from coaches who are not psychologists. Secondly, is an exploration of the place of coaching psychology relative to other psychological sub-disciplines. Thirdly, Grant suggests the development of a research and practice agenda for coaching psychology.

Grant's (2006) challenges outlined above appear to mirror, to some degree, the current questions being asked of educational psychology practice. Firstly, that EPs working in children's services distinguish their work and practices from others who are not psychologists. Secondly, the place of educational psychology relative to other psychological sub-disciplines, e.g. clinical psychology, and finally the development of a robust research and practice agenda for educational psychology. A reconstruction of Grant's challenges suggests a synergy between coaching psychology and contemporary educational psychology.

6.3.3. Towards a psychology of coaching

There have been long standing calls for psychology to broaden its relevance to society in ways that would help the general public in a positive manner in their day to day lives (Miller, 1969). However, as Laungani (1999) suggests, traditional psychology as a research discipline and an applied profession has not risen to the challenge of meeting the needs of the broad adult population. Recently there has been considerable interest in a positive psychology that focuses on developing human strengths and competencies (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder and McCullough, 2000). Positive psychology can be understood as a “the scientific study of optimal functioning, focusing on aspects of the human condition that lead to happiness, fulfillment, and flourishing” (Linley and Harrington, 2005:13). Taxonomies of human strength are now emerging (Peterson and Seligman, 2004) and the positive psychology arena thus far has shed light on areas such as the relationship between various constructs (Lazarus, 2003) for example, the relationship between self-concordance, well-being, goal attainment and goal satisfaction (Sheldon and Elliot, 1999), and the measurement of constructs such as well-being (Ryff and Keyes, 1996).

Grant (2006) suggests that positive psychology will prove to be an important theoretical basis for many coaching psychologists. One important issue stemming from the use of clinically-derived techniques is that such techniques have a pathological orientation and history– they tend to be concerned with diagnosis and identifying and ameliorating dysfunctional issues, and a problem-focused approach (Gergen and McNamee, 1992). Yet coaching populations are not clinical clients with clinical problems and positive psychologies demand an orientation that takes a different starting point. For coaching clients the use of pathology-laden terminology and a clinical approach can be seen as alienating (Drewery & Winslade, 1997) and may, as Walter and Peller (2000) assert, even contribute to the creation and maintenance of problem behaviour.

6.3.4. Conclusion

It has been postulated that psychology has a genuine and important contribution to make to professional coaching in terms of adapting and validating existing models for use with normal populations (Starker, 1990; Grant, 2006) and Stober, Wildflower and Drake (2006) called for coaches to 'begin integrating evidence from both coaching-specific research and *related disciplines*, their own expertise, and an understanding of the uniqueness of each client...into a coherent body of knowledge that applies to and guides coaching'. Grant (2001), a leading exponent of psychological coaching, suggests that the principles of Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) might actually provide the essential constructs underpinning a psychology of coaching and suggests that one way to circumvent the potential problems associated with the use of problem- focused clinical techniques is to integrate a solution-focused approach (de Shazer, 1988, 1994) into a cognitive-behavioral framework, and use this to form a basis for a psychology of coaching. It is this type of coaching that is the focus of this study.

In conclusion, the coaching model studied herein is based on the application of SFBT to the workplace in a form of Solution Focused Coaching. There appears to be links between the emergence of positive psychology, coaching psychology and SFBT (and its many iterations and applications), with observable synergies and cross pollination across these domains, with a shared focus upon how psychology can be used in situations not about the remediation of dysfunctional behaviour, but rather about the unlocking of potential. Crucially, it has been suggested that the central tenets of SFBT may well prove to be the essential constructs underpinning a psychology of coaching (Grant, 2001). In this study SFBT is the foundation of the coaching psychologist 's intervention. Therefore a detailed consideration of the basis and application of SFBT is provided below.

6.4. Solution Focused Brief Therapy

6.4.1. Background and Introduction

SFBT began to develop in Milwaukee in 1980 and was given its name in 1982 (De Shazer, 1985). Originally the product of team effort, SFBT has evolved into its present form over the past 30 years. It has origins in various forms of brief therapy, which in turn evolved from the systematic and strategic family therapy traditions in the United States of America (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974; Watzlawick, 1978). A key historical influence was the work of Milton Erickson whose work was highlighted by the foundation of the Mental Research Institute (MRI) formed in Palo Alto, California in 1958, and the publication of *Strategies of Psychotherapy* (Haley, 1963). A brief consideration of Erickson's work gives useful context to the emergence of SFBT, hints at where SFBT came from and also how it could be seen as the basis for psychological coaching. O'Connell (1998) cites the following as being central characteristics of Erickson's approach:

- Use of a non-pathological model: Problems are not indications of pathology or dysfunction, rather they stem from a limited repertoire of behaviour.
- A focus on constructing solutions: The therapist/coach facilitates the construction of solutions rather than trying to understand the etiology of the problem.
- Use of existing client resources: The therapist/coach helps the client recognise and utilise resources of which they were unaware.
- Utilization: The mobilisation and utilisation of any part of the client's life experience that could help resolve the presenting problem.
- Action-orientation: There is a fundamental expectation on the therapist/coach's part that positive change will occur, and therapist/coach expects the client to act to create this change outside of the coaching session.

- Clear, specific goal setting: Setting of attainable goals within a specific time frame.
- Assumption that change can happen in a short period of time: This stands in contrast to therapeutic schools that assume that the problem must be worked on over a long period of time.
- Strategic: Therapeutic/coaching interventions are designed specifically for each client.
- Future-orientation: The emphasis is more on the future (what the client wants to have happen) than the present or the past.
- Enchantment: The therapy/coaching process is designed and conducted in a way that is attractive and engaging for the client.
- Active and influential therapist: The therapist/coach is openly influential.

Erickson's work provided a wave of evolution in therapy that SFBT was to continue. The original setting and composition of the Milwaukee team that developed SFBT had a profound influence on its development, and the team members came from a variety of academic disciplines, including medicine, psychology, social work, education, sociology, philosophy, linguistics, and even biology and engineering (Berg and Dolan, 2001). Throughout the development of SFBT, the two people who endured and remained most committed to developing the model into its present form were Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg.

Steve de Shazer, who died in 2005, is rightly regarded as the father of the solution-focused approach to people's difficulties that can be described as non-pathological and collaborative (de Shazer, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1993; Berg, 1994). The model was developed deductively and De Shazer and Berg described it as 'experimental and research orientated' (De Shazer and Berg, 1997: 121). The approach was originally developed in direct opposition to traditional psychotherapeutic premises about people, problems of living, and the solutions to those problems (Berg and Dolan, 2001).

6.4.2. The central characteristics of SFBT

Steve de Shazer and colleagues at Milwaukee's Brief Family Therapy Center developed an approach to therapy that was explicitly solution-focused and this distinguished the approach. De Shazer and colleagues (Weiner-Davis, de Shazer & Gingerich, 1987; Berg, 1991; de Shazer, 1988, 1991; de Shazer et al, 1986; O'Hanlon & Weiner Davis, 1989) built on Erickson's work and, in short, discovered that clients achieved their goals quicker by talking more about their hopes for the future and their strengths, rather than describing their problem-peppered past.

SFBT broke with some fundamental rules in psychotherapy, most importantly that there is a causal connection between problem and solution, the classical expert-client/patient relationship, and the focus on gaining insight into the problem before it can be resolved and change arrived at. De Shazer also observed that small changes have a ripple effect and lead to larger changes in the environment of the client. As Murphy (1996) went on to emphasize, "big problems do not need big solutions".

De Shazer (1985) suggests that for the finding of a solution, it is useful to develop a 'vision' of a future or 'one of a set of futures', that is perceived as being more satisfactory and fulfilling, and the therapist's task is to assist the client in developing 'an expectation of change and solution' and the use of the unlocking 'skeleton' key. Furthermore, they discovered that by amplifying the "solution" behaviour and reinforcing it by giving compliments, the client began to do more of it, thus outweighing the "problem" patterns.

In a series of efforts to map the structure of therapy, de Shazer (1985, 1988) identified exceptions to presenting problems as fundamental to this solution-focused approach. Instead of exploring the initial complaints of clients and maintaining a problem-focus, de Shazer instituted a variety of strategies for inquiring about and reinforcing examples of solution through focusing on those

instances in which clients behaved in ways consistent with their desired ends. This work, it seems, has more to do with the client examining 'exceptions' (i.e. when the door was perhaps momentarily open), successes and progression towards the 'vision' or goals. The operative assumption is that somewhere there is a context in which clients do not enact their problems. Once this can be identified, it is a candidate for a constructed solution.

By circumventing traditional procedures of evaluating and exploring past problems and by targeting specific, desired patterns as objectives, solution-focused therapy was able to address the concerns of clients in a brief fashion, generally lasting well under 10 sessions in duration. De Shazer (1985) also emphasizes the co-operative nature of the therapist-client relationship as a means of progressing towards the future identified by the client, rather than the future identified by the therapist or psychologist.

These characteristics formed the basis of SFBT (de Shazer, 1988). Subsequent writings by O'Hanlon and Weiner-Davis (1989) and Walter and Peller (1992) have elaborated the SFBT model, making it one of the most popular brief approaches to therapy.

In short, in SFBT given that the client is presumed to have tried 'everything' to solve the complaints, there is no point in dwelling on and examining failed attempts at solutions. Instead, the focus is on how the clients will know when the problem is solved and what they are doing that is good for them. It is through this that the keys to solutions can be found. In the preface to his book *Keys To Solution In Brief Therapy* de Shazer (1985) provides a metaphor to encapsulate brief SFBT:

The complaints that clients bring to therapists are like locks in doors that open onto a more satisfactory life. The clients have tried everything they think is reasonable, right, and good, and what they have done was based on their true reality, but the door is still locked; therefore they think their situation is beyond solution. Frequently, this leads to greater and greater efforts to find out why the lock is the way it is or why it does not open. However, it seems clear that solutions are arrived at through

keys rather than through locks; and skeleton keys (of various sorts) work in many different kinds of locks. An intervention only needs to fit in such a way that the solution evolves. It does not need to match the complexity of the lock. Just because the complaint is complicated does not mean that the solution needs to be complicated.

(De Shazer, 1985: 15-16)

6.4.3. Psychological Theories Underpinning SFBT

Although there is 'no single accepted theory of solution-focused therapy' (Miller, Hubble and Duncan, 1996: 2) it is apparent that various theoretical assumptions underpin SFBT (see Figure 1). The crucial assumption made by SFBT is that therapy is more of an epistemological activity than a medical/therapeutic one (Walter and Peller, 2000) and that "we live in a world of meaning and language that is creational, social, and active," (Walter and Peller stress, 1996: 11). De Shazer (1988: 8) observed, "problems are problems because they are maintained. Problems are held together simply by their being described as problems", which again emphasizes the centrality of language and the languaging of life and of problems in life. In SFBT the identification between the client and the problem is broken, a break through which the individual gains the ability to do something different, discovering constructive patterns that become solutions and which importantly, in some sense, were already present in their life.

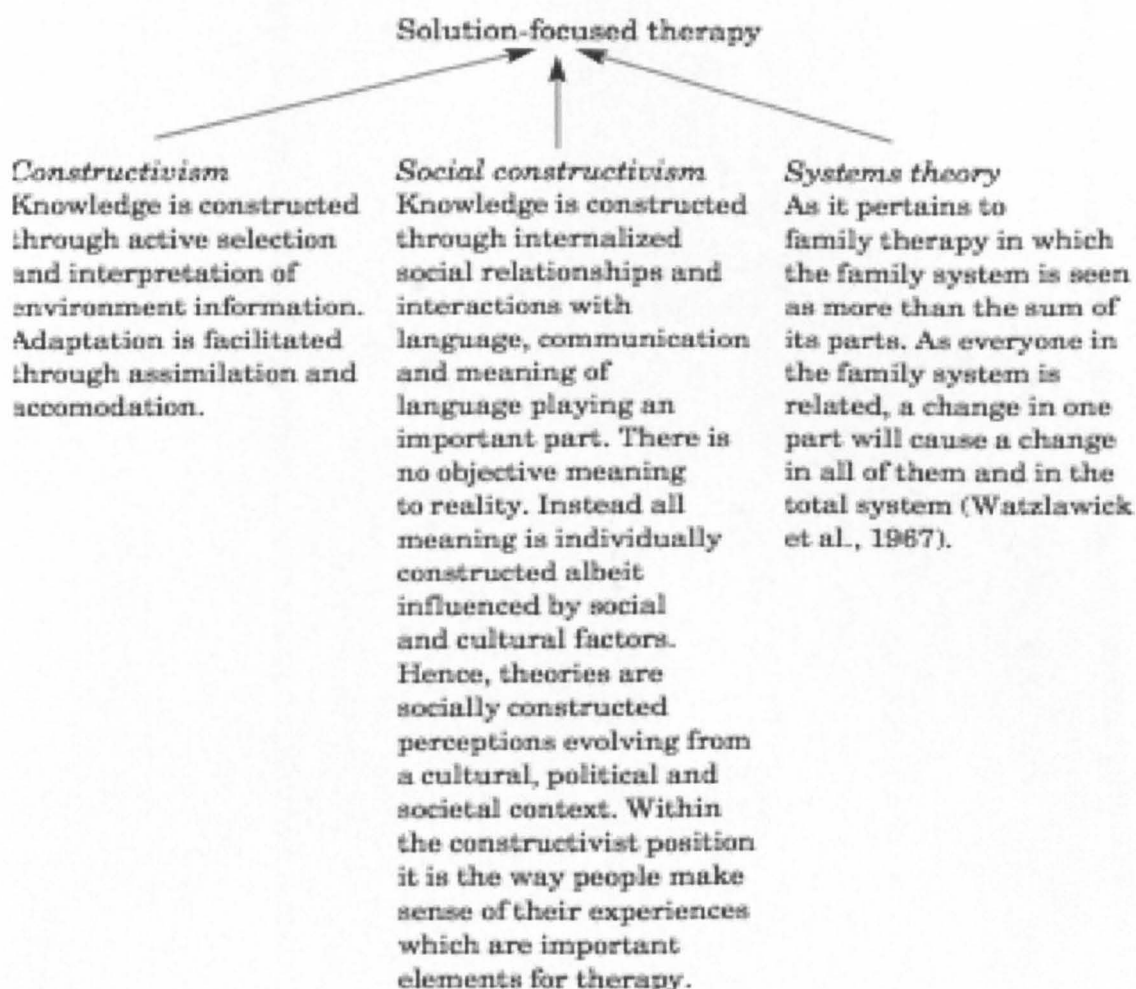


FIGURE -1 THEORIES UNDERPINNING SOLUTION-FOCUSED THERAPY (P.5 STOBIE, BOYLE AND WOOLFSON, 2005)

Given this discursive vantage point, with a central focus on language, it can be argued that SFBT draws heavily upon constructivism, and indeed it is upon social constructivism that solution-focused therapists have developed guiding principles for their practice that extend the initial work of de Shazer (e.g. Durrant, 1992, 1993)². The notion that the problems experienced by clients are not intrinsic to them, but the result of the ways in which they construe themselves and their world, connects with the Constructivist philosophical tradition that emphasizes perception as the result of active, interpretive processes mediated by people's experience, values, and beliefs. The 'client-

² It is important to note at this point that the terms constructionism and constructivism are often used interchangeably. Later in the study the point will be made that the epistemological basis for the study, social constructionism, is able to relate strongly to the epistemological basis for SFBT.

therapist collaboration' central to SFBT- where the therapist is responsible for helping the clients to identify what they want to achieve and how to accomplish those goals- is akin to the Vygotsky's Constructivist deliberations regarding the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1962).

Based upon such assumptions, solution-focused work has developed a number of methods, formulae and viewpoints, which can be used to assist to find solutions to their problems and attempt to help people re- construct "themselves". At this point it is worth considering the classical model of SFBT, as a precursor to then considering how solution-focused practice has evolved and also how it has manifest in EP practice.

6.4.4. Methods used in SFBT- the classical model

De Shazer and Berg (1997) outlined four characteristics of a classical SFBT session:

1. At some point in the first interview, the therapist will ask the 'Miracle Question'.
2. At least once during the first interview and at subsequent ones, the client will be asked to rate something on a scale of '0-10' or '1-10'.
3. At some point during the interview, the therapist will take a break.
4. After this intermission, the therapist will give the client some compliments which will sometimes (frequently) be followed by suggestion or homework task (frequently called an 'experiment').

(De Shazer and Berg, 1997: 123)

De Shazer and Berg go on to say that, for research purposes, if any or all of these four characteristics are missing we have to conclude that the therapist is not practicing SFBT.

6.4.5. How the classical model has been augmented over time

These classical characteristics have been augmented and built upon over time. In their review, Gingerich and Eisengart (2000) argue that certain specific techniques clearly distinguish SFBT as a modality and set out 7 distinctive criteria for SFBT:

- A search for pre-session change;
- Goal-setting;
- Use of the miracle question;
- Use of scaling questions;

- A search for exceptions;
- A consulting break;
- A message including compliments and a task.

Simon (1996) and O'Hanlon and Weiner-Davis (1989) make the important point that, despite its name, SFBT is less about solutions than about goals and possibilities. The client enters the collaboration with problems in the foreground of perception. SFBT attempts to shift this focus to the life that clients want to be living, and it places this in the foreground, which essentially places the goal and possibilities at the forefront of the work. Walter and Peller (1996) use the term "goaling" to describe this way in which individuals continually develop life possibilities, and in SFBT the objective is less of an end point. It is a process of evolving meaning, jointly guided by the participants, and guided by the client's best hopes.

6.4.6. The Appeal of SFBT as a change tool

There is a growing agreement across different ways of working, including psychology (Padesky 1993, Dummett 2005, Ingram and Synder 2006), narrative therapy (White and Epston 1989) and, indeed, solution focused approaches (de Shazer 1986) of the importance of attending to individuals' ideas, and focusing on strengths and resilience, when working to bring about change.

These ideas are backed by research. For example, Hubble, Duncan and Miller (1999) in a review of outcome studies found that client's utilizing their resources and experiencing a positive alliance with the worker accounted for the majority of the variance in treatment outcome. Other evidence includes that from the Multi-dimensional Family Prevention programme in the US, which found that families reluctant to engage in services were more likely to do so when practitioners asked about their goals for change (Becker, Hogue and Little, 2002). In another study O'Neil and McCashen (1991) found that when they

acknowledged family strengths, services users reported that they felt they were viewed more holistically.

These findings also appear to be replicated in situations where there are professional concerns. Brown (1996), and McKinnon (1992), both found that when service users involved with child protection services felt they had been given a say in matters and presented with options, they responded favorably. When the opposite happens families become alienated and disengage. Thoburn, Lewis and Shemmings (1995) found that parents were actively involved in 65% of cases where the outcome was good and only in 35% where the outcome was poor or there was no change.

An appealing aspect of SFBT is its emphasis on client strengths and assets. Gingerich and Eisengart (2000), in their review, note that the “solution-focus assumes clients want to change, have the capacity to envision change, and are doing their best to make change happen. Further, solution-focused therapists assume that the solution, or at least part of it, is probably already happening.” (p. 478). Given the appeal of SFBT, it is hardly surprising that it has been applied in a range of context. Next consideration will be given to how EPs have brought SFBT into their practice.

6.5. Solution Focused practice by EPs

During the last decade SFBT and a solution-focused orientation has surfaced in EP work (Boyle and Woolfson, 2005). Supporters of solution-focused practice in the UK have published in EP and counselling literature for example Murphy and Duncan (1997), Rhodes (1993) Rhodes and Ajmal (1995) and Thorne and Ivens (1999) in respect of its application in schools; Nash (1999) in regard to supervisory skills; O'Connell (1998) pertaining to counselling skills; Redpath and Harker (1999) extending solution-focused work beyond individual pupil level work to group-work, in-service training, teacher consultation and inter-agency meetings.

Whilst the use of various psychotherapeutic approaches has been promoted, including SFBT, as appropriate and useful for the practice of the EP (Boyle, 2007a), little is known about the use of solution-focused practice by UK EPs in terms of its effectiveness (Stobie, Boyle and Woolfson, 2005). There are no British evaluations about the effectiveness of solution-focused practice by EPs. In fact, there are few evaluation studies of the effectiveness of SFBT (e.g. Carr, 2000; Franklin et al., 2001; Gingerich and Eisengart, 2000; de Jong and Hopwood, 1996; McKeel, 1996).

A little more is known about the nature of the application of solution-focused approaches by EPs. Stobie et al (2005) undertook a small-scale computer-mediated exploratory survey examining the nature of SFBT practice by EPs and investigated whether and how solution-focused practice is evaluated and contributed to EPs' knowledge and skills base. This exploratory study was integrated into an overview of solution-focused therapy and a literature review of the application of solution-focused practice by EPs. The article proposed ways by which solution-focused practice could be evaluated by busy EP practitioners and therefore become potentially evidence-based. Figure 2 below (Stobie et al, 2005:12) provides an overview of the application of SFBT practice by EPs as constructed by Stobie et al.

<i>Study</i>	<i>Rhodes (1993)</i>	<i>Murphy (1994)</i>	<i>Ajmal and Rhodes (1995)</i>	<i>Franklin et al. (2001)</i>
Type of practice	Single case study 5-year-old male	Two single case studies: (1) 12-year-old female (2) 14-year old female	Two single case studies: (1) 14-year-old female with special educational needs	Seven single case studies
Criteria for selection	Referral to EP	Referral to EP	Referral to EP	Learning challenged plus behavioural problems
Selection measure	None	None	None	Conners Teaching Rating Scale
Research design	None	None	None	Single case AB Design
Setting	Infant class	Secondary school	Secondary school	5th and 6th Grade
Problem	Behaviour problems	(1) Behaviour problems (2) Non-attendance	(1) Low confidence as a learner (2) Reading and spelling	Learning and behavioural problems
Intervention	With class teacher	(1) With teacher and counsellor (2) With EP	Not reported	Research/therapy team of four; consultation with teachers
Methods used	Exception questions; goal identification scaling questions; compliments teacher/ EP collaboration	(1) Goal identification (2) Exception questions; goal identification	(1) Goal identification scaling questions; (2) Exception questions	Exceptions; goal identification tasks; solution-focused scaling questions; hypothetical questions compliments; miracle question
Evaluation	Significant improvements reported by teacher after 5 months; classroom observation by EP	(1) Decrease in attention-seeking behaviour reported by teacher/counsellor (2) Attendance rate improved from 40 percent to 80 percent	(1) Not reported (2) Not reported	Significant improvement reported on scores on Conners Teachers Rating Scales and Individualized rating scales

FIGURE -2 EXAMPLES OF SOLUTION-FOCUSED PRACTICE BY EPs (P.12 STOBIE, BOYLE AND WOOLFSON, 2005)

Whilst there appears to be little indication on what basis EPs decide to use solution-focused methods, and how they knew that these had resulted in change, nevertheless, some EPs appear to have embraced solution-focused practices across their work (Redpath and Harker, 1999). Common to many of the authors who have been quoted as using solution-focused practice in schools, is their concern that empirical investigation of school applications are required to evaluate evidence of its effectiveness.

The dearth of empirical evidence related to the EPs solution focused practice invites a wider look into outcome research relating to SFBT. There is one published systematic review of outcome research relating to SFBT (Gingerich and Eisengart, 2000) that has relevance to the work of EPs. The authors identified 15 controlled studies of the outcomes from SFBT, with four of the studies involving children/young persons as participants; Geil, (1998), cited in

Gingerich and Eisengart, (2000); LaFountain and Garner, (1996) cited in Gingerich and Eisengart, (2000); Littrell, Malia and Vanderwood, (1995); and Seagram, (1997) cited in Gingerich and Eisengart, (2000).

Geil's (1998) study using classroom-based observation revealed improvements in behaviour in the case of one of the three pupils allocated to the SFBT condition. This unpublished study compared the outcomes from behavioural consultation and SFBT in a sample of eight elementary school pupils with externalizing classroom behaviour problems, using single-case designs.

LaFountain and Garner (1996) reported small, but statistically significant improvements in measures of self-esteem in the case of the pupils involved in the groups, and 81 percent were reported by their counsellors to have achieved their goals. This work examined the effects of solution-focused group work in a study of the outcomes for 311 participants spread over elementary, middle and high schools with a range of presenting difficulties.

Littrell et al. (1995) found that SFBT was as successful as a problem-focused approach in alleviating high school student concerns following a single counselling session, based upon self-report Likert-scale outcome measures.

Finally, Seagram (1997), in a well-controlled unpublished study, reported lower rates of recidivism (20 percent versus 42 percent) at six months follow-up for adolescent offenders who had been involved in individual SFBT sessions.

These studies offer a small evidence base for an approach that is growing in its application to the school context, as we see in the next section.

6.5.1. The Value of SF approaches to Schools

The value of solution-focused approaches in school has been described as lying in a 'competency-based view of people as resourceful and capable of fostering a co-operative relationship between school staff and the parents and students with whom they work' (Murphy, 1996: 199). The aspect of time- limited involvement in case work makes it appealing to both school staff and EPs (Durrant, 1992.; Murphy, 1996; Murphy and Duncan, 1997; Redpath and Harker, 1999; Rhodes, 1993; Rhodes and Ajmal, 1995).

Murphy has suggested that EPs can address systemic problems in the school by means of solution-focused methods (1994) and that a SFBT approach may be useful in 'challenging the routine practice of working exclusively or primarily with students to resolve school-related behaviour problems' (1994: 200), and contributing to the much called for transformation of educational psychology towards a holistic, systemic and collaborative outlook (e.g. Gillham, 1978). Hallam, Rhamie and Shaw (2006) in the evaluation report for the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Strategy (REFERENCE) pilot reported that use of a solution focused coaching approach, with its emphasis on noticing and feeding back positives, was a factor that contributed to success within the school improvement strand of the pilot.

6.5.2. Conclusion of the literature review

The literature review has considered a historical overview of the EP role and within the academic literature two key and differing EP roles have been constructed in the UK; namely 'consultation' and 'traditional' educational psychology (e.g. Gutkin and Curtis, 1990; Wagner, 1995, Ledbetter, 2006). The role relationships and practices within these roles have been detailed and considered. The emerging field of coaching psychology as a contemporary and

emergent psychological sub-discipline has been considered and links made between psychological coaching and 'consultation'.

Anthony Grant (2006) identified the tenets of SFBT as a potential basis for the emerging field of coaching psychology and therefore SFBT was considered in detail. A summary of the history of the approach, and a presentation of its key characteristics, as well as the emergence of Solution Focused EP practice, has been be provided. This helps to clarify the psychological basis of the intervention at the heart of the study, Solution Focused Coaching.

The next section acts as a bridge between the literature review and methodology by outlining the Nottinghamshire Solution Focused Coaching model, the context and background to the work, the practical details of the intervention and how it is organised, delivered and evaluated.

7). The Nottinghamshire SFC model

7.1.1. Context and background

Solution Focused Coaching in Nottinghamshire was developed through the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Strategy pilot (REFERENCE) as part of the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service core and centrally funded service delivery. The Primary Behaviour and Attendance Strategy pilot took place from 2003-05 and involved 25 Local Authorities, including Nottinghamshire. The four strands of the pilot included a universal element providing professional development opportunities to all schools in the pilot authorities (the CPD strand); a targeted element providing focused support to schools where behaviour and attendance had been identified as key issues (the school improvement strand); a universal element providing curriculum work focusing on the social and emotional aspects of learning for all children in pilot schools (the curriculum materials or Social Emotional Aspects of Learning strand, or SEAL); and a targeted element providing group work for children needing extra help in this area, and their parents/carers (the small group interventions strand).

It is extremely salient to this study to note that within the evaluation of the strategy activities that were *particularly valued* were solution-focused problem solving approaches in relation to improving behaviour (Hallam, Rhamie and Shaw, 2006).

The pilot aimed to:

- enable schools in the pilot Local Authorities (LAs) to access high-quality professional development on behaviour and attendance issues;
- develop and test out models of LA support where behaviour and attendance were key school improvement issues;

- trial curriculum materials which develop children's social, emotional and behavioural skills and materials for school self-review and training in improving behaviour (SEAL);
- implement and evaluate small group interventions for children needing additional focused help with their social, emotional and behavioural skills;
- promote the development of a common approach across the 25 participating LAs and the Department's Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP) LAs.

Solution Focused Coaching formed part of the school improvement strand. LA's were funded to employ a 'teacher coach' to work with existing services (educational psychology and behaviour support) in schools experiencing difficulty. This was to be achieved using a systematic process of audit, action plan, and professional development that included on-the-job solution-focused coaching.

The evaluations of the strategy aimed to test out the effectiveness in relation to:

- improvements in behaviour, attendance and attainment for individual children;
- teacher skills and confidence;
- and the promotion of effective whole school approaches to positive behaviour, attendance, and improvements in attainment.

Emerging best practice, particularly for the more innovative measures, was identified as was their sustainability within schools and LAs, and transferability to other LAs. Nottinghamshire was one of small number of LAs who developed coaching interventions with EPs acting as coaching psychologists.

7.1.2. Initiating and coordinating whole school and targeted coaching

From September 2006 there has been the capacity for 10 SFC projects to be run at any one time, supporting schools identified through the Local Authority

Improving Schools Steering Group (Primary). The schools tended to be within, or recently emerging from, what is termed 'support category 4', that is a label of concern/support that suggests a school will receive focused intervention and support from the School Improvement Service.

7.1.3. The SFC team

The coaching team comprised of 12 EPs drawn from the Nottinghamshire EPS. All of the EPs delivering coaching had chosen to pursue this form of practice. Nottinghamshire EPS runs a systemic and cumulative whole service professional development mode and the service had participated in service training regarding solution-focused approaches and solution-focused coaching. As well as this the SFC team met each term to provide group supervision.

7.1.4. The SFC intervention

Within the school context, the Nottinghamshire SFC intervention involves a whole school professional development opportunity that, through 3 sessions of observation and solution-focused feedback with each individual member of staff, aimed at promoting the effectiveness of the school through individual change. Based on the concepts of coaching and solution-focused brief therapy, it is an explicitly facilitative psychological model. Whilst SFC is not an advisory or directive model of intervention it is very much about providing a balance between support and challenge, with the aim of bringing about real and lasting beneficial change. An essential component of the work is that each coaching session is confidential. Also the practice of SFC is discursive and, whilst teachers were encouraged to make notes of insights/actions that support change and reflection and psychologists would use a professional notebook to support the sessions, written feedback is not provided session by session. Feedback is provided at the end of the coaching programme through a 'development document', designed to provide strength-based feedback

regarding the whole school, and to provide a prompt of further development through the identification of particularly powerful positive exceptions and also staff hopes for the future elicited during coaching.

7.1.5. Conditions for a successful project- key assertions

The key starting point for this way of working is client engagement and therefore it is important to acknowledge that SFC could only be effective when working with schools that wished to engage in a change process. Observation and feedback are fundamental keystones for the success of this work and therefore those schools that cannot create the opportunity for feedback sessions of at least 45 minutes (usually 60 minutes) were not in a position to benefit from this intervention. The framework for SFC has a detailed section entitled "Making Solution Focused Coaching Work" (figure 3) which is used when considering the viability of a potential coaching project.

Responsibilities of the Coaching Team

Be supportive, positive and collaborative, in working with schools and welcome feedback from schools on achieving this goal.

A representative from the coaching team will visit school prior to coaching to meet staff, familiarise them with the process and answer questions.

The coaches will always try and see the teacher before the lesson to introduce themselves.

All teachers will receive confidential feedback as a basis for personal and whole school development.

Responsibilities of the School

A timetable is drawn up for lesson observations and feedback. It is important that the coach observes actual teaching sessions.

Observation should last around 30 – 45 minutes.

Feedback sessions are at least 45 minutes and no more than 75 minutes.

Coaches need 5-10 minutes preparation time between observation and feedback.

The feedback sessions should ideally take place immediately after the observations.

Teachers are free from their duties for feedback sessions.

The room where feedback will take place should reflect the professional nature of the meeting and should be free from interruptions.

The SFC team are given adequate notice of any changes to the arrangements for observation and feedback.

Teachers should have notice of when a coach is to visit their lesson.

Making observation effective

It will be helpful if the teacher has given some thought to the areas they may wish the coach to focus on.

The teacher does not need to provide a lesson plan and when observed should carry on as normal.

Most teachers tend to explain to the students who the coach is with a general introduction, saying something like: "This is Ms/Mrs/he is here to look at the way we work in this lesson".

The coach will generally act as "a fly on the wall". S/he will sit at the back or to one side and make notes. S/he will not participate in the lesson unless pupils actually approach her/him.

Making feedback effective

The coach comments on the effective teaching points s/he has observed and teacher and coach usually then discuss issues arising from this.

Individual feedback is not written by the coach, although teachers can make their own notes and there is a framework for this, which teachers may wish to use. The teacher (and coach) may then identify (choose) one or two areas of development to work on.

Following coaching with all the teachers in the school the SFC team will provide a development document called the Solution Focused Coaching Development Document: promoting growth and development.

This will include possibilities for development across the whole school system based on the effective practice observed and discussed in feedback sessions. Individual teachers are not identified in the development document, although examples of their good practice will be included.

The development document will be presented to the Head Teacher/Senior Leadership Team (Subject Co-ordinator) for initial comments and then to the whole staff. There will be the opportunity for the SFC team to work with the whole staff.

Confidentiality

SFC is a confidential process.

Any information sharing between coaches will be based on professional development needs.

It will be ensured that the teacher has sufficient time to air any concerns about the process.

The Coach will not provide critical feedback or make any performance judgements. Any information the coach believes should be shared with another, for example the school's Senior Management Team, will only be done so in the interest of staff or pupil health and safety and with the knowledge of the teacher.

Confidentiality within the SFC process rests within the broader responsibilities in relation to the well-being of the teacher and the pupils. In those rare occasions where issues arise this would be initially be discussed in the feedback session and a way forward agreed.

Feeding back the development document to the school

Head Teacher/Senior Leadership Team should be engaged in considering the development document and it might help the school think about possibilities for the future. The nature of the discussions at this stage has to be solution focused. A good meeting around the development document is one where the SLT has:

A clear picture of what is working well in their school.

Discussed the preferred future of the school building on these strengths.

FIGURE -3 FIGURE SHOWING TEXT TAKEN FROM THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SFC GUIDING FRAMEWORK ILLUSTRATING KEY DISTINCTIONS WITH REGARD TO 'MAKING SFC WORK

7.1.6. Evaluative Practice

The Solution Focused Coaching team make use of a simple evaluative tool, figure 4 on page 55, that engages coaching clients in rating how strongly they agree with a series of statements, as well as asking what worked well and how the intervention could be even better. The tool is given to all the coaching clients at the end of the project as a summative evaluation.

1. How would you rate your overall experience of the coaching project?	5	4	3	2	1
2. How would you rate the quality of the coaching sessions?	5	4	3	2	1
3. How would you rate the effectiveness of the coaching sessions?	5	4	3	2	1
4. How would you rate the value for money of the coaching project?	5	4	3	2	1
5. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on your business?	5	4	3	2	1
6. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on your personal life?	5	4	3	2	1
7. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on your team?	5	4	3	2	1
8. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on your customers?	5	4	3	2	1
9. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on your suppliers?	5	4	3	2	1
10. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on your competitors?	5	4	3	2	1
11. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on your industry?	5	4	3	2	1
12. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on your community?	5	4	3	2	1
13. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on your country?	5	4	3	2	1
14. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the world?	5	4	3	2	1
15. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the universe?	5	4	3	2	1
16. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the multiverse?	5	4	3	2	1
17. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the omniverse?	5	4	3	2	1
18. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the metaverse?	5	4	3	2	1
19. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the virtual world?	5	4	3	2	1
20. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the digital world?	5	4	3	2	1
21. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the online world?	5	4	3	2	1
22. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the internet?	5	4	3	2	1
23. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the web?	5	4	3	2	1
24. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the cloud?	5	4	3	2	1
25. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the data?	5	4	3	2	1
26. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the information?	5	4	3	2	1
27. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the knowledge?	5	4	3	2	1
28. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the wisdom?	5	4	3	2	1
29. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the understanding?	5	4	3	2	1
30. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the awareness?	5	4	3	2	1
31. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the consciousness?	5	4	3	2	1
32. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the mind?	5	4	3	2	1
33. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the soul?	5	4	3	2	1
34. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the spirit?	5	4	3	2	1
35. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the heart?	5	4	3	2	1
36. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the love?	5	4	3	2	1
37. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the compassion?	5	4	3	2	1
38. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the empathy?	5	4	3	2	1
39. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the kindness?	5	4	3	2	1
40. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the generosity?	5	4	3	2	1
41. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the selflessness?	5	4	3	2	1
42. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the humility?	5	4	3	2	1
43. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the modesty?	5	4	3	2	1
44. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the simplicity?	5	4	3	2	1
45. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the purity?	5	4	3	2	1
46. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the honesty?	5	4	3	2	1
47. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the integrity?	5	4	3	2	1
48. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the justice?	5	4	3	2	1
49. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the fairness?	5	4	3	2	1
50. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the equality?	5	4	3	2	1
51. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the freedom?	5	4	3	2	1
52. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the peace?	5	4	3	2	1
53. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the harmony?	5	4	3	2	1
54. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the balance?	5	4	3	2	1
55. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the stability?	5	4	3	2	1
56. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the security?	5	4	3	2	1
57. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the safety?	5	4	3	2	1
58. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the health?	5	4	3	2	1
59. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the well-being?	5	4	3	2	1
60. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the happiness?	5	4	3	2	1
61. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the joy?	5	4	3	2	1
62. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the pleasure?	5	4	3	2	1
63. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the satisfaction?	5	4	3	2	1
64. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the fulfillment?	5	4	3	2	1
65. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the meaning?	5	4	3	2	1
66. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the purpose?	5	4	3	2	1
67. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the passion?	5	4	3	2	1
68. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the enthusiasm?	5	4	3	2	1
69. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the energy?	5	4	3	2	1
70. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the motivation?	5	4	3	2	1
71. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the determination?	5	4	3	2	1
72. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the perseverance?	5	4	3	2	1
73. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the resilience?	5	4	3	2	1
74. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the adaptability?	5	4	3	2	1
75. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the flexibility?	5	4	3	2	1
76. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the openness?	5	4	3	2	1
77. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the receptivity?	5	4	3	2	1
78. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the vulnerability?	5	4	3	2	1
79. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the authenticity?	5	4	3	2	1
80. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the genuineness?	5	4	3	2	1
81. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the sincerity?	5	4	3	2	1
82. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the honesty?	5	4	3	2	1
83. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the integrity?	5	4	3	2	1
84. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the justice?	5	4	3	2	1
85. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the fairness?	5	4	3	2	1
86. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the equality?	5	4	3	2	1
87. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the freedom?	5	4	3	2	1
88. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the peace?	5	4	3	2	1
89. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the harmony?	5	4	3	2	1
90. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the balance?	5	4	3	2	1
91. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the stability?	5	4	3	2	1
92. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the security?	5	4	3	2	1
93. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the safety?	5	4	3	2	1
94. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the health?	5	4	3	2	1
95. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the well-being?	5	4	3	2	1
96. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the happiness?	5	4	3	2	1
97. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the joy?	5	4	3	2	1
98. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the pleasure?	5	4	3	2	1
99. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the satisfaction?	5	4	3	2	1
100. How would you rate the impact of the coaching project on the fulfillment?	5	4	3	2	1

FIGURE -4 FIGURE SHOWING TEXT TAKEN FROM THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SFC EVALUATIVE TOOL USED AT THE END OF A COACHING PROJECT, BY ALL THOSE WHO RECEIVED COACHING

8). Method

8.1. Introduction to the method

This chapter provides a justification for the methodology in this social constructionist Q sort study that aims to answer the research questions that are, in respect of school staff who have taken part in solution focused coaching:

1. How do coachees view effective solution focused coaching?
2. In what ways may these views inform psychological coaching practice?

It begins at the broadest level by outlining a conceptual framework for the study, beginning with a framework of guidance for ethical considerations. Then it moves onto exploring the historical context of knowledge production and how this is reflected in current psychological research. The epistemological commitments that underpin this study are then identified, and links made between these commitments and appropriate methodology for the research and the questions it aims to answer.

The second section elaborates the methods of the research and analysis used in the production of data for this study.

8.1.1. *Ethical Considerations*

Before embarking on the fieldwork the ethical implications of the study were considered, with reference to the British Psychological Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants (BPS, 2009). The study went forward with a strong ethical basis. Full consent was gained from the participants, and all the participants were told the full objectives of the research. Participation in the study was initially agreed with the head teacher of the schools. Therefore individual participants willingness to take part was

investigated during the administration of the q-sort. At the onset of the q-sort exercise it was made plain to the participants their right to withdraw from the research at any time. The researcher felt the study posed no risk to the psychological health and wellbeing of the participants. There was no concealment within the study parameters and full confidentiality was to be maintained in the study and the participants will not be identifiable in the study.

The framework of guidance for permissions, access and ethical issues from Robson (2002) was applied throughout the study. This outlines ten questionable practices in social research, (table 1, below). These questions were adopted as a resource upon which to reflect throughout the research process, and especially at the design stage. Full confidentiality was assured to those whom took part in the study and the participants were fully informed of the study, its aims, objectives and their role, prior to giving consent.

Table-1 Ten Questionable practices in social research- Robson, 2002

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Involving people without their knowledge or consent.2. Coercing them to participate.3. Withholding information about the true nature of the research4. Otherwise deceiving the participant.5. Inducing participants to commit acts diminishing their self-esteem.6. Violating rights of self-determination (e.g. in studies seeking to promote individual change.7. Exposing participants to physical or mental stress.8. Invading privacy9. Withholding benefits from some participants (e.g. in comparison groups).10. Not treating participants fairly, or consideration, or with respect. |
|---|

8.2. A conceptual framework for the research- an overview

8.2.1. Traditions in knowledge production

The genesis of the established traditional view of knowledge production is associated with the French philosopher Comte who, in developing a science of society, argued that social phenomena, like physical phenomena, should be viewed as laws and theories to be empirically investigated and established

positively. This position led to a general doctrine of positivism that holds that genuine knowledge is established by assessing observable evidence in an impartial way. Positivism therefore follows an empiricist tradition limiting enquiry and belief to what can be firmly established through reason (Assiter, 2000). This notion of reason flows from a long philosophical tradition and has, Alcott (1996) asserts, resulted in an epistemological commitment to reason as the only way of seeking truth. Objectivism became embedded in the definition of science, and cognitive authority rested upon knowledge claims that were evaluated rationally.

This tradition of validating knowledge persisted until the second half of the 19th century when there was a reaction against the worldview projected by the positivist approach. Positivism, many argued, is mechanistic and reductionist, excluding, by definition notions of choice, freedom, individuality and moral responsibility (Assiter, 2000; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). What emerged from this debate are alternative traditions based on the re-conceptualizations of the epistemological foundations of knowledge, each founded upon particular metaphysical beliefs and ontology. This gave rise to a range of associated methodologies. In some texts these re-conceptualizations are set out upon a binary of methodology (Gergen, 2006); forming an epistemological duality, that may actually be illusory.

8.2.2. Epistemological dualism

Carr (1995, in Pring, 2000: 31) notes that two strong philosophical traditions have dominated educational research- one of which adopts an established traditional epistemological position and another that works from an alternative interpretivist position. This dichotomy is manifest in the epistemological commitments that underpin psychological research traditions, with the terms quantitative and qualitative often being used to describe this dichotomy (Denzin

and Lincoln, 2000). What emerges are a series of dualisms that define the traditions and in turn determine the nature of the research undertaken.

Pring (2000) outlines these dualisms as being between: the objective world of physical things and the subjective world of meanings; the public world of outer reality and the private world of inner thoughts; and a qualitative phenomenological approach and a scientific quantitative approach. Pawson (2000) observes these competing perspectives, operating contemporarily within educational research, similarly reflect fundamentally different philosophical positions, namely numerical meta-analysis and narrative review (embedding similar conflict between quantitative and qualitative research), positivism and phenomenology, and outcomes and process.

To construct a robust basis for the epistemology of the study an account of the discourse of difference between quantitative and qualitative methods is outlined, drawing on the potential epistemological and ontological underpinnings of each approach. It will be argued that such an ideological divide between quantitative and qualitative appears to be increasingly less well defined as there is increasing support for the notion that many of the ideological differences are more apparent than real and that there can be advantages in combining approaches (Robson, 2002). This is an important claim to make, as the methodology used in this study offers a qualiquantalogical approach, as we shall see.

8.2.3. Quantitative and qualitative debates

Halfpenny (1979, p799) outlines the features of qualitative and quantitative methods (drawn from the terms used by speakers at a conference on research methods) and argues that, depending upon your perspective, the associated terms could be viewed as either strengths or weaknesses. For example, qualitative method can be described as soft, flexible, subjective, political, case

study, speculative and grounded, whilst quantitative method can be said to be hard, fixed, objective, value free, survey, hypothesis testing and abstract.

The quantitative method originated, it can be argued, in the logical empiricism of the 20th century tracing the source of knowledge to events in the real world-with "knowledge copying the contours of the world" (Gergen, 1985). The quantitative paradigm, Smith (1983) argues, reflects an epistemology based in the realist perspective and reflects the call for a 'science of society.' Indeed it is interesting to note the extent to which quantitative social research uses the same language employed in science. An interpretation of this is that quantitative methods allow the production of scientific laws that relate to social life and reflects a positivist paradigm in the production of scientific law within a theory of causation. However, there are few quantitative researchers who would accept such an assertion (Marsh, 1982). Silverman (2000) observes that most quantitative researchers claim that their aim is to produce a set of cumulative generalizations based on the critical sifting of data rather than retain a strict adherence to Hume's 'constant conjunction'. According to Hume, all that is possible to observe is the 'constant conjunction' of events. We observe the co-occurrence of events and, in the positivist view of science, this is all we need to know.

Whilst experiments, particularly those involving randomized controlled trials, are viewed by many as the gold standard for social research (Robson, 2002) there has been an increasing recognition of the value of some very different approaches to social research (although outside the social science community it can be argued that the quantitative research has been the dominant paradigm).

Bryman (1988) argues that the methods of research considered quantitative within the social field- quasi-experimental method, social survey, experiment, official statistics, 'structured' observation, content analysis for example- have perceived advantages namely that: such data is representative; allows the testing of hypotheses; precise measurement and handling of large dataset; and provides reliability of observations and of measurement.

The data is seen as being hard and theory is placed at the beginning of the enquiry. Indeed Denzin and Lincoln (2000) note bias from research funding agencies, observing that qualitative researchers have been referred to as 'journalists or soft scientists' and their work termed 'unscientific, or only exploratory, or entirely personal and full of bias'.

However, virtually all fields and disciplines now have strong advocates for what are commonly called qualitative designs, designs often referred to as flexible, which involve the use of methods that result in qualitative data (often in the form of words) and can be presented as existing in contrast with fixed design quantitative approaches based upon experiments and surveys.

Qualitative research methods, underpinned by relativist epistemology, are a body of research methodologies orientated towards, and based upon, a preference for qualitative data. The preference for word and images over numbers in qualitative research is perhaps reflective of the fact that whilst numbers are sometimes useful, they can conceal as well as reveal social processes (Henshaw, 2006). Robson (2002) outlines how qualitative designs reflect a philosophical critique of the standard view through the adoption of relativism, an approach that in its extreme, maintains that there is no external reality independent of human consciousness- rather there are only different sets of meanings that people attach to the world. In this view 'reality' is constructed by the means of a conceptual system and classifications, and hence there can be no objective reality because different cultures and societies have different conceptual systems (Robson, 2002). A relativist approach would deny the existence of an external reality independent of our theoretical beliefs and concepts. Reality, it is argued, is represented through the eyes of participants.

From this view enquiry, the research process itself, is viewed as generating working hypotheses. The emergence of concepts from data, in contrast to imposition as a hypothesis to test, results in theory generation rather than

theory testing. Within this stance the imposition of a priori theory is rejected, as is the generation of immutable empirical facts.

8.2.4. *Deconstructing Epistemological Duality in Psychological Research*

Whilst some contributors argue that there are genuine differences of principle that separate quantitative and qualitative methods (Ashworth, 1995; Richardson, 2006; Hammersley, in Richardson, 2006); other argue that they can be regarded as having complementary (though possibly different) roles in psychological research (Richardson, 2006).

Silverman (2000) argues that the haziness of the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research leads the researcher to make pragmatic choices between research methodologies according to the research opportunity and model. Hammersley (1992) adds weight to this and suggests that it is not a stark choice between words and numbers, nor an ideological commitment to one methodological paradigm or another, rather decisions on methodology should be based on the nature of what we are trying to describe, on the likely accuracy of our descriptions, on our purposes, and on the resources available (Hammersley, 1992). Indeed studies in the sociology of scientific knowledge have tended to show that 'science' is not conducted in the 'scientific' manner generally assumed (Robson, 2002).

Pring (2000) comments that many regard as false this dichotomy in that it fails to recognise the complexity of inquiry. The apparent dichotomy between the epistemological bases, that quantification leads to hard data, whilst qualification leads to deep data, begs the question, succinctly posed by Zelditch, what do you do if you prefer data that is real, deep and hard? (Zelditch, in Burgess, 1991: 257). Pring (2000) goes on to note that there are many distinctions to be made *within* each paradigm and these distinctions are often as significant as the distinctions made *between* paradigms. He argues that research needs to

acknowledge the dynamic relationship between research conducted within different paradigms observing that:

The qualitative investigation can clear the ground for the quantitative- and the quantitative be suggestive of the differences to be explored in a more interpretative mode (Pring, 200: 55).

As the ideological divide between quantitative and qualitative appears less distinct it can be agreed that such a binary, where such a sharp contrast between methods is provided, is perhaps not the most helpful way to view epistemology. Silverman suggests that:

It helps if we treat this less as a war and more as a clarion call to be clear about the issues that animate our work and help to define our research problem (Silverman, 2005: 11).

Methodological pluralism, where a variety of paradigms are required in order to provide converging evidence upon phenomena (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1989) perhaps captures the essence of the assertion that the epistemological debate is largely artificial (Bryman, 1988).

Critical psychological thinking in the form of constructionist theory extends the dialogue upon the quantitative / qualitative debate. From the perspective of constructionist theory the most important feature of any methodology is that it should avoid imposing the researcher's view of the world on the people being researched, not that methodology should avoid using numbers. Kitzinger (1984) suggests that the issue has been obscured by the qualitative / quantitative debate. She argues that;

Both approaches run the risk of imposing the researchers construction on the participants- quantitative through the a priori imposition of structure and meaning through the operational definition and qualitative

research through the a posteriori imposition of structure through categorization (Kitzinger, 1984).

This study adopts a combined approach. A qualiquantalogical methodology is used, one that involves numbers and statistical analysis- Q-methodology. This approach provides a research tool that challenges the dualism discussed above; Q-methodology is a constructionist approach that, whilst dealing with numbers, challenges the extant “scientific” and traditionally quantitative / hypothetico-deductive approach in psychology. It is significant that Q-methodology was designed for the purpose of challenging the dated Newtonian logic of “testing” that has predominated in psychology (Watts and Stenner, 2003a). It is also important to recognise that when William Stephenson conceived Q-methodology it was performing a similar function of challenge long before any qualitative tradition had been established (Stephenson, 1935). Indeed Q-methodology, it will be argued, is a research method that both challenges qualitative and quantitative paradigm dualisms and meets those epistemological commitments that will be presented short with to frame this study. It deals with numbers, and it deals with language. It offers data that is both ‘deep’ and ‘hard’. A central importance is placed upon the role of language as the fundamental instrument used to represent and construct individual worldviews, resonating with Gergen’s claim that ‘words create worlds’ (Gergen, 1996); in short, by using Q-methodology subjective worlds are made extant through the employment of techniques of analysis that embrace both words and numbers.

8.3. Framing the epistemology of the study

Johnson & Duberley (2000) describe epistemology as “being concerned with knowledge about knowledge... [it] is the study of the criteria by which we can know what does and does not constitute warranted, or scientific, knowledge” (Johnson & Duberley 2000:2-3). If it is acknowledged that a researcher’s approach to research is contingent on a personal set of beliefs and

commitments, both tacitly and explicitly understood, then the question of what constitutes warranted knowledge increases in complexity. Therefore what was once widely accepted as warranted knowledge, that is knowledge generated within a positivist model of research, becomes open to question and critique.

It is however important to acknowledge, as one layer of complexity, that this process is value laden because the status of knowledge framed in a positivist tradition remains dominant in the western world. This dominance is challenged within criticalist research paradigms whose epistemological stance holds that events are understood in relation to dominant structures, and whose aim it is to uncover and challenge constraints on equality, exposing how dominant interests are constructed and maintained through discourse that preserves social inequalities. However, these approaches to knowledge production remain peripheral, as Habermas (1972 in Assiter, 2000) notes, the scientific mentality has been elevated to an almost unassailable position as being the only epistemology of the west.

A psychological account wishing to stray from this epistemology must be very explicit about its basis and warrant. The following section will answer Silverman's 'clarion call' to be clear about the issues that animate this piece of work.

8.3.1. A discontent with experimental method

It is within the assumptions of positivism, the 'standard view' of science, that a critique can be outlined, a critique that advances that the 'standard' positivist scientific view is essential wrong as a model for the social sciences (Robson, 2002) and provides the epistemological basis for this study.

As outlined earlier, according to Hume, all that is possible to observe is the 'constant conjunction' of events; we observe the co-occurrence of events and, in

the positivist view of science this is all we need to know. However, with people as the focus of the study, within the context of a social real world context, 'constant conjunction' in a strict sense is virtually non-existent (Robson, 2002). Robson (2002) observes that it is somewhat paradoxical that an adherence to positivist views appears to linger in social science, despite ample demonstrations that 'constant conjunction' is not credible in the natural sciences from which it has perhaps most readily existed.

As Gergen (1997) notes, accompanying the deterioration of commitment to empiricist metatheory has been a widespread discontent with the experimental method in the social sciences. Early critics stressed the extent to which experimental findings were subject to experimenter bias or demand characteristics established by the experimenter (see Rosnow's 1981 summary and Rosenthal, 2006). Critics also expressed concern with the ethics of experimental manipulation (e.g. Kelman, 1968), the ecological validity of experiments, the manipulative attitude of experimenters toward their subjects (Ring, 1967), and the extent to which experimental results are achieved through rhetoric and skilled stagecraft (McGuire, 1982). Still others, including critical psychologists and feminists, raised ideological issues, arguing that experiments replicated the system of domination and control inherent in capitalist society, or male personality, or both (Reinharz, 1992).

Substantial segments of the research community now seek viable alternatives to experimental methodology and there are strong movements in psychology that signal a discontent with a narrowness in the discipline of psychology (Harre and Secord, 1972; Gergen, 1973; Shotter 1975). Such writers make an argument for a new paradigm, which would involve a shift towards rethinking what psychology is away from methodologies based on laboratory experiments, or on the language and metaphors of science, towards a construction of ways of working which are more appropriate to, and, in some sense, a closer reflection of, psychological life (Smith, Harre and Langenhove, 2005).

Gergen (1999) provides a comprehensive constructionist critique of the chief criteria of research excellence in the empiricist tradition. As Gergen observes, we now find that the empirical tradition is not Science with a capital S, but rather, only one possible tradition among many, with both potentials and limitations (Gergen, 1999). Further to this Gergen rejects the binary that the opposite of traditional empiricism is qualitative methodology. Rather Gergen posits that the binary itself grows from the soil of modernism and should ultimately be abandoned.

This clears the way for an epistemological stance towards research methodology that matches psychological collaborative practice and psychological life itself- social constructionism, and which, in turn, leads to a methodology for study, namely Q-methodology, that is relevant to the study of complex social phenomena such as individual viewpoints. Next, the epistemological commitments within this study will be outlined; commitments that in turn provide the basis for the use of the methodology employed in the study.

8.4. Epistemological commitments within the study

The process of being human is the process of meaning-making

Robert Kegan

8.4.1. Making the post-modern turn

A major change has been taking place in the social sciences over the last 40 years, which has seen honourable traditions everywhere being thrown into question³ (Gergen, in Kwee, Gergen and Koshikawa, 2006). This change has seen a growing doubt in universalised conceptions of truth, objectivity, rationality, progress, and moral principle. Denzen and Lincoln (1994) posit that a “quiet methodological revolution has been taking place in the social sciences”. There are many names for this revolution in thought and practice. Terms such as postmodernism, post-foundationalism, post-empiricism, post-structuralism, and post-Enlightenment are often among them. Some speak in terms of a “linguistic turn”, others of a “cultural turn” in our understanding of knowledge and the self. In its simplest form, postmodernism refers to an ideological critique, questions the single voice modernist discourse as the overarching foundation of literary, political, and social thinking and departs

³ The emergence of social constructionism in the 1960's did not leave educational psychology untouched. The Summerfield Report (DES, 1968) was a turning point in the role confusion and professional dissatisfaction expressed by educational psychologists and in part due to a realisation of the profound implications social constructionism had for the profession (Kelly, Woolfson and Boyle, 2008). Nonetheless, evidence suggests that educational psychology has failed to keep track with contemporary social constructionism and at present it is weakly evidenced in both practitioners and trainees (Kelly, 2006; Stobie, 2003). There are a range of frameworks for practice in educational psychology that are all derived from social constructionism, for example 'consultation'; however these frameworks vary in terms of their power to support and reflect a meaningful, broad-based applied model of social constructionism (Kelly, Woolfson and Boyle, 2008).

from modernist traditions. Although there is no one postmodernism, in general it challenges the modernist notions of knowledge as objective and fixed, the knower and knowledge as independent of each other, language as representing truth and reality, and human nature as universal (Anderson, 1997). Yet many of the central ideas move about an orbit usefully characterised as social constructionism.

8.4.2. Isomorphism, psychological practice and research method

The new methods of scrutiny that appear under the banner of social constructionist and post-modern approaches offer a range of ways of exploring psychological practice; they also provide a de facto basis for psychological practice itself. The epistemological stances for both the methodology of this study and the therapeutic system applied to a coaching process -Solution Focused Brief Therapy- can be seen as “fruits from the same tree”- *social constructionism*. An internally consistent approach such as this, where the discursive resources within practice and research are isomorphic⁴ through the embedding of both in a particular stance upon knowledge production - social constructionism, resonates with Grant's (2006) suggestion that the emerging field of positive psychology may be extended past cross-sectional or correlational work by designing interventions that use coaching as a research framework. Grant (2006) goes on to suggest that this may be an important role for coaching psychologists.

This common basis in a social constructionist approach to social scrutiny and psychological practice reflects the stance proposed by Kenneth J. Gergen,

⁴ The concept of isomorphism, is borrowed from the field of mathematics, and has been proposed as a framework for training and supervision in the realm of family therapy. Bateson (1979), emphasized the importance of examining the “patterns that connect.” As conceptualized by Levinson (1972) and Hofstadter (1979), isomorphism refers to the phenomenon whereby categories with different content, but similar form, can be mapped on each in other in such a way that there are corresponding parts and processes within each structure. When this occurs, these parallel structures can be described as isomorphic, and each is an isomorph of the other. Therefore, when EP practice system is able to mapped onto the EP research system via shared epistemology, the roles of EP as practitioner and researcher correspond respectively.

which has been concerned with the construction of knowledge and contemporary therapeutic practices. This work is of particular value to this study.

8.4.3. Orienting principles for social constructionism.

There are many variants of the constructionist story- one particular orientation relates to knowledge. Defining constructionism is itself problematic as to define it is to be swayed by the very assumptions that social constructionism opposes. I forgo this discussion and instead make reference to Gergen (2006) and foreground at this point that social constructionism encompasses a range of epistemologies that are in opposition to positivist assumptions and a hierarchical model of power, assumptions which dominate the research landscape (Gergen, 2006). As a leading proponent of this particular variant of social constructionism Kenneth J. Gergen's work has extended and elaborated constructionist deliberations. His work provides the backdrop to the following propositions, which in turn provide a basis for this study. These propositions prepare the way for considering a constructionist epistemology (Gergen, 1992; 1994; 1995; 1999; 2006a; 2006b, Gergen and Gergen, 2002) and consider how *words create worlds*:

- This orientation assumes that all we take to exist, to be real, to be the subject of scientific or spiritual consciousness, is constructed in relations with others- the world does not dictate a particular account of its nature. This contrasts with the more usual assumption that accounts of the world are reality driven
- For constructionists, whatever becomes meaningful to us happens primarily as a result of our relationships with others
- Different communities of researchers each have their own particular language of description and explanation, as will various religions, professions, ethnic traditions, and so on

- The construction of the world will be closely tied to the shared values of groups therefore any observational test of a proposition must rely on a set of communal agreements about what exists and how it is manifest
- This orientation makes it difficult to accept the traditional view of knowledge as mirror of reality. Conversely it recognises that all knowledge claims are culturally and historically situated
- The emphasis within this orientation is on the ways in which conventions or structures of language are used to frame the world and thus achieve certain social effects.
- This means that we are free to create together new realities and related ways of life

To social constructionism, the social setting is an evolving construction. When members of a social setting develop external and shareable constructs, they engage the setting in a cycle of development that can critically inform its ultimate form. From this viewpoint, we live in worlds of meaning, communally convened through language and relationships.

Social constructionism is, therefore, against the claim that psychology is 'naturally' a natural science, require for its conduct the same methods of inquiry of the other, morally neutral sciences (Shotter, 2008). Shotter (2008) then extends this claim towards psychological research and states:

We must abandon the attempt simply to discover and explain our supposed 'natural' natures, and turn to a study of how we actually do treat each other as being, within the context of our everyday, conversation intertwined, communal activities- a change that leads us on into a concern with 'making', with processes of 'social construction'.

(Shotter, 2008; p.22)

8.4.4. *Researcher stance within social constructionism*

As Shotter (2008) states, this constructionist consciousness has implications for psychological research. Using a social constructionist approach scholars have created a wave of reflection and renewal (Gergen, 1999) in which we learn of the socially constructed character of what it is to be a child, an adolescent, or old (Slife and Williams, 1995); mental illness such as schizophrenia, anorexia and multiple personality disorder (Milgram, 1974); along with suicide, murder and other social problems (Gilligan, 1982).

This approach is in contrast to traditional methodologies in which it is assumed that knowledge lives “in the mind”, and that reality exists “in the world”. This approach reached its pinnacle of development in the modern philosophy of science that views objective scientific method as the best possible way to obtain knowledge about the world. However at least since Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century, we have recognised that there is no direct connection between an independent, objective world (“noumena”) and our experience (“phenomena”) (Gergen, 2001). Many studies show how presently unquestioned definitions have actually changed with time and circumstance and question how we have come to speak so unreflexively about “mental illness,” “mental retardation,” “homosexuality,” and so on. Social constructionism argues that all we have is a set of interpretations of our perceptions and experiences, and it is these that lead us to believe that a world exists “out there”. If that connection is always hypothetical, what is it that actually guarantees the “truth”, or in constructionist language, the “authority of knowledge”? (Ratner, 2006).

Social constructionism argues that the “authority of knowledge” ultimately derives from a “knowledge community” of people who agree the truth. As Thomas Kuhn says, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, “knowledge is intrinsically the common property of a group or else nothing at all” (1970, p.210).

The empiricist tradition honors the investigator who discovers “the truth” or “reveals” the true nature of things. This results in a dominant investigators

voice, and typically empiricist research separates the investigator from the subjects of the study. The understanding of research relationships within this alternative paradigm cuts across the traditional stance of researcher-as-expert, thus allowing all participants to become the 'changer and the changed' (Gitlin and Russell, 1994:184). What is implied by this stance is that data is *produced* rather than *collected* as interpretations emerge through interaction rather than being external to the research process. Facilitating the 'voice' of participants thus becomes an essential part of the research project. This lends a complexity to both the data production and analysis. Complexity is therefore acknowledged as a necessary part of facilitating articulation of research participants' knowledge and understanding (Elbaz, 1983,1990, 1997).

The constructionist stance calls to account the assumption of scientific objectivity, or more pointedly foregrounds the view that objectivity is a rhetorical achievement. Gergen (2001) deliberates over objectivity in the social sciences, saying:

To tell the truth, on the account, is not to furnish an accurate picture of what actually happened but to participate in a set of social conventions...to be objective is to play by the rules within a given tradition of social practices...to do science is not to hold a mirror to nature but to participate in the interpretation conventions and practices of a particular culture. The major question that must be asked of scientific accounts, then, is not whether they are true to nature but what these accounts...offer to the culture more generally.

(Gergen, 2001: 806)

The stance can then be extended. When researchers enter a sociocultural setting to conduct research they become part of that setting and thus become mediating factors in the very phenomena they purport to document (Smith, Harre and Langenhove, 2005). The researcher themselves, and the tools they use- the instructional intervention and the assessment vehicles- are not cultural neutral, but replete with culture. Therefore an emphasis should be

placed on the tools used by the researcher, as these tools are not neutral, rather they can be assessed in terms of what they “offer to the culture more generally”. In this study it is argued that the Q-methodology approach applied offers a tool for emancipation and empowerment, in that it makes complex social phenomena, and the views held on the phenomena intelligible and communicable, without becoming reductionist.

8.4.5. An illustrative example of a constructionist deliberation

Given the bold advantages claimed in the section above, in short that in the social sciences there is a requirement for a constructionist dynamic, it is useful at this point to illustrate some cultural and social gain that have been made through the constructionist dialogue. The work of Moll and Greenberg (1990) illustrates the point well. It is a study that has relevance to the practice of educational psychology and the author finds it particularly illustrative of the dangers inherent to the psychological practice of assessment of children and young people, or at least the dangers of only ever taking psychological practice to that point.

Moll and Greenberg asked the question- how do schools construct children and young people in their (school's) terms, and what social processes have favoured the use of particular terms and not others? Concerned by the historical disproportionate failure of Latino students in American schools, Moll and Greenberg investigated the learning of Southwestern Mexican-American students both in school and in their home community. They endeavoured to identify the source of student's failure, which had primarily been attributed to cognitive deficiencies.

Taking a Vygotskian perspective, Moll and Green (1990) went on to argue that the students did not have a fixed level of “ability” that was “measured” by the neutral instruments of school assessment, but instead a range of potential that

had taken a particular cultural shape through their immersion in the agricultural community in which they had been raised. Moll and Greenberg (1990) concluded that the determination that the students were cognitively deficient was a function of the culture-laden means of evaluative mediation that were more congenial to students of European-origin middle-class backgrounds than to students of Mexican-origin agricultural backgrounds; and that the “zone of proximal development” (which to the researchers include the social context of learning and the cultural tools it provides) that afforded opportunities for success in the Mexican-American community did not exist in school. Here the emphasis is on the ways in which conventions or structures of language are used to frame the world and thus achieve certain social effects.

The reframing of historical educational failure as being predominantly an issue of social process, rather than wholly a cognitive fixed and within-person affect, is a powerful challenge to perceived truth. It is also emancipatory and meets well Gergen’s challenge that we assess social field research on a basis of what they “offer to the culture more generally”. To see generations of children as being able to reach their full potential if the context adapts (i.e. becomes inclusive) is worthwhile, from whatever epistemological stance.

8.4.6. Challenging Conventions of truth

So we begin to see that whilst particular constructs can be invoked as impartial truth claims, which exist above and beyond the ideological or political, might appear pragmatic- it is clearly not above scrutiny. The work of Moll and Greenberg “deconstructed” both the educational failure of a particular group of young people and also the practice of educational assessment. The work had emancipatory goals- to promote social action. Neither the examination systems, nor the cultural milieu of the school context, were beyond ideological or political implications- however tacit and emergent. For constructionist

theorists like Moll and Greenberg there is no apolitical knowledge- all knowledge is value related, situated and communally convened.

8.4.7. Potential appropriate methodologies

The research questions within this study, and primarily the first of the two questions- how do coachees view effective solution focused coaching- is an invitation to investigate subjectivity. It is an appropriate question as it arose abductively through psychological practice and within a context of the emerging children's' services that demands greater attention to be paid to the link between what psychologists do and how service users experience psychologists work. What was needed in this study therefore was a method of study of human subjectivity.

The epistemology of the study has been outlined, with a commitment made to a social constructionist stance. With that established it is worth referring to what Chamberlain (1999) suggests as guiding principles that researchers might keep in mind as they conduct their practice:

Deciding on the epistemology (e.g., constructionist) prior to selecting the theoretical perspective (e.g., phenomenology or feminism) prior to choosing the methodology (e.g., grounded theory) and then the specific methods (e.g., focus groups) puts methodology and methods firmly in their place. (Chamberlain, 1999: 295)

The point made here is that the reasons for researcher's choices (and the researcher's theoretical interests that are secured by those choices) need to be made explicit and held up to scrutiny. This demands explicit researcher accounts of ontological, epistemological, and methodological commitments within research. This type of reflexivity is crucial if social constructionist

researchers are to address their own construction of the world and hence, their own practice of power.

To social constructionism, the social setting is an evolving construction. As aforementioned, when members of a social setting develop external and shareable constructs, they engage the setting in a cycle of development that can critically inform its ultimate form. Thus, in this research, the methodology needed to be a tool that would allow for deconstruction; to provide discursive resource towards a dialogue of deconstruction and reconstruction over solution focused coaching with school staff. The research calls for a tool that can allow an intelligible and rigorous study of human subjectivity, in this case in relation to how teachers view effective solution focused coaching.

A social constructionist epistemology approach to social research, as Wendy Stainton Rogers (1997) notes, is based on perturbation, in which the objective is to “question the taken for granted”. To this end a number of methodologies were considered and discounted for clear epistemological reasons.

One illustrative example was that of an interpretative phenomenological approach called “Meaning Condensing”. This descriptive, phenomenological and analytical tool outlined by Amadeo Giorgi (1985) was considered as Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe such tools as steering a researcher’s thinking away from the confines of both the technical literature and personal experience. Instead in the phenomenological paradigm, the primary focus is on understanding the meanings of human experience of particular relevance to the context with this consisting of studying culture from the informant’s point of view, and attempting to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular contexts (Bailey 1997). Phenomenology has its origins in the thinking of the German philosopher Husserl and the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, that which Crotty (1996) calls the classical phenomenologist approach. According to Van Manen (1990) it is an exploration of ‘the essence of lived experience’.

Through deliberating on such an individualised approach to the study of social phenomena came the realisation that the study was not so concerned with studying individuals but in studying the “viewpoints” that might furnish a picture of discursive diversity around the topic of psychological coaching. There would be, after all, less “viewpoints” on how to make psychological coaching work well than participants taking part in coaching work, as it would be likely that there be a series of shared viewpoints, or positions, upon the phenomena under study. This is based on the assumption of ‘finite diversity’, a concept which will be visited later, and probably derived from Keynes's (1921) principles of atomic uniformity and limited independent variety, i.e. in a nutshell, that outcomes are the result of an almost infinite number of small effects, but that they take a relatively small number of distinct forms. These principles were incorporated into factor theory by Burt (1940) and generally accepted by Stephenson (1953), the originator of Q-methodology.

The study is concerned with rigorously deconstructing the psychological coaching phenomena in terms of “viewpoints”. As we will see, the methodology selected for the research, Q-methodology, and the British constructionist Q dialect specifically, provides the means for achieving this, and enables a “best estimate or model of these attitudes” (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers, 1990). Also, Q-methodology, as a research tradition (and a tradition of social construction) has made response to questions of validity, reliability, and generalisability that can often challenge the rigour of qualitative methods. Q-methodology is also a versatile task that combines the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research traditions and in other respects provides a bridge between the two (Dennis and Goldberg, 1996; Sell and Brown, 1984). As such, it provided an apt tool for answering the research questions.

8.5. Q-methodology

'We argue that Q offers a means of exploring subjectivity, beliefs and values while retaining the transparency, rigour and mathematical underpinnings of quantitative techniques.' (Baker, Thompson and Mannion 2006)

8.5.1. Introduction to Q-methodology

Fundamentally, Q-methodology provides a foundation for the systematic study of subjectivity. It was developed by British physicist and psychologist William Stephenson who presented Q-methodology as an inversion of conventional factor analysis in the sense that Q correlates persons instead of tests; "previously a large number of people were given a small number of tests, now we give a small number of people a large number of test-items" (Stephenson, 1935). It was 'rediscovered' by British social constructionists as a rich technique for applying quantitative analysis to qualitative issues (Kitzinger and Stainton-Rogers, 1985; Stenner, 2004) and this study is located with the British dialect that has now emerged.

A crucial premise of Q is that subjectivity is communicable, and that when subjectivity is communicated, when it is expressed operantly, it can be systematically analysed, just as any other behaviour (Stephenson, 1953; 1968). In this way, Q can be very helpful in exploring tastes, preferences, sentiments, motives and goals, the part of personality that is of great influence on behaviour but that often remains largely unexplored.

As we will see, Q employs a technique that captures the full range of views upon a particular topic and involves the sorting of the statements by participants to create viewpoints. The viewpoint constructions made by the participants are then factor analysed to reveal the underlying structure of views. The factors

resulting from Q analysis thus represent clusters of subjectivity that are operant (Brown 1993; 2002[b]).

In doing this, Q-methodology pursues a 'snap shot' or temporarily frozen form image of the connected series of subject positions, or view points; through Q-methodology people give their subjective meaning to the statements, and by doing so reveal their subjective viewpoint (Smith 2001) or personal profile (Brouwer 1999). The epistemological stance within the study inheres curiosity and promotes a turn towards discovery and understanding, in preference to the traditional psychological hallmark of asserting hypotheses and to confirm predictions. Thus the process of revelation in Q-methodology is highly resonant with the epistemology of the study.

Q-methodology was designed expressly to deal with subjective experience and social psychologists have already employed it successfully in the context of a range of subject-matters including: partnership love's diverse character, jealousy; rebelliousness; childhood; and lesbian identity (Stenner & Stainton Rogers, 1998; Stenner & Marshall, 1995; Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1992; Kitzinger & Stainton Rogers, 1985).

8.5.2. How Q investigates viewpoints

Performing a Q-methodological study involves the following steps:

- definition of the concourse;
- development of the Q-sample or Q-set as it is variably referred to;
- selection of the P-set or person sample;
- Q sorting and recording these on a Q-sort form;
- and analysis and interpretation.

The collections of subjective viewpoints in the form of Q-sorts and by-person factor analysis of correlations between these, leads to the potential emergence of an underlying simple structure within the viewpoints. Patterns of similarity and difference among viewpoints expressed in Q sort form can be statistically identified and described in qualitative detail (Stenner and Stainton Rogers, 2004; Watts and Stenner, 2005). It is this central feature that recommends it to persons interested in qualitative aspects of human behavior.

In Q, the flow of communicability surrounding any topic is referred to as a "concourse" (from the Latin "concursum," meaning "a running together," as when ideas run together in thought). It is from this concourse that a sample of statements is subsequently drawn for administration in a Q sort. Developing a Q-set begins with work to collect a broad range of statements, collecting all the possible statements the respondents can make about the subject at hand; the aim is to identify and record as many of the ideas, comments and views that are in circulation around the topic. Watts and Stenner (2005) emphasize the importance of this stage in a Q-study. Brown (1980: 173) describes the concourse as '...the corpus of verbiage uttered vis-à-vis the subject matter under investigation' and 'the flow of communicability surrounding any topic' in 'the ordinary conversation, commentary, and discourse of every day life' Brown (1993).

Brown (1993) states:

Concourse is the very stuff of life, from the playful banter of lovers or chums to the heady discussions of philosophers and scientists to the private thoughts found in dreams and diaries. From concourse, new meanings arise, bright ideas are hatched, and discoveries are made: it is the wellspring of creativity and identity formation in individuals, groups, organizations, and nations, and it is Q-methodology's task to reveal the inherent structure of a concourse – the vectors of thought that sustain it and which, in turn, are sustained by it. (Brown, 1993: 2).

A range of sources allow the sampling from the hypothetical universe of propositions in the concourse of debate (Rex Stainton Rogers, 1995), with statements drawn from writings on the topic, previous research, interviews, focus groups, brainstorming, or reflection including. Rex Stainton Rogers (1995) suggests the use of:

- Individual and/or group interviews
- Literature review (professional and/or popular)
- Transmitted media output
- The cultural experience of the researcher(s)

Typically a statement pool of around 3 times the size of the aimed-for Q-set is gathered (Brown, 1993). From this 'concourse of views' a representative sample of 'statements' is selected. This selection of statements is referred to as the 'Q-sample'. Q sorts do not have to be in the form of language. The Q sort should seek to insure:

- Balance
- Appropriate and applicability to the issue
- Intelligibility and simplicity
- Comprehensiveness through the ability to reflect the full range of views from the concourse

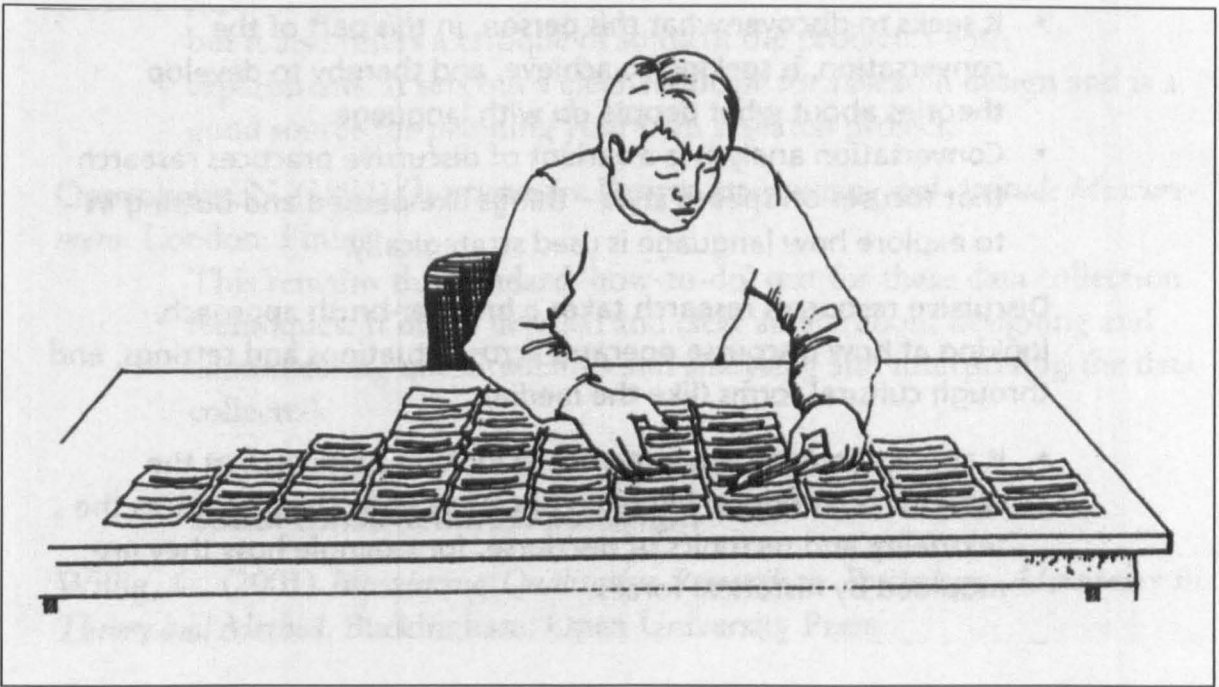


FIGURE -5 A PARTICIPANT SORTING STATEMENTS IN A Q-SORT. IMAGE COPYRIGHT © WENDY STAINTON ROGERS 2003

Most typically, a person is presented with a set of statements about some topic, and is asked to rank-order them (usually from "agree" to "disagree"). This operation is referred to as "Q sorting." This sorting is usually done on a forced distribution. The participant was asked to fit their sort to a quasi-normal distribution. This distribution was originally adopted in Q-methodology because it was believed to make some of the subsequent statistical procedures slightly more straightforward. Brown (1971, 1985) however, has shown that the shape of the Q-sort distribution is of no great statistical significance, but he argues that there are good reasons for retaining the traditional layout:

- Participants conceptually easily understand it
- Participants find it straightforward to sort statements on to it
- It makes participants express a series of relative preferences between items

Layout for a 55-statement Q-sort, as used in this study, is shown below. In this configuration, 55 statements can be sorted – one on to each of the rectangular boxes. The sorter can place nine statements in each of the 0 (neutral), six in the +1 and -1 columns, five in each of +2, +3 and -2 -3 columns and so on.

Ultimately the range of the distribution depends on the number of statements and its kurtosis: according to Brown (1980), most Q-sets contained 40 to 50 statements, employing a relatively flattened distribution with a range of -5 to +5.

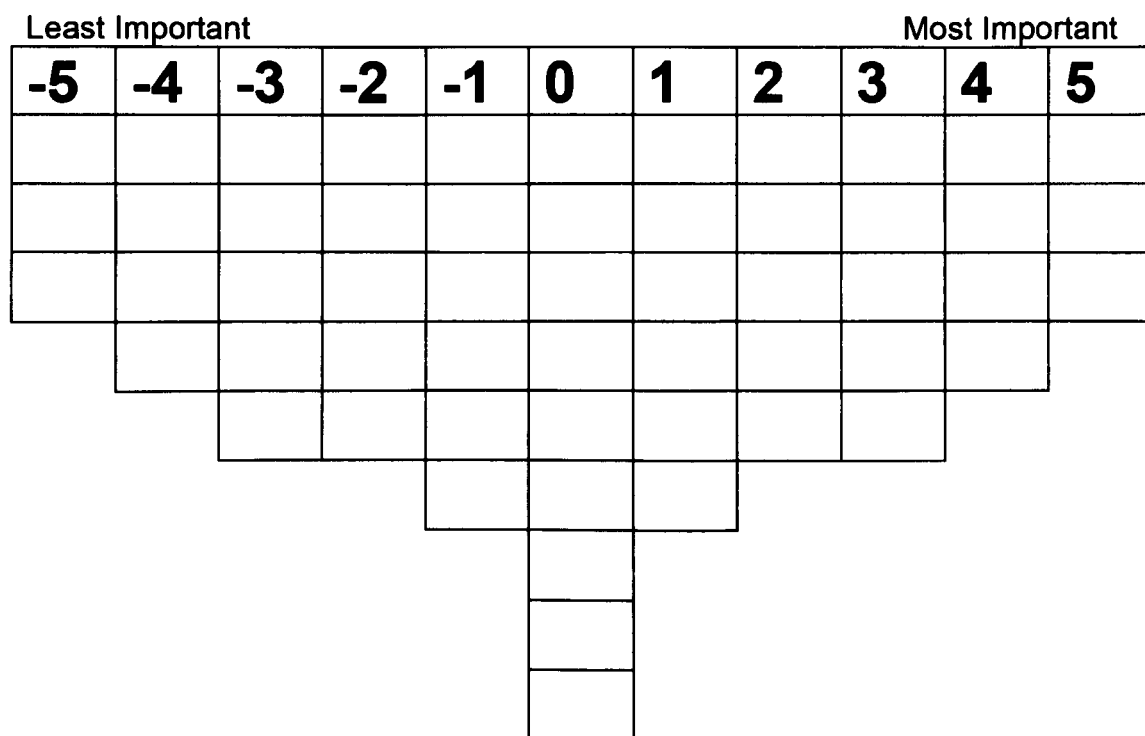


FIGURE -6 Q-SORT CONFIGURATION

8.5.3. Working towards 'finite diversity'; the P-set, Q-set and sampling in Q-method

Q operates on this assumption of 'finite diversity', a concept probably derived from Keynes's (1921) principles of atomic uniformity and limited independent variety, i.e. in a nutshell, that outcomes (e.g., a person's Q sort) are the result of an almost infinite number of small effects, but that they take a relatively small number of distinct forms (Q factors). These principles were incorporated into factor theory by Burt (1940) and generally accepted by Stephenson (1953). Q-

methodological study therefore requires only a limited number of respondents: "...all that is required are enough subjects to establish the existence of a factor for purposes of comparing one factor with another [...] P-sets, as in the case of Q-samples, provide breadth and comprehensiveness so as to maximise confidence that the major factors at issue have been manifested using a particular set of persons and a particular set of Q statements" (Brown, 1980).

Through the sampling of the 'hypothetical universe of propositions' in the concourse of debate (Rex Stainton Rogers, 1995) participants in the study are chosen to facilitate the expectation of "finite diversity" (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers, 1990). What a Q-methodology study then yields through such "finite diversity" is a picture of the competing social constructions of an issue.

In order to engage with the "finite diversity"; it is not that participants are sampled- rather they are chosen to facilitate the expectation of "finite diversity" (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers, 1990). Q-methodology facilitates this "finite diversity" by allowing the researcher to see if there are any patterns shared across individuals, and what are the diversity of accounts, without this resulting in chaotic multiplication. The mathematics set out by Stephenson deal with this diversity- "finite diversity" asserting that there are a limited number of ordered patternings within a particular discourse domain. Q works on this assumption and attempts to reveal those ordered patternings (factors or discourses) in a structured and interpretable manner.

It is important to state that whilst Q-methodology involves the pulling together of individual understandings into something broader than an individual understanding, it does this with no pretension to 'universality'. Lincoln and Guba (1985: p110) describe seeking a valid form of knowledge that is *'more than knowing the unique. ...but not a search for nomic generalisations'*, and this description helpfully captures the aims of a Q-methodology study.

Large numbers of participants are not required for a Q-methodology study (Watts and Stenner, 2005). So therefore, in a 'traditional' Q-methodology study

only a modest number of participants are involved – usually from one to thirty (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers, 1990). Q-methodology tends to use person samples that are small because of its intensive orientation; this is a preference in keeping with the behaviorist dictum that it is more informative to study one subject for 1,000 hours than 1,000 subjects for 1 hour (McKeown and Thomas, 1988).

In Q-methodology the participants are referred to as the P-set and it is usually smaller than the Q-set (Brouwer, 1999). The aim is to have four or five persons defining each anticipated viewpoint, which are often two to four, and rarely more than six. It is important to note that the P-set is not random. It is a structured sample of respondents who are theoretically relevant to the problem under consideration; for instance, persons who are expected to have a clear and distinct viewpoint regarding the problem and, in that quality, may define a factor (Brown, 1980).

The Q-sorts are subjected to factor analysis. This *by person* process of exploratory factor analysis compares each participant's whole Q-sort with the whole Q-sort of every other participant. The analysis identifies groups of people who have sorted the statements in a similar way. Each of these groupings is expressed mathematically as a factor and each factor represents a different viewpoint on the issue.

Q-methodologists in general seek to identify and describe minority voices alongside the majority discourse (Brown 2006). An unspoken implication of an interest in quantifying the distribution of viewpoints could be to privilege, or pay greater attention to, those viewpoints that have more adherents. This is not the case in Q-methodology- as Brown (1980) puts it 'he (Stephenson) looked at individuals measuring rather than being measured'.

8.5.4. *Validity*

Due to its qualitative aspects, questions of research validity in Q-methodology are assessed differently than in quantitative research method. The sorting is wholly subjective, in the sense that it represents a point of view. Each individual's rank-ordered set of statements is considered a valid expression of their opinion. Therefore, there is no external criterion by which to appraise an individual's perspective. The various aspects of validity relevant in Q-methodology are addressed further in the following ways:

- Content validity of the Q-set is addressed through thorough sampling of the concourse around the topic in question. This would include thorough literature review and by eliciting expert advice of those associated with the field under investigation for example.
- Face validity of the text and statement wording is addressed through using a balance between naturalistic and structured sources and by leaving those statements in the participants' (participants within the concourse) words, edited only slightly for grammar and readability.
- Item validity in Q-methodology is understood differently than in more traditional survey research. In Q-methodology, one *expects* the meaning of an item to be interpreted individually and the meaning of how each item is individually interpreted becomes apparent in the rank ordering.

8.5.5. *Reliability and generalisability*

Q-methodology makes no claims to describe the distribution of the viewpoints within the broader population. Q-studies do not, for example, say '...67% of people hold a factor 1 viewpoint, 25% a factor 2 viewpoint...' and so on. For some this may appear to be a shortcoming. Anyone wishing to establish the distribution of the different viewpoints within the wider population could use items from the concourse to construct a questionnaire that would answer this, through the use of a representative sample, or by sampling the total population,

and the use of standard variance analysis techniques to analyse the data collected.

Most Q-methodology studies are exploratory and qualitative in nature and tend not to use random sample design and because Q-methodology is a small sample investigation of human subjectivity based on sorting of items of unknown reliability and results from Q-methodological studies have often been criticised for their reliability hence the possibility for generalisation (Thomas and Baas, 1992). This criticism flounders once one accepts that in Q-methodology, generalization claims rarely occur beyond the immediate set of participants. Statistical reliability, regarding the ability to generalise sample results to the wider or perhaps even general population, is not a focus in Q-methodology. The results of a Q-methodological study are the distinct subjectivities about a topic that are operant, not the percentage of the sample (or the general population) that adheres to any of them.

According to Brown (1980) an important notion behind Q-methodology is that only a limited number of distinct viewpoints exist on any topic. Any well-structured Q-set, containing the wide range of existing opinions on the topic, will reveal these perspectives. Once identified, their occurrence among the larger population could be, if required, subsequently tested using large group surveys and standard variance analytic methods.

The most important type of reliability for Q is replicability: will the same condition of instruction lead to factors that are reliable across similarly structured yet different Q-samples and when administered to different sets of persons? Studies pertaining to this have shown:

- Based on the findings of two pairs of tandem studies, this limited number of comparative studies indicates that different sets of statements structured in different ways can nevertheless be expected to converge on the same conclusions Thomas and Baas (1992) concluded that scepticism over this type of reliability is unwarranted. (Thomas & Baas, 1992).

- Test-retest studies have shown that administering the same instrument (Q-sample) to the same individuals at two points in time have typically resulted in correlation coefficients of .80 or higher (Brown, 1980).
- Q-methodology has also produced consistent findings in two more types of study comparisons: first, when administering the same set of statements to different person samples; and second, when pursuing the same research topic, but using different sets of statements and different person samples (Dennis, 1988 in Valetta and Wigger, 1997).
- For reliability and stability of identified factor viewpoints, findings were consistent when the instrument was administered to different person samples, and even when different Q-samples and person samples were used (Valetta and Wigger, 1997).

8.6. The research questions within the context of the epistemology and methodology

Now that the social constructionist commitments, validity and reliability of the study has been established, and the Q-methodology outlined, it seems pertinent to revisit the research questions within the context of the stated epistemology and methodology.

The focus of this study is upon shared 'social subjectivities' and knowing more about what works in psychological coaching with teachers. It is also about reflexivity in psychological practice. The aim is it not to exhaustively chart all possibilities- rather it is to investigate the extent of the commonality present in the data. As we learn below, the Q-methodology card-sorting task renders a hyper-astronomical number of possible statement configurations available to our participants and a complete lack of consensus may prevail (Watts and Stenner, 2005). The key question herein therefore is whether the commonality of the configurations produced by our participants reveals anything beyond a massive number of disparate positions; the actuality is that a successful Q-methodology study should uncover a simple structure within the views investigated and, without resorting to overdue reduction, an array of viewpoints and factor descriptions that are rich, inclusive, divergent and of huge practical use.

By trying to achieve this the study aims to provide further discursive resource towards what works in a specific domain of educational psychology practice, solution focused coaching, and to reconstruct the solution focused approach for coaching work with teachers. In doing this, primary voice is given to coachees. Given that the research questions ground the study, and the methods of knowledge production are set against them, we revisit them below. In respect of school staff (teachers and teaching assistants) that have taken part in solution focused coaching:

1. How do coachees view effective solution focused coaching?
2. In what ways may these views inform psychological coaching practice?

It has been established that these questions will be addressed through the use of Q-methodology approach to the shared “social subjectivities” of solution focused coaching. This will involve an essentially gestalt procedure, and show the primary ways in which themes are interconnected or otherwise related by the participants. The outcomes of this will provide an explorative and warranted knowledge framework identifying which aspects of a solution-focused approach are most effective in solution focused coaching in schools from the point of view of coachees.

8.6.1. *Setting social change in motion using the appreciative eye*

In answering the research questions one of the emancipatory aims of this study is to engage service users in the construction of the solution focused psychological coaching process they participate in. The use of Q-methodology in this study, and specifically the British social constructionist dialect of , is very much reflective of a “deconstructive” way of working. In approaching the study I read and gained energy from Schutz’s (1972) notion of “worrying the taken-for-granted” and the Stainton Rogers idea of psychological research as “perturbation” (1990); in this study the aim is to reconstruct SFBT / psychological coaching towards coachee’s views of what works and of what is important. In this study “deconstruction” is perturbation as method; “worrying the taken-for granted” becomes manifest through the use of Q-methodology in the British dialect (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers, 1990).

It is important to state that the perturbation in this case is stated towards what works well and to consider the reasons for this. Patton (1997) suggests the impact of an evaluation program comes not just from the findings but also from going through the thinking process that the evaluation requires. In the case of

this study the thinking process involves reconstructing psychological coaching from the point of view of school staff on what is important in the work being effective. Q-methodology involves the development of the set of descriptors that capture the concourse of views on a subject- the Q-set; this entails setting the parameters for the phenomena in question, known as the concourse of views. In this case the concourse is – what is happening, what is in place, what are the circumstances that lead to successful solution focused coaching.

It is asserted that an appreciative posture is in part an ideological motivated and epistemological choice. Social constructionism rejects the notion of a singular material social world, which may be mapped with accuracy and objectivity. Such objectivity is viewed as a rhetorical achievement, played-out through language games set within communities of knowledge (Gergen, 1996). Therefore this study sets out with the aim to construct new knowledge about effective psychological coaching. This appreciative stance is psychologically motivated and resonant with the mode of coaching being investigated and the epistemological commitments within the study *and* the solution focused coaching practice; these resonances being related earlier to the concept of working isomorphically. An underpinning to the appreciative approach taken in the study is adequately illustrated through reference to Watkins and Mohr's (2001) statement of the basic beliefs of an appreciative approach:

The intervention into any human system is fateful and ... the system will move in the direction of the first questions that are asked. In other words, in an evaluation using an appreciative framework, the first questions asked would focus on stories of best practices, positive moments, greatest learning, successful processes, generative partnerships and so on. This enables the system to look for its successes and creates images of a future built on those positive experiences from the past (Watkins and Mohr, 2001. p.183).

Ultimately this study will be of practical use beyond the author's own learning, through the notion of achievable social action and policy in relation to social

focused and psychological coaching. A constructionist stance, where the “heliocentric effect” (the effect of the moth flying towards the light) of a positively stated inquiry (i.e. inquiry into solution focused psychological coaching when at its most effective) takes centre stage, provides the discursive means towards such emancipatory ends. Potential for learning and change has been placed at the onset of the study. Preskill and Coghlan (2003) stress that evaluation through an appreciative framework can increase participation in evaluation, maximize the use of results and build capacity for learning and change in organizations and communities. For these reasons, and the others explored above, an appreciative posture was adopted in this study.

8.7. Q-Methodology Procedure in this study

8.7.1. Sampling the concourse and developing the Q-set

Developing a Q-set begins with work to collect what Stephenson (1953) termed a broad concourse of statements. The aim here is to identify and record as many of the ideas, comments and views that are in circulation around the topic. Brown (1980: p173) describes the concourse as ‘...the corpus of verbiage uttered vis-à-vis the subject matter under investigation.’ Similarly Watts and Stenner (2005) state the importance of this stage in a Q-study, emphasising that it provides the foundation for the subsequent stages of analysis.

To help develop the Q-set ideas, comments and views were gathered under three fundamental aspects of therapeutic/collaborative process suggested by Jones (2000):

1. Attitude, behaviour and explicative experiences of the coachee;
2. Actions, attitudes, approaches, behaviour of the coaches;
3. The nature of the dyadic interaction, the environment and atmosphere of the coaching sessions.

To fully sample the concourse of views naturalistic sources included all the remarks or views heard on the topic of ‘effective solution focused coaching’, and these were cumulatively noted. These included: comments from psychological coaches in supervision and group collaboration; comments and feedback from coaching clients and key stakeholders who noticed the effects and features of the work; remarks made by participants in workshops run by the author using a solution focused coaching framework (which is, in essence, coaching at the group and organizational levels).

To augment this a series of specific structured activities took place:

- Consideration of the academic and professional literature concerned with what makes solution-focused work effective, and the ingredients to this approach
- Consideration of the literature on effective psychological coaching
- Interview transcripts with two workers who use a solution-focused approach- a solution focused family therapist, and an experienced senior educational psychologist who practices as solution focused coach
- Interviews with two coaching clients who had expressed particular satisfaction with the solution focused approach
- Feedback from a question posted upon “EPNET⁵” regarding what are the features of effective collaborative and solution-focused work
- A collection of examples of effective SF practice from across the children’s services
- Feedback from 32 EPs at a Nottinghamshire EPS whole service event
- The feedback from all the completed evaluations from the completed SFC projects- in response to the question “what worked well?” in SFC
- A detailed written collaboration evaluation made about what worked well in a piece of SF leadership coaching, a piece that was based upon feedback from the clients themselves

Given as aforementioned that it has been suggested that the central tenets of SFBT may well prove to be the essential constructs underpinning a psychology of coaching (Grant, 2001) a detailed consideration of the ideas of what works in SFBT was also undertaken, through a detailed literature review, and statements added to the concourse that seemed pertinent to the notion of what makes solution-focused work effectively.

⁵ EPNET is a internet discussion network used by a significant number of EPs to discuss professional issues, request advice and information from colleagues and engage in debate

A year of collecting the concourse resulted in nearly 200 different statements germane to 'effective solution focused work / coaching'. This initial concourse was then edited down to form a 52-item pilot Q-set. This was achieved by reorganizing the entire concourse against the three overarching themes suggested by Jones (2000), and then condensing the statements in each theme towards a manageable total number of statements.

The move from the larger concourse to the smaller Q-set has similarities to the process in survey methodology of moving from the population of possible respondents down to the sample of respondents who are invited to take part in the survey. In both cases the key issue is representativeness – the need to be confident that the sample is representative of the population (which in this case is the population of views on the topic area). To facilitate this the 200 statements were handwritten onto pieces of card (about the size of a credit card) and laid out in three groups. The reduction of the 200 statements to the 52-item pilot q-set proved to be mainly a process of removing duplication and picking those statements whose wording most aptly illustrated the subject material of each theme being tapped into by the statements.

It was also important to ensure that statements were worded as well as possible. Oppenheim's (1992) classic guide to questionnaire design was a particularly helpful source of advice. The process involved:

- Editing statements to improve intelligibility and reduce ambiguity
- Editing to make sure that each statement used contained a single idea
- Removing duplications
- Where possible choosing phrasing that sounded naturalistic rather than formal

The 52 items were then typed onto envelope labels and stuck onto pieces of card.

8.7.2. *Piloting the Q-set*

The pilot Q-set was trialed with six teachers who were actively receiving “follow-up coaching” support. Follow-up coaching is provided to those teachers who request further coaching support after taking part in a whole school coaching project. In order to embed reflexivity throughout the study (Rex Stainton Rogers, 1995) the pilot participants were asked to provide some brief supplementary comments on; their interpretation of the meanings and implications of any statements that were of major personal importance; any further relevant statements they would like to have seen included in the study; and any statements that they had not understood.

Key messages from discussion with the participants after the Q-sorting sessions were:

- The task was enjoyable and was, at times, described as cathartic
- They would have been happy to work with a total number of statements of between 50 and 60
- Some statements still appeared to be repetitive
- Some participants felt the statements had more than one aspect embedded in them
- The pilot procedures often took between 45- 60 minutes

The final Q-set developed totaled 55 statements, through the removal of repetitions and the addition of a number of statements when deconstructing statements identified as having more than one aspect embedded in them. The statements were also re-ordered somewhat as it appeared that some distinctive, yet subtly related, statements, were closely ordered. The final Q-set is provided in the appendix (appendix 1).

8.7.3. *The person sample or P-set*

In a Q–methodological study representativeness of participants is required only to the extent that the researcher seeks to ensure that a full range of viewpoints can be collected (Brown, 1980: 54). Q-methodology makes no claims to quantify the proportions of people who might conform to a particular viewpoint. As detailed earlier, concerns about representativeness in a Q–study are more significant in terms of the representativeness of the statements in the Q–set. Here it is important that all the key issues appear in the Q–set and it is for this reason that, (as described in the method section), great care was taken to construct the set of statements. In exploring a topic, Q methodologists ensure that they collect the views of enough people to make it likely that all the viewpoints emerged. A Q–study does not make claims about the distribution of each of those viewpoints in the population; there is no need for the sample to match the demographic characteristics of the general population (Brown, 1986).

Large numbers of participants are not required for a Q-methodology study (Watts and Stenner, 2005). In a ‘traditional’ Q-methodology study only a modest number of participants are involved – usually from one to thirty (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers, 1990). Therefore, 27 participants from three schools were recruited for the study. Each of the three schools had been identified through the Nottinghamshire School Improvement Service as requiring whole staff coaching support, and all had received solution focused coaching within the last school term, or were receiving support at the time of participation in the Q sort. All participants had experience of at least two coaching sessions.

The participant sample displayed the following demographic characteristics:

Ages: Ranged from 23 years to 53 years, with an average of 36.9 years.

Gender: 24 female participants, 3 male participants.

Teaching Experience: Ranged from 0 years (newly qualified teachers in their first year of teaching) to 27 years, with an average of 7 years.

Teaching Role: 1 head teacher, 1 deputy head teacher, 1 assistant head teacher, 19 classroom teachers, 5 teaching assistants.

8.7.4. The procedure for administration of the Q-set

The Q-sorts were collected over a 4 week period during the summer term 2008. The researcher negotiating visits to the participating schools and the release of teachers to undertake the sorting. Teacher's completed q-sorts individually and each administration took between 45 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes. Participants were asked to sort the Q-sample under a 'condition of instruction' that is:

'Please sort these statements, from those you agree with most to those you agree with least, as being important for effective psychological coaching',

The researcher then remained passive as the participants worked with the Q-set. This sorting was done on a 'forced distribution' lay out, as detailed earlier, with the participant required to fit their sort to a quasi-normal distribution. The principal psychological advantage of the forced distribution is that it makes participants express a series of relative preferences between items. This makes some of the subsequent statistical procedures slightly more straightforward.

8.7.5. Summary of the Methodology Procedure

It would be useful at this point to summarise the Q-methodology process. It is a linear, stage-by-stage process, which allows a researcher to deal with human subjectivity towards complex social phenomena. The table below offers a summary of the process; it ends with the Q analysis and that will be considered in detail in the following chapter. The stages of the study are in chronological order with some details of the key activities within each stage.

Table-2 Summary of the stages of the study design and the key activities within each stage

Stage of the Procedure	Key Activities within each stage
The SFC intervention	Whole school Solution Focused Coaching projects are initiated, with each member of staff receiving 3 coaching sessions. At any time up to 10 schools are receiving the intervention, which normally lasts between 2 and 3 school terms
The concourse	The author draws on a range of sources- both structured and naturalistic, to gather statements that capture the flow of communicability surrounding the topic at hand. The author investigated the concourse for around 1 year, gathering over 200 statements
The Q-sample or Q-set	The concourse is worked into a useable Q-set, a set of statements drawn from the concourse that capture the diverse complexity surrounding the topic. A Q-set was made of around 55 statements germane to the question "what are the ingredients for effective SFC"
Piloting the Q-set	The draft Q-set is piloted, to allow ambiguities in the language of the Q items to be ironed out and for it to be tested and improved for usability. 6 teachers in receipt of "follow on" SFC participated in this stage and changes made to the Q-set in response to their feedback.
The person sample of P-set	The P-set entails a structured sample of respondents who are theoretically relevant to the problem under consideration; for instance, persons who are expected to have a clear and distinct viewpoint regarding the problem and, in that quality, may define a factor (Brown, 1980). In this case teachers who have received at least 2 SFC sessions within the last term. 27 teachers participated as the P-set.
Administration of the Q-set	A programme of individual sessions with the 27 teachers, to enable them to complete the Q sort procedure, laying down 55 statements on a response grid to show what they view to be important and not important in effective SFC.
Q analysis	The administrated Q-sets were recorded on a score sheet that can be inputted into specialist software to allow a statistical analysis of the combined Q-sets, and to reveal the "simple structure" of the subjectivities revealed through the Q process

9). Q-Methodology Results

9.1. Overview of a Q-Methodology Analysis

Q-methodology correlates subjective views of an issue. In short this means Q methodology, and the complex mathematics it uses, helps to explore the 'shape' or 'pattern' of views on a topic. Using Q-methodology we can see what views group together, and what other views are held as their antithesis. Q views the individual person as a complex configuration of events, and it is in this sense that the basic law of Q-methodology can be seen to be "the transformation of subjective events into operant factor structure" (Stephenson, 1970-1980: p205). Q-methodology achieves this through the analysis of the 'concourse' (the flow) of opinion on a topic to develop a Q-set, which in turn is sorted by the study participants. The Q-methodology data is provided in a series of tables and provides the resources upon which an investigation can be made. In this case, what makes for effective solution focused coaching from the point of view of coachees.

Data analysis in Q-methodology typically involves the sequential application of three sets of statistical procedures: correlation, factor analysis, and the computation of factor scores. Through these procedures it aims to reveal mathematically how subjective worlds are constructed and experienced, this means finding a factor solution where as many of the participants as possible load significantly on one or other of the factors. Put very clearly, what is sought in a Q-study is a factor solution that provides a representation of *as many of the participants' viewpoints as possible*.

To this end, the most widely used Q-analysis software is Schmolck's and Brown's 'PQMethod' (Schmolck 2002). The author was fortunate to be coached in the use of this software by Dr John Bradley, Principal Educational Psychologist, and with his help became familiar with the use of PQMethod. The following section provides a detailed explanation on the handling of data using PQMethod. This explanation of the step-by-step mathematical and practical

issues arising in the analysis should assist those readers unfamiliar with Q-methodological studies. Following this the Q analysis results are presented.

9.2. Q analysis- an explanation of the handling of the data

9.2.1. Q analysis- factors, rotation and prototype viewpoints

What is being correlated and factor analysed in a Q–study are the whole Q–sorts to reach what Watts and Stenner (2005) call the ‘overall configuration’. In order to achieve this, the completed Q-sorts are analysed by factor analysis. When the Q-sorts have been collected and transferred to a scoring sheet, a correlation matrix is created which correlates each Q-sort with every other Q-sort in the sample. The analysis correlates each person’s whole Q–sort with the whole Q–sorts of all other participants and extracts matrix factors that represent the different viewpoints expressed by the participants.

Extracting the significant factors within the views of the participants is traditionally undertaken using centroid analysis, the oldest of the factor techniques and sometimes known as “simple summation method”. This method offers a potentially infinite number of rotated factor solutions. Usually three to six factors are chosen and retained for further examination. The aim at this point is to explore several different factor solutions by rotating them manually to see which gives a solution in which most participants are loaded significantly on one of the factors. Such manual rotation, or judgmental rotation and significant loading, are considered below.

Without this rotation the factor solution provided by the PQMethod software rely only on Eigenvalues⁶, a mathematical measure that represents the amount of variance accounted for by a factor, as a guide. In the first stage of analysis the PQMethod programme extracted 3, 4 and 5 unrotated factors, using Centroid Factor Analysis. From this it emerged that the three-factor solution gave high

⁶ An Eigenvalue conceptually represents the amount of the variance accounted for by a factor.

numbers of participants (23 out of a possible 27) loading significantly on one factor or another.

Judgmental (manual) rotation was used to then 'fine tune' the factors. The mathematical methods employed within Q-methodology approximate a *simple structure* and manual rotation allows us, for good reason, to abandon this simple structure for the "simplest structure" (Brown, 1980). This involves the rotation, by a few degrees, of the factors to find the 'best fit' for the data in terms of accounting for a higher number of the participants through the new emerging factor solution.

In this study, minor judgmental (manual) rotation was undertaken to produce a factor solution in which 24 out of a possible 27 participants loaded significantly on one of the factors (while not also being significantly loaded on any other factor). On rotation, the previous 3 factor solution- that had already accounted for 23 out of the 27 participants- brought into play one further participant. On rotation the factors held 9, 8 and 7 participants respectively on factors 1, 2 and 3. This 3 factor solution appeared particularly robust, as it balanced, ...'the need for parsimony (relatively few factors) against the need for plausibility (sufficient factors to account for the data)' (Fabrigar, Wegener et. al., 1999). It also met with a rule of thumb suggested as a safeguard of factor reliability, suggested by Watts and Stenner (2005a), that each factor must have at least two sorts that load significant on it. Also, conveniently, each of the factors had at least three participants who loaded significantly on them and *on no other factor*. This means the factors met the traditional criteria of having Eigenvalues greater than 1⁷, usually termed the Kaiser 1 rule – (Ferguson and Cox, 1993). It is important to note that the factor reliability achieved in the study is very high.

This use of manual rotation is perhaps a delineating facet that identifies the British Dialect of Q. Therefore its use is worthy of an explanation and justification. A basis for its use is captured by the comments of preeminent

⁷ The Eigenvalue of a factor is determined by the sum of the squared loadings on the factor. Conceptually this represents the amount of variance accounted by a factor.

British Q methodologists Watts and Stenner (2005a) who remark: 'Why, argue enthusiasts for hand rotation, let a computer decide which point of view to adopt on one's data?' It is important to recognise that there has been no change to any of the data when judgemental rotation has taken place – the participants' scores from their Q-sorts remain unchanged and all that has changed is how the factors have been located. It is also important to state that in centroid method- Stephenson's factor method of choice- there is no mathematically correct solution out of the infinite number possible (MCKeown and Thomas, 1988). Having no "correct solution", it allows for abductive logic and to change the vantage point from which the data are viewed.

The PQMethod program helps by constructing a prototype factor viewpoint for each factor. It does this by a process of weighted averages, and this is explained in detail below. In short PQMethod averages the Q-sorts of the people who are pure cases of the factor (they load significantly on the factor and on no other factor), but weights this average in proportion to the size of the participants loading on the factor. This re-expression, as the "best estimate" of the Q sort that represents each factor, provides a typical Q sort that captures that viewpoint.

9.2.2. *Understanding factors as viewpoints*

As outlined above, the final phase of Q analysis provides a factor solution, or factor viewpoints, that provides a representation of *as many of the participants' viewpoints as possible*. The phrase 'a factor viewpoint' requires some explanation. Watts and Stenner (1992) state: 'In effect, the Q-sorts of all the participants that load significantly on a given factor are merged to yield a single (factor exemplifying) Q-sort' and that this 'serves as an interpretable *best estimate* of the pattern or item configuration which characterises that factor' (Watts and Stenner, 2005a). Thomas and Baas (1992) suggest that the output of a sample of Q-methodology should be seen as 'proof of a cognitive pattern' (Thomas and Baas, 1992) a pattern that can be referred to as revealing an

underlying “simple structure” (Brown, 1980). It is important to note that the emphasis is on the shared and the group, rather than the individual. Q-methodology pursues constructions of a social kind (Moscovici, 1981) and typically focuses on the range of viewpoints that are shared by specific groups of participants. That is how factors may be understood, as viewpoints, as overviews of the relevant viewpoints *on the subject*.

9.2.3. *Interpreting the Emergent Factors*

The final stage of Q analysis is to interpret the emergent factors. Interpretation may be aided by theory, previous research and/or cultural knowledge (Watts and Stenner, 2005). This final stage of analysis will be dealt with in context, through the discussion of the Q Study Results in chapter 11, and it is sufficient to say at this point that the interpretative task- framed in this study as the discussion of the Q-methodology results- involves “the production of a series of summarizing accounts, each of which explicates the viewpoint being expressed by a particular factor” (Watts and Stenner, 2005: 82).

Ascription of meaning to the factors, what the author has referred to in this study as *theorizing the findings*, comes *after* their discovery and not before, and because the data is “public” and others are free to examine the factor arrays and arrive at their own conclusions, the authors interpretations remain open to debate. This is viewed as a virtue of the method (McKeown and Thomas, 1988). The complete report from which any interpretative findings are made, come in the form of the table of results generated by the PQMethod, the input of data and the judgmental/manual (minor) rotation. The factor viewpoints, which are captured through the a single exemplifying Q-sort, can then be seen to have illuminated the complex social phenomena which in this study is collaborative work between teachers and educational psychologists in the form of Solution Focused Coaching. The varieties of Solution Focused Coaching experience can then be explored for robust associations with a host of attitudinal and choice

variables, and by theorizing the findings it is possible to create a symbiotic link between the findings of the study and the wider context of relevant psychological discourses.

Such a factor interpretation is seen as a hermeneutic process engaging the perspective of the researcher (Shinebourne, 2009). It is with this final stage in mind- where the researcher voice becomes very clear and apparent as they attempt to interpret and theorize what has been made visible through the factor viewpoints- that the following results section contains the detailed tables that form the Q analysis output. The position of these tables in the body of the text of the methodology section is a mindful choice as it ensures they retain a “public” status.

To support the reader and ensure the data is transparent and retain a public status an explanatory text is included at the beginning of the presentation of the results to act as a key to the subsequent tables of results, with further introduction provided to each of the tables/stages as they are presented in turn. This is to ensure the reader is able to access the data in as meaningful a way as is possible.

9.2.4. Summary of the explanation of the handling of the data

In summary:

- A robust three factor solution has been produced which appears plausible and parsimonious
- There are at least 3 actors that load on each factor rising to the safeguard of factor reliability
- The factor solution meets the Kaiser 1 rule-that three participants load significantly and exclusively on each factor and that the factors have Eigenvalues of greater than 1

- The factor array uncovered- and the wealth of interpretative data provided- now allows for the production of a series of summarizing accounts, each of which explicates the viewpoint being expressed by a particular factor

Firstly the tables of results are presented.

9.3. The tables of results

9.3.1. A guide to reading the tables of results

In preparation for the large amount of information PQMethod provides, It might be helpful to re-cap at this point. As we shall see, Q-methodology make no psychometric claims (Watts and Stenner, 2005) and it should not be viewed as a “statistical method of data reduction that identifies and combines sets of dependent variables that are measuring similar things” (McGarty and Haslam, 2003). Rather, Q-methodology adopts a multiple-participant format in order to make sense of highly complex and socially contestable concepts and subject matters from the point of view of the group of participants involved (Stainton Rogers, 1995; Watts and Stenner, 2003a). Q is essentially a gestalt procedure, which means that what it does show us are the primary ways in which themes are being interconnected or otherwise related by a group of participants and is an “openly holistic” approach (Watts and Stenner, 2005). PQMethod, the statistical programme used to analyse the completed Q sorts, produces a series of tables. These tables are generally termed the factor arrays, and provide the detailed “qualiquantalogical” data (Stenner and Stainton Rogers, 2004) thus highlighting how Q methodology’s quantitative features render it a highly unusual qualitative research method (Curt, 1994; Watts and Stenner, 2003a).

At this point it is appropriate to re-consider what is meant by a factor in this context. Each of the factors extracted represents an idealized or prototypical Q-sort (or viewpoint). Factor analysis, after all, is a method for simplifying data. The data could be described by saying ‘there are 27 viewpoints here and they are...’ and then describing each of the 27 viewpoints as represented by the 27 Q-sorts. Factor analysis however allows the data to be simplified or grouped so it is possible to say ‘Although there are 27 viewpoints here, you can describe how most participants see the issue by reference to 3 viewpoints (or factors) which give a fair summary of the way these people see things.’

Thus the data provided by PQMethod is rich and, to those new to Q-methodology, complex. It has been said that the files/tables provided by dedicated Q-methodology packages can be confusing for the uninitiated (Watts and Stenner, 2005). To provide a balance for this, figure 7 provides a discursive introductory step, a summary treatment of sorts, of what each cluster of tables of data produced by PQMethod tell us about the factor solution, and how they may be interpreted. Then, as each actual cluster of tables are presented, further statistical and technical interpretative detail will be provided for each.

Rotated Factor Matrix (table 3, page 114) This individual table maps the loadings of each participant's Q sort on the 3 extracted, and rotated, factors. Significant loadings are marked with a star and are in bold. Loading means the extent to which a person's actual sort correlates with the theoretical sort represented by the factor. For a load to be significant it must load on only one factor and the loading should account for more than half the variance. This table shows the distribution of these loadings, and how the 3-factor solution accounts for 24 of the 27 participants (24 of the participants are marked with a star and are in bold).

Factor arrays (table 4, 5 and 6 on pages 117, 118, 119) The Q sorts of all the participants that load significantly on a given factor are merged together to yield a single factor exemplifying Q sort and this cluster of tables serve as an interpretable "best estimate" of the pattern or item configuration that characterises that factor (Watts and Stenner, 2005).

Summary of how each of the three factors values each of the statements (table 7, page 121) This table summarises how each of the three factors values each of the statements, and provides an easy way of comparing how each factor deals with each statement.

Statements placed in rank order, with those with highest consensus first, and the statements with most disagreement last. How each factor values each statement is also included (table 8, page 123) This table sorts the statements on the basis of the extent to which they provoked agreement or disagreement between the factor views. The statements are placed in rank order, with those with highest consensus first, and the statements with the most disagreement last. How each factor values each statement is also included in the table.

Distinguishing statements and statements that do not distinguish (tables 9, 10, 11 and 12 pages 125-126) Distinguishing statements are those that provoke a significantly different response for each particular factor. The table shows those statements that have achieved a statistical significance of at least $P < .05$ and also those statements reaching a level of $P < .01$ are marked with an asterisk (*). Distinguishing statements are in effect those that characterize that factor viewpoint – the issues on which they are set apart from the other viewpoints. At the end of this group of tables is the consensus table showing statements that do not distinguish between any pair of factors. In effect these are the statements on which all participants agreed.

Descending array of differences between each factor (table 13, 14 and 15, pages 128, 129 and 130) In this group of tables the data permits a detailed comparison of the differences between each of the pairs of factors. There are some mathematical peculiarities to this table that need to be understood. In reading these tables it must be remembered that it is at both ends of the table that the differences between the viewpoints are found. The PQMethod programme ranks the differences by the mathematical size of the difference. However the programme ranks the differences with a negative sign below the positive differences and the neutral items. In the middle of the table are the items on which there is broad agreement between the two factor viewpoints that are being compared.

FIGURE -7 AN OVERVIEW OF THE Q-METHODOLOGY DATA PRODUCED BY PQMETHOD AND USED FOR FACTOR INTERPRETATION

9.3.2. The rotated factor matrix

Table-3, on page 114, shows the rotated factor matrix, which in this study is a three-factor solution. The left hand column lists the participants, each with a number to ensure anonymity. The next three columns each represent the three factors (numbered 1-3). The five-figure number entered in each of the cells shows the participant's loading on each of the factors. The loading is in effect the degree of correlation between the participant's Q-sort and each of the factors. The PQMethod programme identifies factor loadings that are pure cases. That is, where the participant loads significantly only on one factor⁸. The programme has flagged these exemplar cases of the Factor 1 viewpoint with an X.

We can look at the row of data for participant 14 as an example; this shows how participant 14 constructed a sort that correlates 0.6086 with Factor 1; 0.3146 with factor 2 and 0.0345 with factor 3. Participant 14 also loads significantly only on factor 1, as denoted by an X.

QSORT	1	2	3
14	0.6086X	0.3146	0.0345

The Q sorts of those participants that load significantly only on one factor have further importance in the analytic process. Figure-8, on the page 113, shows the data for the 9 participants who load significantly on Factor 1 (and no other factor). These 9 people have constructed similar Q-sorts and can be said to view the issue – what is important for effective solution focused coaching – in a broadly similar way. Factor analysis then, through PQMethod, reduces their 9 similar viewpoints to one viewpoint, which is termed Factor 1. It is this factor

⁸ Loading means the extent to which a person's actual sort correlates with the theoretical sort represented by the factor. The criteria for loading is that the q-sort loads onto one factor only, and that the loading accounts for more than half the variance with the between the actual sort and the theoretical sort represented by the factor.

analysed data that allows PQMethod to present a single factor exemplifying Q sort for each factor array (see tables 4, 5 and 6, on pages 117, 119 and 120). PQMethod undertakes this process for each of the three factors. The strength of the factor solution uncovered by the study is illustrated by virtue of the fact that 24 of the 27 participants (Q sorts) are able to load significantly onto one of the factors, and also that the distribution of the significant loadings meets the Kaiser 1 rule, that each factor have at least that three participants load significantly and exclusively on each factor. Also each factor has a balanced share of significant loading Q sorts (participants).

QSORT	1	2	3
5	0.3997X	0.3186	0.1326
7	0.5956X	0.1111	0.4420
9	0.5089X	0.0520	0.2522
10	0.6723X	0.2520	0.3612
11	0.4716X	0.2437	0.3206
14	0.6086X	0.3146	0.0345
17	0.4683X	-0.0246	0.3509
20	0.5782X	0.1780	0.4846
27	0.6071X	0.1544	0.5519

FIGURE -8 EXTRACT FROM THE ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX (TABLE 2) SUMMARISING PARTICIPANTS WHO LOAD ON FACTOR 1.

Table-3 The rotated factor matrix showing how each participant's Q sort maps onto the 3 extracted factors, with significant loadings marked with a X

Loadings			
QSORT	1	2	3
1	0.4756	0.4967	0.3709
2	0.3323	0.1598	0.5551X
3	0.2153	0.2854	0.6130X
4	0.3582	0.4467X	0.2140
5	0.3997X	0.3186	0.1326
6	0.3778	0.4806X	0.2049
7	0.5956X	0.1111	0.4420
8	0.3230	-0.0214	0.5112X
9	0.5089X	0.0520	0.2522
10	0.6723X	0.2520	0.3612
11	0.4716X	0.2437	0.3206
12	0.3190	0.6252X	0.3038
13	0.0061	0.5436X	0.4229
14	0.6086X	0.3146	0.0345
15	0.1644	0.0953	0.4761X
16	0.0880	0.0639	0.7705X
17	0.4683X	-0.0246	0.3509
18	0.1679	0.6106X	0.4884
19	0.0157	-0.0319	0.2611
20	0.5782X	0.1780	0.4846
21	0.3773	0.0887	0.5727X
22	0.0088	0.7654X	0.1558
23	0.2271	0.4468X	0.2943
24	0.2914	0.6417X	0.2161
25	0.3519	0.4009	0.5306
26	0.3650	0.3007	0.4963X
27	0.6071X	0.1544	0.5519

9.3.3. The factor arrays of the 3 factors

In tables 4 to 6 the Q sorts of all the participants that load significantly on a given factor are merged together to yield a single factor exemplifying Q sort. This serves as an interpretable “best estimate” of the pattern. Figure 9 provides an extract from Table 6– the factor array for Factor 3, as a convenient example:

Factor 3		
Statement	No.	Z-SCORES
I will feel properly listened to and understood	47	2.145
a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achieveme	33	1.800
I should feel very safe and able to talk openly	48	1.708
I will feel the coach is on my side	51	1.591
the work has to be confidential	14	1.449
being told the positive things the coach notices about me	49	1.418
Help to detail goals and small steps towards them	3	1.269

FIGURE-9 AN EXTRACT FROM THE FACTOR 3 ARRAY

It can be seen that for this factor (viewpoint), statements 47, 33 and 48 are the most strongly agreed with statements. They would, in an idealised Q-sort representing the Factor 3 position, be located as the three +5 (most important), statements. Similarly statements 51, 14, 49 and 3 are then the next most agreed with statements respectively and in an idealised Factor 3 sort they would be placed in the four spaces for +4 agreements.

Figure- 10 shows how this would appear on a Q-sort layout.

Least Important

Most Important

[illegible]

FIGURE-10 USING THE FACTOR ARRAY TO CONSTRUCT A FACTOR 3 Q-SORT.

This illustrates how, by referring to the factor arrays, it is possible to see what a 'Factor 3' Q-sort looks like.

Table-4 Factor 1 array showing the single factor exemplifying Q sort

Statement	No.	Z-SCORES
efforts to be validated and recognised	34	1.961
I will feel properly listened to and understood	47	1.942
being told the positive things the coach notices about me	49	1.926
I wont be judged, I will be appreciated	31	1.754
I ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have	23	1.703
I should feel very safe and able to talk openly	48	1.264
I am doing the best I can under the circumstances I am in	30	1.009
we will develop a range of possible solutions I can draw on	12	0.880
the work has to be confidential	14	0.878
know how the school came to be offered coaching and the aims	55	0.869
the work is about thinking outside the box	35	0.859
the starting point is my needs not external agenda	8	0.808
a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achieveme	33	0.801
I will feel the coach is on my side	51	0.792
helped to fully activate and tap into my knowledge and skill	45	0.656
introduces new ways of seeing, new ways of understanding	10	0.590
work is collaborative- we will be equal partners	29	0.534
we talk about things that are helping at present	40	0.502
identify elements of my goals already in place	19	0.480
supported in elaborating on my personal approach	27	0.420
At the beginning I am asked what my best hopes are	17	0.288
Observation should be the teachers choice	54	0.271
work helps organise my thinking plan priorities	7	0.224
the goals of the work are an ongoing topic of discussion	18	0.131
I will have chance to say what wont work for me	44	0.104
I am helped to arrive at my own solutions	38	0.098
the coach shares the rational behind their approach	5	0.093
I can raise any matter to do with school	13	0.026
the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion	25	0.010
feeling emotionally comfortable with the coach is essential	42	-0.035
Help to detail goals and small steps towards them	3	-0.048
develop an image of things when fully resolved	36	-0.055
At end agree tasks to practice change	2	-0.069
will be exploring what other people will notice	15	-0.233
at the end of session we summarise and plan small steps	16	-0.272
the coach is interested in what I have been doing to improve	41	-0.356
we will work out what will be different when things better	11	-0.586
we will check up on progress between sessions	32	-0.590
there will be a set number of sessions	4	-0.620
coping skills are a topic for discussion	21	-0.620
the chance to sit back and reflect	24	-0.625
we work somewhere private and away from work	37	-0.686
questions that take through a process of personal changes	26	-0.787
we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions	46	-0.837
work life nad personal life are able to be topics	6	-0.844
we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress	39	-1.002
work out feelings that would tell me the work is worthwhile	28	-1.119
problem free talk helps	9	-1.233
the coach writes to me between each session	52	-1.336
it is important to have some choice in who coaches me	20	-1.356
I will be using a journal to support the work	50	-1.381
I value the coach giving a written record	1	-1.434
the discussion lasts a full hour	43	-1.754
I find it useful to make my own notes during sessions	53	-1.765
choosing the gender of the coach	22	-2.229

Table-5 Factor 2 array showing the single factor exemplifying Q sort

Statement	No.	Z-SCORES
a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achieve	33	1.994
I ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have	23	1.704
we will develop a range of possible solutions I can draw on	12	1.584
helped to fully activate and tap into my knowledge and skill	45	1.480
being told the positive things the coach notices about me	49	1.423
introduces new ways of seeing, new ways of understanding	10	1.375
supported in elaborating on my personal approach	27	1.148
at the end of session we summarise and plan small steps	16	1.058
we talk about things that are helping at present	40	0.990
I will have chance to say what wont work for me	44	0.965
I am helped to arrive at my own solutions	38	0.935
Help to detail goals and small steps towards them	3	0.865
the work is about thinking outside the box	35	0.812
efforts to be validated and recognised	34	0.751
identify elements of my goals already in place	19	0.572
will be exploring what other people will notice	15	0.572
the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion	25	0.513
At the beginning I am asked what my best hopes are	17	0.445
At end agree tasks to practice change	2	0.410
work out feelings that would tell me the work is worthwhile	28	0.394
we will check up on progress between sessions	32	0.382
I am doing the best I can under the circumstances I am in	30	0.370
copng skills are a topic for discussion	21	0.352
the coach is interested in what I have been doing to improve	41	0.284
I wont be judged, I will be appreciated	31	0.150
questions that take through a process of personal changes	26	0.123
we will work out what will be different when things better	11	0.111
the coach shares the rational behind their approach	5	0.071
work helps organise my thinking plan priorities	7	0.055
develop an image of things when fully resolved	36	-0.015
the chance to sit back and reflect	24	-0.019
the goals of the work are an ongoing topic of discussion	18	-0.172
I will feel properly listened to and understood	47	-0.194
work is collaborative- we will be equal partners	29	-0.247
I can raise any matter to do with school	13	-0.331
Observation should be the teachers choice	54	-0.345
problem free talk helps	9	-0.347
feeling emotionally comfortable with the coach is essential	42	-0.423
the work has to be confidential	14	-0.542
I will feel the coach is on my side	51	-0.584
the starting point is my needs not external agenda	8	-0.686
work life nad personal life are able to be topics	6	-0.739
the coach writes to me between each session	52	-0.741
I value the coach giving a written record	1	-0.771
we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress	39	-0.792
we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions	46	-0.819
know how the school came to be offered coaching and the aims	55	-0.833
I should feel very safe and able to talk openly	48	-0.921
I will be using a journal to support the work	50	-1.137
there will be a set number of sessions	4	-1.416
I find it useful to make my own notes during sessions	53	-1.470
we work somewhere private and away from work	37	-1.851
the discussion lasts a full hour	43	-1.977
it is important to have some choice in who coaches me	20	-2.136
choosing the gender of the coach	22	-2.382

Table-6 Factor 3 array showing the single factor exemplifying Q sort

Statement	No.	Z-SCORES
I will feel properly listened to and understood	47	2.145
a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achieveme	33	1.800
I should feel very safe and able to talk openly	48	1.708
I will feel the coach is on my side	51	1.591
the work has to be confidential	14	1.449
being told the positive things the coach notices about me	49	1.418
Help to detail goals and small steps towards them	3	1.269
I ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have	23	1.194
we will develop a range of possible solutions I can draw on	12	1.028
supported in elaborating on my personal approach	27	0.853
we talk about things that are helping at present	40	0.841
the coach is interested in what I have been doing to improve	41	0.814
the starting point is my needs not external agenda	8	0.620
I can raise any matter to do with school	13	0.557
at the end of session we summarise and plan small steps	16	0.552
I am helped to arrive at my own solutions	38	0.516
work is collaborative- we will be equal partners	29	0.468
I wont be judged, I will be appreciated	31	0.351
I am doing the best I can under the circumstances I am in	30	0.340
feeling emotionally comfortable with the coach is essential	42	0.325
work life nad personal life are able to be topics	6	0.290
helped to fully activate and tap into my knowledge and skill	45	0.259
efforts to be validated and recognised	34	0.225
the chance to sit back and reflect	24	0.207
develop an image of things when fully resolved	36	0.203
problem free talk helps	9	0.150
identify elements of my goals already in place	19	0.143
questions that take through a process of personal changes	26	0.112
Observation should be the teachers choice	54	0.097
introduces new ways of seeing, new ways of understanding	10	0.020
At end agree tasks to practice change	2	0.015
coping skills are a topic for discussion	21	0.000
we will work out what will be different when things better	11	-0.068
work helps organise my thinking plan priorities	7	-0.127
the work is about thinking outside the box	35	-0.159
the coach shares the rational behind their approach	5	-0.170
work out feelings that would tell me the work is worthwhile	28	-0.406
know how the school came to be offered coaching and the aims	55	-0.500
we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions	46	-0.513
the goals of the work are an ongoing topic of discussion	18	-0.532
we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress	39	-0.584
I find it useful to make my own notes during sessions	53	-0.802
we will check up on progress between sessions	32	-0.811
will be exploring what other people will notice	15	-0.877
At the beginning I am asked what my best hopes are	17	-0.901
the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion	25	-0.984
I will have chance to say what wont work for me	44	-1.037
I value the coach giving a written record	1	-1.179
there will be a set number of sessions	4	-1.388
it is important to have some choice in who coaches me	20	-1.537
we work somewhere private and away from work	37	-1.632
I will be using a journal to support the work	50	-1.684
choosing the gender of the coach	22	-1.741
the coach writes to me between each session	52	-1.915
the discussion lasts a full hour	43	-2.012

9.3.4. *Factor Q sort values for each statement*

Table 7, on page 121, makes it possible to see how each factor would score each of the statements. By now the logic of the tables should be apparent. For the sake of clarity however one line of Table-7 can be examined:

Statement	Factor			
	No.	1	2	3
the work has to be confidential	14	3	-2	4

Taking statement 14 ‘the work has to be confidential’ as an example. The factor 1 position on this statement is moderate agreement (3); the factor 2 position is mild to moderate disagreement (-2) and factor 3 agrees strongly (4).

Table-7 Summary of how each of the three factors values each of the statements

Statement	No.	Factor Arrays		
		1	2	3
I value the coach giving a written record	1	-4	-3	-3
At end agree tasks to practice change	2	-1	1	0
Help to detail goals and small steps towards them	3	0	3	4
there will be a set number of sessions	4	-2	-4	-4
the coach shares the rational behind their approach	5	0	0	-1
work life nad personal life are able to be topics	6	-3	-2	1
work helps organise my thinking plan priorities	7	1	0	-1
the starting point is my needs not external agenda	8	3	-2	2
problem free talk helps	9	-3	-1	0
introduces new ways of seeing, new ways of understanding	10	2	4	0
we will work out what will be different when things better	11	-1	0	-1
we will develop a range of possible solutions I can draw on	12	3	5	3
I can raise any matter to do with school	13	0	-1	2
the work has to be confidential	14	3	-2	4
will be exploring what other people will notice	15	-1	2	-3
at the end of session we summarise and plan small steps	16	-1	3	2
At the beginning I am asked what my best hopes are	17	1	1	-3
the goals of the work are an ongoing topic of discussion	18	0	0	-2
identify elements of my goals already in place	19	1	2	0
it is important to have some choice in who coaches me	20	-4	-5	-4
coping skills are a topic for discussion	21	-2	1	0
choosing the gender of the coach	22	-5	-5	-5
I ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have	23	4	5	3
the chance to sit back and reflect	24	-2	0	0
the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion	25	0	2	-3
questions that take through a process of personal changes	26	-2	0	0
supported in elaborating on my personal approach	27	1	4	3
work out feelings that would tell me the work is worthwhile	28	-3	1	-1
work is collaborative- we will be equal partners	29	2	-1	2
I am doing the best I can under the circumstances I am in	30	4	1	1
I wont be judged, I will be appreciated	31	4	0	1
we will check up on progress between sessions	32	-1	1	-2
a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achieveme	33	2	5	5
efforts to be validated and recognised	34	5	2	1
the work is about thinking outside the box	35	3	2	-1
develop an image of things when fully resolved	36	0	0	0
we work somewhere private and away from work	37	-2	-4	-4
I am helped to arrive at my own solutions	38	0	3	2
we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress	39	-3	-3	-2
we talk about things that are helping at present	40	1	3	3
the coach is interested in what I have been doing to improve	41	-1	0	3
feeling emotionally comfortable with the coach is essential	42	0	-1	1
the discussion lasts a full hour	43	-5	-5	-5
I will have chance to say what wont work for me	44	0	3	-3
helped to fully activate and tap into my knowledge and skill	45	2	4	1
we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions	46	-3	-3	-2
I will feel properly listened to and understood	47	5	-1	5
I should feel very safe and able to talk openly	48	4	-3	5
being told the positive things the coach notices about me	49	5	4	4
I will be using a journal to support the work	50	-4	-4	-4
I will feel the coach is on my side	51	2	-2	4
the coach writes to me between each session	52	-4	-2	-5
I find it useful to make my own notes during sessions	53	-5	-4	-2
Observation should be the teachers choice	54	1	-1	0
know how the school came to be offered coaching and the aims	55	3	-3	-1

9.3.5. *Consensus vs. disagreement statements*

Table-8, on page 123, sorts the statements on the basis of the extent to which they provoked agreement or disagreement between the factor views. To illustrate this we see at the top of the table that statements 36 and 43 achieved the highest level of consensus, with statement 36 gaining a neutral level of agreement from all factors and statement 43 receiving across the board very strong disagreement. Similarly at foot of the table statements 48 and 47 provoked the highest levels of disagreement between the factors with a range of responses from -3 to +5 (statement 48) and -1 to +5 (statement 47).

Table-8 Statements placed in rank order, with those with highest consensus first, and the statements with most disagreement last. How each factor values each statement is also included

Statement	No.	Factor Arrays		
		1	2	3
develop an image of things when fully resolved	36	0	0	0
the discussion lasts a full hour	43	-5	-5	-5
the coach shares the rational behind their approach	5	0	0	-1
work helps organise my thinking plan priorities	7	1	0	-1
we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions	46	-3	-3	-2
we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress	39	-3	-3	-2
identify elements of my goals already in place	19	1	2	0
we talk about things that are helping at present	40	1	3	3
At end agree tasks to practice change	2	-1	1	0
I will be using a journal to support the work	50	-4	-4	-4
being told the positive things the coach notices about me	49	5	4	4
I ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have	23	4	5	3
Observation should be the teachers choice	54	1	-1	0
the goals of the work are an ongoing topic of discussion	18	0	0	-2
I value the coach giving a written record	1	-4	-3	-3
choosing the gender of the coach	22	-5	-5	-5
we will work out what will be different when things better	11	-1	0	-1
supported in elaborating on my personal approach	27	1	4	3
we will develop a range of possible solutions I can draw on	12	3	5	3
feeling emotionally comfortable with the coach is essential	42	0	-1	1
I am doing the best I can under the circumstances I am in	30	4	1	1
it is important to have some choice in who coaches me	20	-4	-5	-4
I am helped to arrive at my own solutions	38	0	3	2
the chance to sit back and reflect	24	-2	0	0
work is collaborative- we will be equal partners	29	2	-1	2
I can raise any matter to do with school	13	0	-1	2
there will be a set number of sessions	4	-2	-4	-4
coping skills are a topic for discussion	21	-2	1	0
I find it useful to make my own notes during sessions	53	-5	-4	-2
questions that take through a process of personal changes	26	-2	0	0
the work is about thinking outside the box	35	3	2	-1
the coach is interested in what I have been doing to improve	41	-1	0	3
the coach writes to me between each session	52	-4	-2	-5
we work somewhere private and away from work	37	-2	-4	-4
helped to fully activate and tap into my knowledge and skill	45	2	4	1
work life nad personal life are able to be topics	6	-3	-2	1
we will check up on progress between sessions	32	-1	1	-2
a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achieveme	33	2	5	5
at the end of session we summarise and plan small steps	16	-1	3	2
Help to detail goals and small steps towards them	3	0	3	4
introduces new ways of seeing, new ways of understanding	10	2	4	0
problem free talk helps	9	-3	-1	0
will be exploring what other people will notice	15	-1	2	-3
At the beginning I am asked what my best hopes are	17	1	1	-3
work out feelings that would tell me the work is worthwhile	28	-3	1	-1
the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion	25	0	2	-3
the starting point is my needs not external agenda	8	3	-2	2
I wont be judged, I will be appreciated	31	4	0	1
efforts to be validated and recognised	34	5	2	1
know how the school came to be offered coaching and the aims	55	3	-3	-1
I will have chance to say what wont work for me	44	0	3	-3
the work has to be confidential	14	3	-2	4
I will feel the coach is on my side	51	2	-2	4
I will feel properly listened to and understood	47	5	-1	5
I should feel very safe and able to talk openly	48	4	-3	5

9.3.6. Distinguishing statements and statements that do not distinguish

Distinguishing statements are those that provoke a significantly different response for a particular factor. Therefore there are three tables, one for each Factor, and these are table-9 on page 127, table-10 on page 127, and table-111 on page 128. These tables shows those statements that have achieved a statistical significance of at least $P > 0.05$ and those statements reaching a level of $P > 0.01$ are marked with an asterisk (*).

Distinguishing statements are in effect those that characterize that factor viewpoint – the issues on which they are set apart from the other viewpoints.

At the end of this group of tables is the consensus table (

Table-12 on page 128) showing statements that do not distinguish between any pair of factors. In effect these are the statements on which all participants agreed.

Table-9 Distinguishing statements for factor 1

(P < .05 ; Asterisk (*) indicates significance at P < .01)

Both the factor Q-sort value (headed RNK) and the normalised score are shown.

Statement	No.	Factors		
		1	2	3
		RNK SCORE	RNK SCORE	RNK SCORE
efforts to be validated and recognised	34	5 1.96*	2 0.75	1 0.22
being told the positive things the coach notices about me	49	5 1.93	4 1.42	4 1.42
I wont be judged, I will be appreciated	31	4 1.75*	0 0.15	1 0.35
I am doing the best I can under the circumstances I am in	30	4 1.01*	1 0.37	1 0.34
the work has to be confidential	14	3 0.88	-2 -0.54	4 1.45
know how the school came to be offered coaching and the aims	55	3 0.87*	-3 -0.83	-1 -0.50
a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achieveme	33	2 0.80*	5 1.99	5 1.80
I will feel the coach is on my side	51	2 0.79*	-2 -0.58	4 1.59
introduces new ways of seeing, new ways of understanding	10	2 0.59	4 1.38	0 0.02
I will have chance to say what wont work for me	44	0 0.10*	3 0.97	-3 -1.04
the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion	25	0 0.01	2 0.51	-3 -0.98
Help to detail goals and small steps towards them	3	0 -0.05*	3 0.87	4 1.27
will be exploring what other people will notice	15	-1 -0.23*	2 0.57	-3 -0.88
at the end of session we summarise and plan small steps	16	-1 -0.27*	3 1.06	2 0.55
the coach is interested in what I have been doing to improve	41	-1 -0.36*	0 0.28	3 0.81
we will work out what will be different when things better	11	-1 -0.59	0 0.11	-1 -0.07
there will be a set number of sessions	4	-2 -0.62*	-4 -1.42	-4 -1.39
coping skills are a topic for discussion	21	-2 -0.62	1 0.35	0 0.00
the chance to sit back and reflect	24	-2 -0.62	0 -0.02	0 0.21
we work somewhere private and away from work	37	-2 -0.69*	-4 -1.85	-4 -1.63
questions that take through a process of personal changes	26	-2 -0.79*	0 0.12	0 0.11
work out feelings that would tell me the work is worthwhile	28	-3 -1.12*	1 0.39	-1 -0.41
problem free talk helps	9	-3 -1.23*	-1 -0.35	0 0.15
the coach writes to me between each session	52	-4 -1.34	-2 -0.74	-5 -1.92

Table-10 Distinguishing statements for factor 2

(P < .05 ; Asterisk (*) indicates significance at P < .01)

Both the factor Q-sort value (headed RNK) and the normalised score are shown.

No. Statement	No.	Factors		
		1	2	3
		RNK SCORE	RNK SCORE	RNK SCORE
we will develop a range of possible solutions I can draw on	12	3 0.88	5 1.58	3 1.03
helped to fully activate and tap into my knowledge and skill	45	2 0.66	4 1.48*	1 0.26
introduces new ways of seeing, new ways of understanding	10	2 0.59	4 1.38*	0 0.02
at the end of session we summarise and plan small steps	16	-1 -0.27	3 1.06	2 0.55
I will have chance to say what wont work for me	44	0 0.10	3 0.97*	-3 -1.04
efforts to be validated and recognised	34	5 1.96	2 0.75	1 0.22
will be exploring what other people will notice	15	-1 -0.23	2 0.57*	-3 -0.88
the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion	25	0 0.01	2 0.51	-3 -0.98
work out feelings that would tell me the work is worthwhile	28	-3 -1.12	1 0.39*	-1 -0.41
we will check up on progress between sessions	32	-1 -0.59	1 0.38*	-2 -0.81
the coach is interested in what I have been doing to improve	41	-1 -0.36	0 0.28	3 0.81
I will feel properly listened to and understood	47	5 1.94	-1 -0.19*	5 2.14
work is collaborative- we will be equal partners	29	2 0.53	-1 -0.25*	2 0.47
the work has to be confidential	14	3 0.88	-2 -0.54*	4 1.45
I will feel the coach is on my side	51	2 0.79	-2 -0.58*	4 1.59
the starting point is my needs not external agenda	8	3 0.81	-2 -0.69*	2 0.62
the coach writes to me between each session	52	-4 -1.34	-2 -0.74	-5 -1.92
I should feel very safe and able to talk openly	48	4 1.26	-3 -0.92*	5 1.71
it is important to have some choice in who coaches me	20	-4 -1.36	-5 -2.14	-4 -1.54

Table-11 Distinguishing statements for factor 3
(P < .05 ; Asterisk (*) indicates significance at P < .01)

Both the factor Q-sort value (headed RNK) and the normalised score are shown.

Statement	No.	Factors		
		1	2	3
		RNK SCORE	RNK SCORE	RNK SCORE
I will feel the coach is on my side	51	2 0.79	-2 -0.58	4 1.59*
the work has to be confidential	14	3 0.88	-2 -0.54	4 1.45
I ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have	23	4 1.70	5 1.70	3 1.19
the coach is interested in what I have been doing to improve	41	-1 -0.36	0 0.28	3 0.81
I can raise any matter to do with school	13	0 0.03	-1 -0.33	2 0.56
at the end of session we summarise and plan small steps	16	-1 -0.27	3 1.06	2 0.55
work life nad personal life are able to be topics	6	-3 -0.84	-2 -0.74	1 0.29*
efforts to be validated and recognised	34	5 1.96	2 0.75	1 0.22
introduces new ways of seeing, new ways of understanding	10	2 0.59	4 1.38	0 0.02
the work is about thinking outside the box	35	3 0.86	2 0.81	-1 -0.16*
work out feelings that would tell me the work is worthwhile	28	-3 -1.12	1 0.39	-1 -0.41*
I find it useful to make my own notes during sessions	53	-5 -1.77	-4 -1.47	-2 -0.80*
will be exploring what other people will notice	15	-1 -0.23	2 0.57	-3 -0.88*
At the beginning I am asked what my best hopes are	17	1 0.29	1 0.44	-3 -0.90*
the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion	25	0 0.01	2 0.51	-3 -0.98*
I will have chance to say what wont work for me	44	0 0.10	3 0.97	-3 -1.04*
choosing the gender of the coach	22	-5 -2.23	-5 -2.38	-5 -1.74
the coach writes to me between each session	52	-4 -1.34	-2 -0.74	-5 -1.92

Table-12 Consensus statements: Those that do not distinguish between any pairs of factors.

All these statements are non-significant at P>.01 and those flagged with an asterisk (*) are also non-significant at P>.05.

No. Statement	No.	Factors		
		1	2	3
		RNK SCORE	RNK SCORE	RNK SCORE
At end agree tasks to practice change	2	-1 -0.07	1 0.41	0 0.01
the coach shares the rational behind their approach	5*	0 0.09	0 0.07	-1 -0.17
work helps organise my thinking plan priorities	7*	1 0.22	0 0.06	-1 -0.13
identify elements of my goals already in place	19*	1 0.48	2 0.57	0 0.14
choosing the gender of the coach	22	-5 -2.23	-5 -2.38	-5 -1.74
I ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have	23	4 1.70	5 1.70	3 1.19
develop an image of things when fully resolved	36*	0 -0.06	0 -0.01	0 0.20
we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress	39*	-3 -1.00	-3 -0.79	-2 -0.58
we talk about things that are helping at present	40	1 0.50	3 0.99	3 0.84
the discussion lasts a full hour	43*	-5 -1.75	-5 -1.98	-5 -2.01
we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions	46*	-3 -0.84	-3 -0.82	-2 -0.51
being told the positive things the coach notices about me	49	5 1.93	4 1.42	4 1.42
I will be using a journal to support the work	50	-4 -1.38	-4 -1.14	-4 -1.68
Observation should be the teachers choice	54	1 0.27	-1 -0.34	0 0.10

9.3.7. Descending array of differences between each factor

There are three tables in this cluster- table-13, table 14 and table-15, on pages 130, 131 and 132 respectively. In this group of tables PQMethod is providing data that permits a detailed comparison of the differences between each of the pairs of factors. There are some mathematical peculiarities to this table that need to be understood. In reading these tables it must be remembered that it is at both ends of the table that the differences between the viewpoints are found. The PQMethod programme ranks the differences by the mathematical size of the difference. However the programme ranks the differences with a negative sign below the positive differences and the neutral items. In the middle of the table are the items on which there is broad agreement between the two factor viewpoints.

Table-13 Descending array of differences between factors 1 and 2

Statement	No.	Factor1	Factor2	Difference
I should feel very safe and able to talk openly	48	1.264	-0.921	2.185
I will feel properly listened to and understood	47	1.942	-0.194	2.136
know how the school came to be offered coaching and the aims	55	0.869	-0.833	1.702
I wont be judged, I will be appreciated	31	1.754	0.150	1.604
the starting point is my needs not external agenda	8	0.808	-0.686	1.494
the work has to be confidential	14	0.878	-0.542	1.421
I will feel the coach is on my side	51	0.792	-0.584	1.376
efforts to be validated and recognised	34	1.961	0.751	1.210
we work somewhere private and away from work	37	-0.686	-1.851	1.165
there will be a set number of sessions	4	-0.620	-1.416	0.796
work is collaborative- we will be equal partners	29	0.534	-0.247	0.781
it is important to have some choice in who coaches me	20	-1.356	-2.136	0.780
I am doing the best I can under the circumstances I am in	30	1.009	0.370	0.639
Observation should be the teachers choice	54	0.271	-0.345	0.616
being told the positive things the coach notices about me	49	1.926	1.423	0.503
feeling emotionally comfortable with the coach is essential	42	-0.035	-0.423	0.388
I can raise any matter to do with school	13	0.026	-0.331	0.357
the goals of the work are an ongoing topic of discussion	18	0.131	-0.172	0.302
the discussion lasts a full hour	43	-1.754	-1.977	0.223
work helps organise my thinking plan priorities	7	0.224	0.055	0.169
choosing the gender of the coach	22	-2.229	-2.382	0.153
the work is about thinking outside the box	35	0.859	0.812	0.048
the coach shares the rational behind their approach	5	0.093	0.071	0.023
I ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have	23	1.703	1.704	-0.001
we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions	46	-0.837	-0.819	-0.018
develop an image of things when fully resolved	36	-0.055	-0.015	-0.041
identify elements of my goals already in place	19	0.480	0.572	-0.092
work life nad personal life are able to be topics	6	-0.844	-0.739	-0.105
At the beginning I am asked what my best hopes are	17	0.288	0.445	-0.156
we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress	39	-1.002	-0.792	-0.209
I will be using a journal to support the work	50	-1.381	-1.137	-0.243
I find it useful to make my own notes during sessions	53	-1.765	-1.470	-0.295
At end agree tasks to practice change	2	-0.069	0.410	-0.479
we talk about things that are helping at present	40	0.502	0.990	-0.488
the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion	25	0.010	0.513	-0.503
the coach writes to me between each session	52	-1.336	-0.741	-0.595
the chance to sit back and reflect	24	-0.625	-0.019	-0.606
the coach is interested in what I have been doing to improve	41	-0.356	0.284	-0.641
I value the coach giving a written record	1	-1.434	-0.771	-0.663
we will work out what will be different when things better	11	-0.586	0.111	-0.697
we will develop a range of possible solutions I can draw on	12	0.880	1.584	-0.704
supported in elaborating on my personal approach	27	0.420	1.148	-0.728
introduces new ways of seeing, new ways of understanding	10	0.590	1.375	-0.785
will be exploring what other people will notice	15	-0.233	0.572	-0.806
helped to fully activate and tap into my knowledge and skill	45	0.656	1.480	-0.824
I am helped to arrive at my own solutions	38	0.098	0.935	-0.837
I will have chance to say what wont work for me	44	0.104	0.965	-0.862
problem free talk helps	9	-1.233	-0.347	-0.886
questions that take through a process of personal changes	26	-0.787	0.123	-0.910
Help to detail goals and small steps towards them	3	-0.048	0.865	-0.913
copng skills are a topic for discussion	21	-0.620	0.352	-0.972
we will check up on progress between sessions	32	-0.590	0.382	-0.972
a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achieveme	33	0.801	1.994	-1.193
at the end of session we summarise and plan small steps	16	-0.272	1.058	-1.330
work out feelings that would tell me the work is worthwhile	28	-1.119	0.394	-1.513

Table-14 Descending array of differences between factors 1 and 3

Statement	No.	Factor1	Factor2	Difference
efforts to be validated and recognised	34	1.961	0.225	1.736
I wont be judged, I will be appreciated	31	1.754	0.351	1.403
know how the school came to be offered coaching and the aims	55	0.869	-0.500	1.369
At the beginning I am asked what my best hopes are	17	0.288	-0.901	1.190
I will have chance to say what wont work for me	44	0.104	-1.037	1.141
the work is about thinking outside the box	35	0.859	-0.159	1.019
the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion	25	0.010	-0.984	0.994
we work somewhere private and away from work	37	-0.686	-1.632	0.946
there will be a set number of sessions	4	-0.620	-1.388	0.767
I am doing the best I can under the circumstances I am in	30	1.009	0.340	0.669
the goals of the work are an ongoing topic of discussion	18	0.131	-0.532	0.663
will be exploring what other people will notice	15	-0.233	-0.877	0.644
the coach writes to me between each session	52	-1.336	-1.915	0.579
introduces new ways of seeing, new ways of understanding	10	0.590	0.020	0.570
I ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have	23	1.703	1.194	0.509
being told the positive things the coach notices about me	49	1.926	1.418	0.508
helped to fully activate and tap into my knowledge and skill	45	0.656	0.259	0.396
work helps organise my thinking plan priorities	7	0.224	-0.127	0.351
identify elements of my goals already in place	19	0.480	0.143	0.337
I will be using a journal to support the work	50	-1.381	-1.684	0.304
the coach shares the rational behind their approach	5	0.093	-0.170	0.263
the discussion lasts a full hour	43	-1.754	-2.012	0.258
we will check up on progress between sessions	32	-0.590	-0.811	0.221
the starting point is my needs not external agenda	8	0.808	0.620	0.187
it is important to have some choice in who coaches me	20	-1.356	-1.537	0.181
Observation should be the teachers choice	54	0.271	0.097	0.175
work is collaborative- we will be equal partners	29	0.534	0.468	0.066
At end agree tasks to practice change	2	-0.069	0.015	-0.084
we will develop a range of possible solutions I can draw on	12	0.880	1.028	-0.148
I will feel properly listened to and understood	47	1.942	2.145	-0.202
I value the coach giving a written record	1	-1.434	-1.179	-0.255
develop an image of things when fully resolved	36	-0.055	0.203	-0.259
we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions	46	-0.837	-0.513	-0.324
we talk about things that are helping at present	40	0.502	0.841	-0.338
feeling emotionally comfortable with the coach is essential	42	-0.035	0.325	-0.360
we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress	39	-1.002	-0.584	-0.418
I am helped to arrive at my own solutions	38	0.098	0.516	-0.419
supported in elaborating on my personal approach	27	0.420	0.853	-0.434
I should feel very safe and able to talk openly	48	1.264	1.708	-0.444
choosing the gender of the coach	22	-2.229	-1.741	-0.488
we will work out what will be different when things better	11	-0.586	-0.068	-0.518
I can raise any matter to do with school	13	0.026	0.557	-0.531
the work has to be confidential	14	0.878	1.449	-0.570
coping skills are a topic for discussion	21	-0.620	0.000	-0.620
work out feelings that would tell me the work is worthwhile	28	-1.119	-0.406	-0.712
I will feel the coach is on my side	51	0.792	1.591	-0.799
at the end of session we summarise and plan small steps	16	-0.272	0.552	-0.824
the chance to sit back and reflect	24	-0.625	0.207	-0.831
questions that take through a process of personal changes	26	-0.787	0.112	-0.900
I find it useful to make my own notes during sessions	53	-1.765	-0.802	-0.963
a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achieveme	33	0.801	1.800	-0.999
work life nad personal life are able to be topics	6	-0.844	0.290	-1.135
the coach is interested in what I have been doing to improve	41	-0.356	0.814	-1.170
Help to detail goals and small steps towards them	3	-0.048	1.269	-1.317
problem free talk helps	9	-1.233	0.150	-1.384

Table-15 Descending array of differences between factors 2 and 3

Statement	No.	Factor1	Factor2	Difference
I will have chance to say what wont work for me	44	0.965	-1.037	2.002
the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion	25	0.513	-0.984	1.497
will be exploring what other people will notice	15	0.572	-0.877	1.450
introduces new ways of seeing, new ways of understanding	10	1.375	0.020	1.355
At the beginning I am asked what my best hopes are	17	0.445	-0.901	1.346
helped to fully activate and tap into my knowledge and skill	45	1.480	0.259	1.221
we will check up on progress between sessions	32	0.382	-0.811	1.193
the coach writes to me between each session	52	-0.741	-1.915	1.174
the work is about thinking outside the box	35	0.812	-0.159	0.971
work out feelings that would tell me the work is worthwhile	28	0.394	-0.406	0.801
we will develop a range of possible solutions I can draw on	12	1.584	1.028	0.556
I will be using a journal to support the work	50	-1.137	-1.684	0.547
efforts to be validated and recognised	34	0.751	0.225	0.526
I ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have	23	1.704	1.194	0.509
at the end of session we summarise and plan small steps	16	1.058	0.552	0.507
identify elements of my goals already in place	19	0.572	0.143	0.430
I am helped to arrive at my own solutions	38	0.935	0.516	0.418
I value the coach giving a written record	1	-0.771	-1.179	0.408
At end agree tasks to practice change	2	0.410	0.015	0.395
the goals of the work are an ongoing topic of discussion	18	-0.172	-0.532	0.360
coping skills are a topic for discussion	21	0.352	0.000	0.352
supported in elaborating on my personal approach	27	1.148	0.853	0.295
the coach shares the rational behind their approach	5	0.071	-0.170	0.240
a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achieveme	33	1.994	1.800	0.194
work helps organise my thinking plan priorities	7	0.055	-0.127	0.182
we will work out what will be different when things better	11	0.111	-0.068	0.179
we talk about things that are helping at present	40	0.990	0.841	0.149
the discussion lasts a full hour	43	-1.977	-2.012	0.035
I am doing the best I can under the circumstances I am in	30	0.370	0.340	0.030
questions that take through a process of personal changes	26	0.123	0.112	0.011
being told the positive things the coach notices about me	49	1.423	1.418	0.005
there will be a set number of sessions	4	-1.416	-1.388	-0.029
I wont be judged, I will be appreciated	31	0.150	0.351	-0.201
we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress	39	-0.792	-0.584	-0.208
develop an image of things when fully resolved	36	-0.015	0.203	-0.218
we work somewhere private and away from work	37	-1.851	-1.632	-0.219
the chance to sit back and reflect	24	-0.019	0.207	-0.226
we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions	46	-0.819	-0.513	-0.306
know how the school came to be offered coaching and the aims	55	-0.833	-0.500	-0.333
Help to detail goals and small steps towards them	3	0.865	1.269	-0.404
Observation should be the teachers choice	54	-0.345	0.097	-0.441
problem free talk helps	9	-0.347	0.150	-0.498
the coach is interested in what I have been doing to improve	41	0.284	0.814	-0.530
it is important to have some choice in who coaches me	20	-2.136	-1.537	-0.599
choosing the gender of the coach	22	-2.382	-1.741	-0.641
I find it useful to make my own notes during sessions	53	-1.470	-0.802	-0.668
work is collaborative- we will be equal partners	29	-0.247	0.468	-0.715
feeling emotionally comfortable with the coach is essential	42	-0.423	0.325	-0.748
I can raise any matter to do with school	13	-0.331	0.557	-0.888
work life nad personal life are able to be topics	6	-0.739	0.290	-1.030
the starting point is my needs not external agenda	8	-0.686	0.620	-1.306
the work has to be confidential	14	-0.542	1.449	-1.991
I will feel the coach is on my side	51	-0.584	1.591	-2.174
I will feel properly listened to and understood	47	-0.194	2.145	-2.338
I should feel very safe and able to talk openly	48	-0.921	1.708	-2.629

9.4. Conclusion of Q pattern analysis

Q-methodology's quantitative features render it a highly unusual qualitative research method (Curt, 1994; Watts and Stenner, 2003a). The data provided by PQMethod is rich and complex and it has been said that the files/tables provided by dedicated Q-methodology packages can be confusing for the uninitiated (Watts and Stenner, 2005). As such the tables above have been presented in the body of the text of the thesis, with what has been, hopefully, a comforting degree of introduction and context to allow the reader to act upon one of the strengths of Q-methodology- the public and challengeable nature of the assertions that will be presented in the discussion of the Q study results, below.

This chapter has presented the rotated factor matrix, showing 3 extracted – and manually rotated- factors, that accounted for 24 of the 27 participants, balanced plausibility and parsimony, met the Kaiser 1 rule and the suggested safeguard of factor reliability that at least 3 actors load on each factor. A wealth of interpretative data has been provided, and presented publicly in the body of the text. The 3 factor matrix is a well warranted representation on the views of coachees on what is important in effective solution focused coaching.

This now allows for the production of a series of summarizing accounts, each of which explicates the viewpoint being expressed by a particular factor.

9.5. Reflections on the Methodology

It is customary to end a thesis with notes upon the potential for improvement within a study. There are a number of ways that the study could have been enhanced, all which appear to be methodological and therefore pertinent to be discussed in context and at this point in the thesis. This will act as a momentary pause before the discussion of the results. The amendments suggested below would have added to the rich data set and therefore the current outcomes of the study remain valid. To offer these reflections is not to distract from the positive outcomes of the study.

Firstly, the wording of the script used to introduce the Q sorting task, and the key dimension that framed the Q sorting lay out grid (most important, least important) on reflection may have been able to be more focused. A subtle rewording towards a focus upon “active ingredients” would, I believe, have encapsulated the aims of the study better. It also would have provided a clear theoretical link with many studies into therapeutic efficacy, which in turn share some ground covered by psychological coaching, and which are brought into play later in the thesis when the results are theorized.

It is also suggested that running the study with two concurrent groups, perhaps coaches and coachees, would have provided a useful investigation into how EP and school staff viewpoints may coalesce or differentiate on particular factors.

The author also felt that the brief utterances that emerged during the process of participants laying down their Q sorts were a potential source of further illustrative insight. The study may have become richer through the application of a research methodology upon these conversations, perhaps through structured note taking or transcription and analysis of the explanations made by coachees of their sort. It should be noted that such utterances were brief in nature, and that some participants worked in focused silence, as if entering a “world of their own”. The author would not advocate any prompting of the

participants to explain their sorts as often these explanations were offered spontaneously, and were fascinating for the author both as a researcher and a coaching psychologist- they may also have been fascinating as content in this thesis.

Initially the author drew on sources of instruction over Q-methodology that suggested simple note taking during administration of the Q sorts to allow for minor changes to the Q-set along the way; later there was the discovery of an academic voice advocating the use of transcribed recordings of participants explanations of their sort and also returning to those participants whose sorts particularly explicated the factor viewpoint on which they loaded to interview them in relation to their Q sort.

The author's view is that it would be illusory to assume that this additional source of information would render the factor array somehow more accurate, (or less accurate without the utterances that arose) and indeed there is a danger in an attraction towards overstating the value of what may well be randomly arising verbiage. It may be that they were the byproduct of the social context, which involved the researcher and participant being in the same social space.

The attraction of using such utterances is that on face value they may add to the veracity of the factor array, though the author is again troubled by this idea. The notion that the factor array needs somehow to be made more "colorful" through the use of quotes seems to be a huge diversion from the spirit of the study and the rigor of the methodology. In fact collecting such comments and presenting them in a study such as this would be akin to adding a catch all "any further comments" to the end of a questionnaire and presenting whatever happens to arise, or picking over what arose and using it in some strategic form.

Perhaps it is answering this query over these verbal utterances by saying that the recursive loop allowed by the writing up period of this study leaves the author unconvinced by the notion of simply gathering up the participants utterances that occurred.

It is also felt the overall impact of the study upon practice could have been enhanced through a variety of EPs administrating the Q sorts, in order that they share in the learning that occurs as coachees made their viewpoint intelligible and communicable through the Q procedure. Such a recursive loop may have added further scope for exploring what would have unfolded in terms of developing practices, and created a thread of action research and acted as important continued professional development for those EPs involved.

A final thought as to the potential for improvement is to focus in on what the *commissioners* of the SFC intervention see as important, i.e. senior colleagues in the Nottinghamshire School Improvement Service. Inviting School Improvement colleagues to take part and complete a sort *as if* they were a teacher to be coached might be interesting for a number of reasons; it could make SFC more intelligible to them; it would bring to light areas of shared viewpoint and areas of differences; it would reinforce the professional care and focused evaluation practice being employed by the Solution Focused Coaching team.

Finally, the data available through the participant demographic would provide a researcher more comfortable with a reductionist model to make an exploratory investigation into the relationships between within participant features and the factor viewpoints, for example the relationship between stage of teaching career and factor viewpoints loading. Such an analysis was not within the scope or epistemology of the study; though it could conceivably be viewed as an improvement to have dealt with this data in some methodological way.

10). Discussion of the Q-methodology study Results

In this chapter the Q analysis results allow for the production of a series of summarizing accounts. These accounts will explicate each of the factor viewpoints. Firstly we deal with what has been learnt about those statements that brought about a consensus in how they were rated across all three factors- statements consistently seen as important, not important and neutral.

After the summative accounts the demographics of each factor are presented to further aid the contextualization of the factor viewpoints. This will detail the gender, age, years of experience and role of each participant that loaded on each of the three viewpoints.

The factor array will then be theorized, the aim of which is to make links between areas of psychological theory and understanding that may be relevant to the findings of the study.

10.1. The consensus statements

Before setting out the three factor descriptions that set out the distinct viewpoints on “effective solution focused coaching” held by school staff who have worked with a solution focused coach, the data can also be used to look at areas of consensus within the responses. This is important as it represents a key element of the underlying simple structure of the viewpoints- those points of view shared by all, or many, of the participants.

PQMethod locates consensus by identifying statements that do not achieve a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in response between any pairs of factors. There were 14 consensus statements in all; 4 showing agreement, 5 disagreement, and 5 placed in the neutral zone by the participants. This means that 4 statements were consistently agreed with, 5 consistently disagreed with, and 5 were treated as neutral. Each of these clusters of consensus are presented in turn below, showing the positive, negative and neutral statements, and the range of rating for each statement, the range being drawn from the table-7 page 121.

Positive

- “I ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have” (strong agreement from 3 to 5)
- “we talk about things that are helping at present” (moderate agreement from 1 to 3)
- “being told the positive things the coach notices about me” (strong agreement from 4 to 5)
- “identifying elements of my goals already in place” (moderate agreement from 0 to 2)

These consensus statements are able to indicate factors that may act as a keystone for effective coaching practice. They seem to reinforce a focus on strengths, skills, and whats helping at present; of giving strength-based feedback; and on identifying elements of goals being in place.

These elements all resonate strongly with the core tenets of a solution-focused approach and are theorized later in this section.

Negative

- “choosing the gender of the coach” (strong disagreement at -5)
- “we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress” (moderate disagreement from -2 to -3)
- “the discussion lasts a full hour” (strong disagreement at -5)
- “we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions” (moderate disagreement from -2 to -3)
- “I will be using a journal to support the work” (strong disagreement -4)

Those statements in the negative zones help to challenge some assumptions and mark some particular practices as being not a panacea technique. Teachers disagree strongly that they should choose the gender of the coach in the foreground, nor do they wish to use a written journal as part of the work, or expect a discussion to last a full hour, work in a quiet room with no interruptions, or to keep having sessions until progress is made. Some elements of this consensus may reflect the realities of the school context; it may be that having an hour to work with, a quiet room and a promise of support until progress is made can make coaching work. What teachers may be telling us is that they are realistic about the context they work in and expect to have to work within it.

Neutral

- “observation should be the teachers choice” (1 to -1)
- “at end agree tasks to practice change” (-1 to 1)
- “the coach shares the rational behind their approach” (0 to -1)

- “develop an image of things when fully resolved” (0)
- “work helps organise my thinking plan priorities” (1 to -1)

The neutral zone is reserved for those issues where there is no opinion, uncertainty or equivocation. One could surmise that those statements within this zone do not connect strongly to the overarching sense of what is important for coachees theory of what makes coaching effective.

These consensus statements can also be presented within three overarching themes that were apparent in the concourse of Q-set; attitude behaviour and explicative experiences of the coachee; actions, attitudes, approaches, behaviour of the coaches; the nature of the dyadic interaction, the environment and atmosphere of the coaching sessions.

Attitude, behaviour and explicative experiences of the coachee;

- “develop an image of things when fully resolved” (0)
- “work helps organise my thinking plan priorities” (1 to -1)
- “identify elements of my goals already in place” (moderate agreement from 0 to 2)
- “I ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have” (strong agreement from 3 to 5)

Actions, attitudes, approaches, behaviour of the coaches;

- “the coach shares the rational behind their approach” (0 to -1)
- “being told the positive things the coach notices about me” (strong agreement from 4 to 5)

Nature of the dyadic interaction, the environment and atmosphere of the coaching sessions;

- “observation should be the teachers choice” (1 to -1)

- “at end agree tasks to practice change” (-1 to 1)
- “choosing the gender of the coach” (strong disagreement at -5)
- “the discussion lasts a full hour” (strong disagreement at -5)
- “we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions” (moderate disagreement from -2 to -3)
- “I will be using a journal to support the work” (strong disagreement -4)
- “we talk about things that are helping at present” (moderate agreement from 1 to 3)
- “we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress” (moderate disagreement from -2 to -3)

10.2. How the coachees view effective SFC – describing the factor viewpoints

As explained previously each of the three factors represents a viewpoint on 'what is important in effective solution focused coaching' within a group of school staff who have received Solution Focused Coaching support. Having spent some time considering the mathematical aspects of this analysis of data, the findings can now be considered in terms of their meaning and the extensive, detailed data set out in the Results section can now be used to describe the three viewpoints.

This begins by looking at each of the factor arrays, detailed in table-4 through to table-6, that can be found on pages 117-119, that tell us factor by factor what participants subscribing to that viewpoint think about the issue. These descriptions are supplemented by reference to table-9 through to table-11, located on pages 125 to 126, which tell us what are the distinguishing statements for each factor – those statements upon which that viewpoint has a significantly different outlook from the other viewpoints. This comparison between factors can then be examined further by use of table-13 through to table-15, on pages 128-130, which shows in more detail the differences in outlook between each of the pairs of factors.

10.2.1. *The Factor 1 viewpoint*

Teachers who subscribe to this viewpoint contrast sharply from the other viewpoints in that they foreground that their efforts “be validated and recognised” (+5) and that they “will feel properly listened to and understood” (+5). They wish it be recognised that “I am doing the best I can under the circumstances I am in” (+4) and it is important that “I won’t be judged, I will be appreciated” (+4). Also, they are the only viewpoint to wish to “know how the school came to be offered coaching support and whether there are wider whole school aims or if the project can be driven by teachers own goals” (+3). These teachers see that “the starting point is my needs, not an external agenda” (3)

This theme of positive regard and positive feedback continues, and like the other viewpoints, viewpoint 1 hold that “being told the positive things the coach notices about me” (5) is very important, as is “discover(ing) more about the strengths and skills I have” (+4).

“Change” seems not to be an agenda for teachers of viewpoint 1. They disagree that “we will work out the feelings that would tell me the work is worthwhile” (-3), feel neutral about being helped to “detail goals and small steps towards them” (0)- which is in contrast to the other viewpoints- and they do not want to “work out what will be different when things are better” (-1). Of the three viewpoints only viewpoint 1 gave a less than positive position to “at the end of the session we summarise and plan small steps” (-1). Similarly they are the only viewpoint that, at the end of a session, do not wish to “agree tasks that will help me to practice change” (-1). They are ambivalent towards the notion that they are “helped to arrive at my own solutions” (0). They also do not want to “take the chance to sit back and reflect” (-2).

One of the interesting areas of difference from other viewpoints is their neutrality towards “saying what would work for me” (0) and talking together about “what is working well and how our work can be better” (0), against which

the other viewpoints take a stance. Similarly to other viewpoints, they do not want to “have some choice in who coaches me” (-4).

Looking at where this viewpoint contrasts most sharply to viewpoint 2 “the work has to be confidential” (+3). They also feel that they should feel “very safe and able to talk openly” (+3). There are a number of other statements that whilst distinguishing viewpoint 1 from the other views these differences adopt a similar position to the other viewpoint, only they are either subtly more negative or more positive. Interestingly, whilst such ingredients are seen as being important this viewpoint does not agree “work life and personal life are able to be topics” (-3).

Whilst making a claim towards the dyadic nature of the interaction, this viewpoint disagrees that “we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions” (-3) and that “we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress” (-3).

This viewpoint firmly rejects the use of writing in a variety of possible forms- “I value the coach giving a written record” (-4), “the coach writes to me between each session” (-4), “I find it useful to make my own notes during sessions” (-5) and “I will be using a journal to support the work” (-4) are all rejected firmly.

The opportunity to assert coaching in terms of the environment it may take place in, the number and length of the sessions, or being able to choose the coach or the coaches gender, were all placed on the negative zone- there was strong disagreement with the ideas that; “there will be a set number of sessions” (-2); “we work somewhere private and away from work” (-2); “it is important to have some choice in who coaches me” (-4); “choosing the gender of the coach” (-5); and “the discussion lasts a full hour” (-5).

Summary: From this viewpoint the coach provides a strong positive regard and validates, appreciates and listens to the teacher. The work should be confidential, and the starting point the teacher's own needs, not the organisation. Aiming for change is very strongly not on the agenda, nor are these teachers active in co-constructing the coaching process.

10.2.2. *The Factor 2 viewpoint*

Similarly to the other viewpoints, teachers holding viewpoint 2 value a strengths-based focus. For example in effective coaching, “I will discover more about the strengths and skills I have” (5), and have “a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achievements” (5). Important ingredients are “being told the positive things the coach notices about me” (4) and that “we talk about things that are helping at present” (3).

The contrast between Viewpoint 2 and the other viewpoints begins to come into sharp focus through their view of confidentiality. This is the only viewpoint to disagree that “the work has to be confidential” (-2) and also that disagree that “I should feel very safe and able to talk openly” (-3). This viewpoint disagrees that they need to “know how the school came to be offered coaching and the aims” (-3), and it is the only viewpoint that disagrees that “the starting point is my needs not an external agenda” (-2).

A strong emphasis was placed on coaching bringing about change. This viewpoint wishes to be “supported in elaborating my personal approach” (4). They want “help to detail goals and small steps towards them” (3), which is in strong contrast to viewpoint 1. A theme of future, of outcomes, plans and goals is continued and this viewpoint agrees with a series of statements that coalesce around change. This viewpoint very strongly agrees, “we will develop a range of possible solutions I can draw on” (5). Coaching should “introduces new ways of seeing, new ways of understanding” (4) and the teacher should be “helped to fully activate and tap into my knowledge and skill” (4). Agreement that “at the end of the session we summarise and plan small steps” (3) completes those statements that distinguish this viewpoint as holding stronger agreement than the other viewpoints. Three further statements distinguish this viewpoint and it is the only viewpoint that agrees that “we will be exploring what other people will notice about me” (2) and “work out feelings that will tell me the work is worthwhile” (1). This is the only viewpoint to agree that “we will check up on

progress between sessions" (1) and also that "at the end agree task that's help to practice change" (1).

Teachers in viewpoint 2 have a strong sense of ownership, expecting to be able to shape the coaching relationship. The viewpoint agrees that "I am helped to arrive at my own solutions" (3) and is distinguished from the other viewpoints through its strength of agreement that "I will have a chance to say what won't work for me" (3). This is the only viewpoint that asserts agreement that "the coaching relationship will be a topic for conversation" (2).

Whilst making a claim towards the dyadic nature of the interaction, this viewpoint disagrees that "we work in a quiet room, with no interruptions" (-3) and that "we keep having sessions until I feel I have made progress (-3).

This viewpoint firmly rejects the use of writing in a variety of possible forms- "I value the coach giving a written record" (-3), "the coach writes to me between each session" (-2), "I find it useful to make my own notes during sessions" (-4) and "I will be using a journal to support the work" (-4) are all rejected.

The opportunity to assert coaching in terms of the environment it may take place in, the number and length of the sessions, or being able to choose the coach or the coach gender, were all placed on the negative zone- there was strong disagreement with the ideas that; "there will be a set number of sessions" (-4); "we work somewhere private and away from work" (-4); "it is important to have some choice in who coaches me" (-5); "choosing the gender of the coach" (-5); and "the discussion lasts a full hour" (-5).

Summary: The work should be focused on bringing about change and the teacher is assertive in co-constructing the coaching. From this viewpoint confidentiality is not important, nor is feeling safe and able to talk openly, or feeling properly listened to. These teachers do not need the coach on side and their own needs are not the starting point.

10.2.3. *The Factor 3 viewpoint*

Similarly to the other viewpoints, teachers holding viewpoint 3 value a strengths-based focus. There is a strong agreement that effective coaching will bring “a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achievements” (5). The theme is continued with agreement that “I’ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have” (3), and a very strong positive view of coaching “a better understanding of my skills, strengths and achievements” (5). Important ingredients are “being told the positive things the coach notices about me” (4) and that “we talk about things that are helping at present” (3). This viewpoint agrees that “I’ll discover more about the strengths and skills I have” (3). This viewpoint outlines a dyadic where “we talk about things that are helping at present” (3).

Such a foundation of attending to strengths and giving positive feedback is shared amongst the three factor viewpoints. What differentiates this viewpoint is that it combines elements of both viewpoints 1 and 2. Firstly there is a change theme apparent in this viewpoint, which marks it as similar to viewpoint 2. Viewpoint 3 feels that coaching should “help to detail goals and small steps towards them” (4) and is in agreement that “the coach is interested in what I have been doing to improve” (3)- a view that marks it out from others as it is the only factor viewpoint that agrees with this statement. Change as a function of coaching in viewpoint 3 is further elaborated through agreement that “we will develop a range of possible solutions I can draw on” (3) and will be “supported in elaborating on my personal approach” (3).

There is some subtlety to how this viewpoint sees change. There is neutrality over being asked a series of “questions that take me through a process of personal change” (0). There is disagreement that “we will be exploring what other people will notice” (-3). Also this viewpoint does not agree that it is important that “I have the chance to say what won’t work for me” (-3), and this distinguishes it from viewpoint 2. There seems to be a theme of passivity in that those holding

this viewpoint disagree that “at the beginning I am asked what my best hopes are” (-3) and that “the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion” (-3)- these agreements both distinguish viewpoint 3 from the other viewpoints.

Factor viewpoint 3 is distinguished from viewpoint 2 in the strong view on confidentiality- with strong agreement that “the work has to be confidential” (+4) and feeling “the coach is on my side” (+4). Agreement with these two statements, and those below, reflect the flow of agreement between factor viewpoint 1 and draw out similarities between factors viewpoint 1 and 3. As with viewpoint 1, factor viewpoint 3 agrees that “the starting point is my needs not an external agenda (2). In viewpoint 3 there is very strong agreement that “I will feel properly listened to and understood” (5) and that “I should feel very safe and able to talk openly” (5). Factor viewpoint 3 has a strength of agreement that “I will feel the coach is on my side” (4), that marks out viewpoint 3 as being an even greater agreement than factor viewpoint 1 places on this statement. Agreement with these factors can be presented as a theme of strong personal consideration in the work of the coach. This theme is further elaborated through noting agreement with the statement “I can raise any matter to do with school” (2)- this agreement distinguishing viewpoint 3 from both the other viewpoints. That “work life and personal life are able to be topics” receives slight agreement still distinguishes this viewpoint as the only to place positive agreement with this suggestion.

The opportunity to assert coaching in terms of the environment it may take place in, the number and length of the sessions, or being able to choose the coach or the coach gender, were all placed on the negative zone- there was strong disagreement with the ideas that; “there will be a set number of sessions” (-4); “we work somewhere private and away from work” (-4); “it is important to have some choice in who coaches me” (-4); “choosing the gender of the coach” (-5); and “the discussion lasts a full hour” (-5). This viewpoint firmly rejects the use of writing in a variety of possible forms- “I value the coach giving a written record” (-3), “the coach writes to me between each session” (-5), and “I will be using a journal to support the work” (-4) are all rejected. Even the teacher

making their own notes is also rejected, with disagreement that “I find it useful to make my own notes during sessions” (-2).

Summary: This viewpoint combines themes from the other two factors- teachers with this view want to be able to raise any topic to do with school, including their work and personal lives. Whilst the teacher does not wish to co-construct coaching, change is on the agenda.

10.3. Factor Demographics

The demographic information is presented below. This information is presented to continue the high level of transparency provided in the results section and the discussion of the Q analysis. The aim herein is not to reduce the information available, nor to make claims with any generalisability, such as “NQTs are more likely to load onto a particular factor”. Rather these factor demographics are included to proffer as rich an informational picture as possible of the data available in the study.

Nine participants load significantly on Factor 1. Eight of them are women and one of them a man. Ages range from 23-54, with a mean average of 36. Years of experience in teaching range from 0-27, with a mean average of 7 years. Three of them are in management or coordination roles, one of them is a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT), and five of them are class teachers. Table 15, below, summarises the demographic information participants by participant.

Table-16 Demographics of Factor 1- showing participants gender, age, experience and role

Gender	Age range	Years experience	Role
F	30-40	0-5	NQT
F	40-50	10-15	Year 1 teacher, mentor of NQTs and ICT coordinator
F	20-30	0-5	Class teacher
F	20-30	0-5	Class teacher
F	20-30	0-5	Class teacher
F	50-60	20-30	Assistant head teacher
F	50-60	20-30	Foundation stage coordinator
M	30-40	5-10	Class teacher
F	30-40	10-15	Class teacher

Eight participants load significantly on Factor 2. Seven of them are women and one of them a man. Ages range from 29-51, with a mean average of 39. Years of experience in teaching range from 2-20, with a mean average of 9 years. Three of them are in management or coordination roles; two of them are class teachers, and three of them Teaching Assistants (TAs). Table 16, below, summarises the demographic information participants by participant.

Table-17 Demographics of Factor 2- showing participants gender, age, experience and role

Gender	Age range	Years experience	Role
F	40-50	5-10	Class teacher
F	40-50	20-30	Assistant head teacher and Class teacher
F	50-60	10-15	Class teacher
F	20-30	5-10	Class teacher and member of school SLT
M	30-40	15-20	Head teacher
F	30-40	5-10	TA
F	30-40	1-5	TA
F	40-50	1-5	TA

Seven participants load significantly on Factor 3. All of them are women. Ages range from 23-53, with a mean average of 32. Years of experience in teaching range from 0-15, with a mean average of 5 years. Three of them are class teachers, three of them are Newly Qualified Teachers, and one of them is a Teaching Assistant (TA). Table 17, below, summarises the demographic participants by participant.

Table-18 Demographics of Factor 3- showing participants gender, age, experience and role

Gender	Age range	Years experience	Role
F	40-50	15-20	Class teacher
F	20-30	1-5	NQT
F	20-30	1-5	Class Teacher
F	2-30	1-5	NQT
F	30-40	1-5	NQT
F	20-30	1-5	Class teacher
F	50-60	10-15	TA

10.4. Summary of the discussion of coachees viewpoints

The Q analysis creates a workable model of the viewpoints held by the coachees on effective Solution Focused Coaching. The consensus statements indicated a focus on strengths, skills, and what is helping at present; of giving strength-based feedback; and on identifying elements of goals being in place as being a shared positive emphasis in all three of the three viewpoints that emerged. The idea was introduced that these elements all resonate strongly with the core tenets of a solution-focused approach.

Those statements in the negative zones challenged assumptions and marked some particular practices as being not panacea techniques. Teachers disagree strongly that they should choose the gender of the coach in the foreground, nor do they wish to use a written journal as part of the work, or expect a discussion to last a full hour, work in a quiet room with no interruptions, or to keep having sessions until progress is made. It was suggested that some elements of this consensus may reflect the day to day reality of school life.

In Factor viewpoint 1 the coach provides a strong positive regard and validates, appreciates and listens to the teacher. The work should be confidential, and the starting point the teacher's own needs', not the organization. Aiming for change is very strongly not on the agenda, nor are these teachers active in co-constructing the coaching process.

Factor viewpoint 2 does not see confidentiality as important, nor is feeling safe and able to talk openly, or feeling properly listened to. These teachers do not need the coach on side and their own needs are not the starting point. The work, in their view, should be focused on bringing about change and the teacher is assertive in co-constructing the coaching process.

Factor viewpoint 3 combines themes from the other two factors- teachers with this view want to be able to raise any topic to do with school, including their

work and personal lives. Whilst the teacher does not wish to be co-construct coaching, change is on the agenda.

The next section will consider the links between existing theory and what the Q analysis has revealed.

10.5. Theorizing the findings

This section considers in what ways the factor viewpoints, and consensus statements, warrant psychological coaching conduct and practice. This type of application, however, must remain tentative and exploratory, since Q methodology is not suited to the task of making generalizations to population statistics on the basis of representative samples (Brown, 1980; Stenner & Stainton Rogers, 2004; Thomas & Bass, 1992;1993). In fact even if a Q study were to indicate that only participants from a certain cultural region express a given subjective account, it cannot be concluded that this account is unique to that locale, nor that it is the only account expressed there. Indeed, generalizing claims of this nature are best avoided.

On the other hand, the accounts that do emerge can provide clues for future coaching strategies and psychological practice. It becomes clear below that in this case these clues are based on objective similarities between participants' own judgments, and not on a priori and researcher-imposed judgments about assumed commonalities. With this in mind the opportunity to theorize the findings is not an opportunity to generalise them. The theorization is therefore approach with vigor, in the hope that the clues that the study has provided in turn add to the depth of educational psychology coaching practice through the process of theorization.

Particular reference will be made to the psychotherapy outcome literature that, the author suggests, may be able to act a scaffold for the findings of this Q-methodology study into Solution Focused Coaching and the collaborative EP practice. The theorization of the discussed results will conclude by foregrounding reflexivity and 'social construction' as key resources towards efficacious educational psychology practice in a form that would be continuously prepared to consider implications for client-psychologist relationships, and readily able to re-construct itself in the quest for ever greater efficiency and efficacy. The subjectivity expressed through the study are now, as Curt (1994)

puts it, part of the “fields of the syllable and seeable”, meanings that have been revealed and are practically communicable. It is through this process of revealing that links across psychological disciplines can be made.

10.5.1. The centrality of clients strengths and resources

Identifying the active ingredients of the process that engender a successful outcome, is the same question that has tormented the psychotherapy outcome literature for decades, but around which there is now emerging consensus (Hubble and Miller, 2004; Wampold, 2001); that the client and the client's resources are critical to a successful outcome, with relationship factors following thereafter, with practitioner expertise, including models and techniques, at a distant third place (Hubble and Miller, 2004).

The positively rated consensus statements support a similar pattern in Solution Focused Coaching; in fact all four of the consensus statements focus in on clients resources, in one way or another. See below:

- “I will discover more about the strengths and skills I have” (strong agreement from 3 to 5)
- “we talk about things that are helping at present” (moderate agreement from 1 to 3)
- “being told the positive things the coach notices about me” (strong agreement from 4 to 5)
- “identify elements of my goals already in place” (moderate agreement from 0 to 2)

What can psychological coaching learn from this? First, it is highly likely that the role of the client, their resources and their strengths, are critical to a successful coaching outcome. This then suggests that a focus on coaching approaches that harness the client's inner strengths and resources are likely to be most

effective, in a similar fashion to recent distinctions drawn in the therapy literature (Linley & Harrington, 2006).

These consensus statements also suggest a synergy between what counts in SFBT, put simply- building on what is working in the clients life and/or work- and what teachers and school staff agree upon as being important, from their point of view, about Solution Focused Coaching. Grant (2006) identified the tenets of SFBT as a potential basis for the emerging field of coaching psychology. The finding of this study shows teacher and school staff expectations of coaching foreground a focus on their strengths and resources. That such a fundamental aspect of a solution-focused approach has been placed in the foreground– an explicit focus on strengths and resources- provides some support to Grant's idea.

Whilst it makes sense 'intuitively' for coachees to foreground a focus on strengths, there are also good neuro-psychological reasons that can underpin this. A recent study (Byrd-Craven, Geary, Rose and Ponzi, 2008, in Bannink 2008) shows that extensive discussions of problems and encouragement of 'problem talk', rehashing the details of problems, speculating about problems, and dwelling on negative effects in particular, lead to a significant increase in the stress hormone cortisol, which predicts increased depression and anxiety over time. There is evidence that the creation of new neural integrative links may be a learning process that remains possible into adulthood and that our brains retain the ability to continually reshape emergent properties that allow us to learn and grow with new experiences (Siegel, 1999). Bannink (2008) suggests that by focusing on resiliency, coping, and competencies (solution talk), new-positive-neural networks will emerge and old-negative-ones will 'die away'.

10.5.2. *The co-construction of a "coaching alliance"*

A second feature of the emerging consensus on psychotherapy outcome literature is the idea of alliance factors as being key to successful outcomes.

The three factor viewpoints, and the active ingredients that distinguish between the three, may provide important insight into how the coachees in this study saw the nature of a coaching alliance. The unveiling of the three viewpoints opens up new possibilities in future coaching sessions, and if coaches reflect upon them they may lead to a new form of coherence between coaches and coachees. Key coaching questions begin to emerge that focus in on those elements that distinguish the three viewpoints, as well as in relation to the consensus statements, to allow for a bespoke and co-constructed model of coaching to be offered and received *mindfully*.

It is tentatively suggested that the coaching relationship is likely to be an important predictor of coaching outcomes; a relationship that can be mapped out against the factor viewpoints uncovered in the study. There appears to be three coherent viewpoint positions on the experience of Solution Focused Coaching by school staff in schools in challenging circumstances. Practically what this may mean is that a sense that the coach and coachee are “tuned in” might be what makes coaching effective, and the findings offer practical insight into what the “channels to tune into” may be, with each of the factor viewpoints being a potential channel. Further research may seek to establish if alliance factors are able to be predictive of coaching outcomes, given that therapeutic alliance factors have been established as being predictive of therapeutic outcomes (Martin, Garske, & Davis, 2000).

10.5.3. *A reflexive stance- from prescription to co-construction*

Q-methodology studies clearly demonstrate the objective and reliable status of human subjectivity- with examples showing that Q-sets used years apart and in different localities reveal underlying structures with high test-retest reliability correlation- and as such the three factor viewpoints that arose in this study may begin to act as a road map towards co-constructing new and enhanced forms of collaborative work between EPs and school staff.

The underlying simple structure uncovered by this research provides highly pertinent aspects of the real world to *fasten onto* in Solution Focused Coaching in school. There appear to be some key concepts that helped to draw out the differences between the three factor viewpoints. These key concepts seem to orbit around 3 dynamics, that of

- Whether coaching is an active process that involves planning action versus being an inactive process, whereby the planning of action is “off the agenda”, so to speak
- That the work has a client focus rather than an organizational focus- that the goals in the work come from the coachee’s best hopes, rather than being a priori fact carried forward from a school agenda
- The role of confidentiality and whether the coachee wishes to very directly make use of the confidential covenant that is offered in coaching to talk beyond the workplace, or examine sensitive issues within it

Whilst being the semantic and subjective products of human thought those statements that were found to be of consensus can be said to be “as real, as substantial, and as difficult to get around as any thing the natural world puts in our way” (Watts, 2007).

The skilled coach is now able to explore a co-construction of not just solutions with coaching clients in schools, but the very coaching process, the dyadic interaction of collaborative work itself. Specifically this co-construction would be about utilizing alliance factors that ultimately, along with clients resources, might present the key to successful outcomes. With the three factor viewpoints *in mind* the coaching psychologist has the insights to co-construct the coaching alliance with greater efficiency and efficacy than before. The prescription that was being made- that the coaching be done in a particular way, with particular aspects held dear by the psychologist- has now been perturbed. The coaching educational psychologist has a new position to take.

Hoffman (1993) suggests that the danger in any scheme that divides up and differentiates social interaction is that we too often choose one category and then start to believe in it, and goes on to suggest that what is needed is a method that prevents us from making such a monological choice, except as intention and context cause us to do so. Through this study we are not seeing a new gestalt for Solution Focused Coaching and for other forms of collaborative educational psychology; the invitation is in contrast to a single category- it is for the psychologist to aim for an open plurality with teachers and of new formats. Drawing further on Hoffman's work, what may be termed "*associative forms*" of coaching, or for that matter collaborative-consultation, would come into existence. These forms would be co-constructed with each coachee or client, at the heart of which would be key foundation stones of practice, which in the case of Solution Focused Coaching in school, could be informed through the consensus statements. From these foundations a plurality of forms would be able to be applied, created collaboratively and through an ethic of client participant. The psychologist is required to take a reflexive stance.

In a free society, one could argue, the psychologist must have access to the thinking of the person they coach/consult/collaborate with, in order to prevent making choices for them, and vice versa the psychologists thinking should be open to the client. The reflexive educational psychologist's practice would engender a dialogue with teachers and school staff rather than a monologue. The stories that are being told through the factor viewpoints made operant by the Q analysis could, potentially, lead to an infinite number of *associative forms*. They bring into play a clearer ethic of participation and power, challenging assumption and habit. In short, what is learnt is that nobody has the corner on what the ideal discourse should be; our practice and not just our theory should reflect awareness of the ideas and preferences of our clients; ideas and preferences that would remain hidden if not for inquiry into EP practice.

10.5.4. *Summary of theorisation*

From the coachee's point of view their resources are critical to a successful outcome in Solution Focused Coaching, with relationship factors and practitioner expertise, including models and techniques, being able to be captured with a high degree of verisimilitude by three factor viewpoints that suggest an underlying simple structure that gives an insight into the type of coaching staff in schools value. It is clear to see the value in co-constructing psychological coaching with school staff, to ensure a focus on those ingredients that individual's see as being most important.

In summary, the consensus statements seem to support Grant's (2006) claim that the tenets of SFBT may provide a basis for psychological coaching. The wider findings also resonate with the psychotherapy outcome literature. It is suggested that an open co-construction between the coach and coachee may provide a route way into the active creation of a coaching alliance, that when combined with a focus on clients strengths, provides a foundation for successful coaching.

The basis for this assertion comes from the psychotherapy outcome literature that claims the central importance of an alliance between the therapist and client. The findings in this study may offer a way of practically opening up a dialogue over what matters for each client- the assumption being that different clients need different approaches. The 3 factor solution, plus the consensus statements give the coaching psychologist the discursive means to open up a dialogue with each coachee. Therefore, a new set of assumptions begin to become clear- that new formats for coaching, or *associative forms*, are able to be constructed client by client, with the findings of this study offering an initial road map into this co-construction. These messages may also have relevance to the general practice of collaborative-consultation.

Perhaps what is being achieved is in small part an answer to Stober, Wildflower and Drake (2006) who called for coaches to begin integrating evidence from

both coaching-specific research and related disciplines, their own expertise, and the uniqueness of each client into a coherent body of knowledge that applies to and guides coaching. At this point it is appropriate to consider the wider resonances the study has towards educational psychology theory and practice.

10.6. Appropriateness of Method

At an earlier stage of this research an epistemology stance was set out that led to the identification of a suitable methodology. With the study now completed it is possible to consider the methodology and how well it served the needs of the study.

10.6.1. *Q-methodology as perturbation and social de-construction*

What is involved in a Q-methodology study is the discovery of hypotheses and reaching understandings, instead of testing hypotheses by way of predictability and 'falsifiability'. This study attempts to examine the world from the internal standpoint of the individual being studied and this was successfully achieved. Q-methodology has been seen to have compelling qualities. Q-method conjoins mathematics with subjectivity; quantitative data and qualitative insight. As Wittgenstein (1971), among others, has argued, an individual's relationship to his words is wholly different from everyone else's. The Q-methodology approach has provided social-deconstruction of Solution Focused Coaching in Nottinghamshire.

10.6.2. *Q-methodology as a 'disciplined inquiry'*

Lincoln and Guba (1985: p 49) talk of the need for 'disciplined inquiry' and suggest that *'the feature that most prominently distinguishes disciplined inquiry*

from other forms is that it be conducted (the process) and reported (the product) in such a way that all of its aspects can be examined publicly.' Q-methodology is outstanding in how the process and product are highly visible. The factor analysis of the participants Q-sorts (the process) is completely transparent and the interpretations of the factor viewpoints (the product), being grounded in the factor analysis data, is similarly open to scrutiny. Any reader would be free to take the factor tables and challenge or refine the author's interpretations.

The level of detail in the Q-method provides a richer and more textured picture of viewpoints than would have been achieved with a questionnaire. The study has discovered the operant factor viewpoints of the 27 participants and further to this provided a mathematical basis to claiming an inductive frame of reference- of three factor viewpoints, and a series of consensus statements. These understandings could not be grasped by the application of questionnaires even to large samples. Nor would they be gained through a deep inquiry such as a discourse analysis. The Q-sorts give a holistic picture of how the participants construed all 55 of the issues in the Q-set and provides better differentiation of viewpoints than focus group and interview studies as such examples lack the methodology to accurately identify and describe the different viewpoints emerging in the discourse.

10.6.3. Q-method as emancipation

There is no attempt here, in the style of realist experimental methodology, to claim that the researcher is absent or invisible. The researcher brought his personal and cultural perspectives to this study that will have influenced the framing of the research question and choice of methodology. That said, by using Q-methodology the researcher has greatly limited power to choose what voices to hear and how to interpret and re-present them. In this sense, Q-methodology provides constructionist means towards emancipatory aims.

The sorting of the participants views into the simple structure represented by three factors or viewpoints was driven by the mathematics of the factor analysis and the emergence of a best fit, and the factor array presented is inclusive of 24 out of 27 participants (from a statistical point of view).

In this sense, Q-methodology is able to re-balance the respective power of the researcher and the participants. Much qualitative research, particularly that using focus groups and interviews, lacks a valid process for collating and re-presenting the participants' views (Bradley, 2008). In contrast Q-methodology has taken from the researcher the power to choose or privilege any particular views. The concourse of issues (statements) emerged, in part, from the participants' discourse on the topic. Whilst the factor analysis in Q-methodology simplifies complex data and presents it in an understandable way, and the unspoken implication of an interest in quantifying the distribution of viewpoints could be to privilege those viewpoints that have more adherents, a key distinction the author would make with regard to Q-methodology being able to be described as emancipatory, is that in this study (and Q-methodology in general) we seek to identify and give equal prominence to minority voices alongside the majority discourse (Brown 2006).

In short, the findings in the study are, the author claims, well-warranted descriptions of the views of the coachees who took part. High verisimilitude is claimed, with a minimal degree of researcher influence (and with any influence highly visible). A repositioning of the researcher as visible, accountable and challengeable aligns this study to a social constructionist and emancipatory epistemology. And now, by taking account of the three factor viewpoints, psychologists coaching school staff can be aware of the issues important to coachees and consider how well the psychologist's approach meets each coachee's best hopes. The psychologist's power and responsibility becomes thus redefined. They are freed from the notion of unilateral control and are instead placed in the dynamic of co-construction.

"The point of edifying philosophy is to keep the conversation going rather than to find objective truth" Rorty (1979: 377). The stage is now set, through the discursive resources foregrounded above, for a plethora of new practice narratives developed, potentially, by *all participants*.

10.7. Ethical Issues

Some ethical issues arose during the course of the study. The author became aware that the head teachers approached for permission for their school to take part in the school showed high levels of willingness to partake. In professional supervision this issue was explored. Questions were considered such as were the head teachers only willing to take part because of the author's senior management role? As such might there be an adverse effect on the participants taking part, if they knew a senior officer of the Local Authority acting on behalf of the School Improvement Service was undertaking the evaluation? The author undertook to explore these issues with the head teachers during the visits to the schools.

Feedback from head teachers indicated that their willingness to take part was due to the positive experience of Solution Focused Coaching. Also the q-sort visits to the school took place during the second half of the summer term, and this turned out to be the most practical time a school can take part in such a programme. In fact there seemed to be no evidence to suggest schools participated for any reason other than a willingness to contribute to the study.

10.8. Bringing theory, research and practice together

The theorization of the findings suggest that the assumption would hold that it is a good idea to ask the client, and the next one, and the one after that, about what is important to them and the change they wish to see and to make visible and open the way the EP can work. What this study confirms is that different coaching-clients value different approaches and that the subtleties within this can be made operant. Given that the client's model of change is likely to have a marked effect on how the psychologist should go about their work, the operant subjectivity of the factor viewpoints acts as a force of perturbation towards the practice of the psychologist. Ironically, one new assumption that arises from this study is that there will be no solution focused coaching denouement, to untie and then conclude the practice, across all coachees in all situations. What has been learnt is generative rather than summative. A three factor solution was discovered, and a series of consensus statements. The invitation now is to a re-construction of "how to go about the work" *with* the client.

Social constructionism is marked by a focus on language- that is, a focus on people interacting with one another in the constitution of their worlds (Gergen, 2004), and whilst being the semantic and subjective products of human thought the views made operant in the study can be said to be "as real, as substantial, and as difficult to get around as any thing the natural world puts in our way" (Watts, 2007). At the conclusion of the study a series of principles come to the fore that connect epistemological theory, the research itself and EP practice. These ideas are presented below, in part as a testament to the author's reflexive learning. These principles would position EP practice as social constructionist inquiry, blurring the traditional distinction between research and social change and suggesting a postmodern sensibility in practice. To consider these principles a reflexive loop is required and for psychologists to embrace a fascinating challenge- to deconstruct the old story while moving to co-author a new story that opens up new possibilities for clients. With this invitation

extended, these ideas may help a consideration of the notion of the constructionist psychologist and begin to extend the epistemology of the study into a reflection upon wider EP practice:

- Educational Psychology would, put very simply, become more dialogical by reflecting in the eyes of the other our sense of what we do. Rather than maintaining a position that is monological- in which the only audience for oneself is oneself- hierarchical, expert-orientated models of psychology would shift to ones of lateral configuration. In such a configuration both clients and psychologists have more equal responsibility for the impact of the work of the psychologist.
- The coaching practice studied herein is based on co-construction and collaboration through discursive practice. Through the lens of social constructionism this form of educational psychology practice is *production*. Educational Psychology practice from this viewpoint may be thought of as a *semiosis* – the forging of meaning in the context of collaborative discourse (Gergen, 2004).
- Psychological practice becomes deutero-learning (Bateson, 1972), that is, a process of co-constructing a context in which a change in the set of alternatives from which a choice is made becomes possible. The status quo is being modified and, if successful, clients must end up in a different place from where they began.
- The psychologist adopts a postmodern sensibility wherein the relational context is recognised as providing the psychological constraints and possibilities.
- Educational psychology as social construction suggests that the EP not hold a mirror up to the world “*as it is*”, rather the EP- with their questions, prompts, invitations and enquiries- is working with wet clay, the shape of which becomes clear as the collaborative work unfolds.

This form of educational psychology practice stands in contrast to the traditional model, where the EP’s role can be likened to following the contours of a pre-existing material world, or at least the role was based in the belief in a pre-

existing world. In the traditional discourse the EP is the “skilled assessor”, and often entered into a deficit discourse (with regards to the individual differences children present) revealing the world “as it is”. As Ben Furman (2003) suggests, rather than create hypothesis and then choose the intervention on it, more often than not it seems we go in with an intervention already in mind and then come up with a hypothesis that supports it. The constructionist psychologist would take their practice in a different direction. They would practice within a dynamic collaborative.

Such a postmodern discourse that would “seek to distance us from and make us skeptical about beliefs concerning truth, knowledge, power, the self, and language that are often taken for granted and serve as legitimization for contemporary Western culture” (Jane Flax, 1990: 41). Such a lofty claim can be amply grounded through the presentation of the recent work of Harlene Anderson (2008), who is recognized internationally as a leader in the field of family therapy and for the development of a postmodern collaborative approach. Anderson’s work is an example of social constructionism interpreted as real world psychological practice. Drawing primarily from the works of Bahktin, Gergen, Lyotard, Shotter, and Wittgenstein, Anderson suggests 6 interrelated assumptions and invitations towards collaborative practices that offer some scope for interpreting social constructionism, as Wittgenstein suggests, as a way “to go on”. The author suggests that Anderson’s work serves to further legitimize the practical application of social constructionism to collaborative EP practice and helps to illustrate that the constructionist psychologist is a practical invitation, rather than an academic debate. Anderson’s work provides sustenance to the EP searching for a grounding that is both practically and intellectually satisfying. Anderson suggests:

1. Maintaining skepticism. The invitation is to remember that we are prejudiced by our pre-understandings and experiences that are influenced by our knowledge traditions, and yet given this, we must remain humble about our knowing, realize that we can never have complete and coherent understanding

of another person, and always be open to learning from and about their uniqueness and the novelty of their life.

2. Avoiding the risks of generalization. The invitation is to listen, hear, and respond with the other in such a way that what we bring to the encounter does not close us to their meanings, descriptions, and understandings of their lived experiences, but rather engages us in dialogue with them.

3. Knowledge as an interactive social process. The invitation is to act as a catalyst for a conversational partnership: a space, a relationship, and a process in which each person participates in dialogical construction of newness and has a sense of ownership of it.

4. Privileging local knowledge. The invitation is to ensure that each member of the community has the opportunity to participate as an equitable contributor to the conversation, including the design of the designated activity and its outcome.

5. Language as a creative social process. The invitation is to remember that our clients, as we do, bring their language (i.e., words, descriptions, meaning, beliefs) with them and that it is in the encounter and interaction of our different languages that dialogic transformation is possible.

6. Knowledge and language as transforming. The invitation is to remember that we are not change agents but rather engaged with others in mutually transformational relationships and conversations.

10.9. Implications for future research

As a tool, Q method is ideal for working with complex, seemingly hard to penetrate social issues. The first stage of Q, the development of the Q-set, offers the opportunity to know what it is that will be studied (in this case Solution Focused Coaching conducted by EPs with school staff) and to express the phenomena in question in its full diverse complexity. The second stage takes this complexity and provides an intelligible and communicable model of how the phenomenon is viewed. The use of this approach in educational psychology would offer a unique potent way of answering a number of questions that have concerned the profession for over thirty years, namely what does contemporary educational psychology need to look like.

Focusing on psychological coaching, an extension to this study could involve a specific focus upon the potential saliency of a coaching alliance to positive coachee experience. A Q method approach would provide a suitable approach to the deconstructing-reconstruction of the psychological coaching alliance, and this would provide the EP crafting a coaching relationship with an invaluable insight.

The use of a questionnaire to look into the larger population of coaching clients, both to help inform what should happen in pieces of coaching work, and to continue to build a theory of the active ingredients of coaching were, is attractive also.

10.10. Final thoughts

For the educational psychology profession the discourse of Special Educational Needs is perhaps being replaced with a discourse regarding a concept of broader additional needs and improved outcomes for children and young people. Alongside this EP training is in an emerging flux, both in terms of curricula and security of funding; CAMHS services are moving into territories previously occupied by EPs and the government provide further direction towards school intervention around psychological wellbeing (SEAL). What these observations signal is that the pace of change is such that the gold standard “randomly controlled trial” studies, that are so often advocated as the basis for the creation of “evidenced based interventions”, lag so far behind the real world context as to be considered by some as unworkable.

These times of huge change therefore call for a major shift in thinking in educational psychology; EPs ways of working can no longer be taken for granted, remain tacit or be assumed to be an unalienable right. EPs must re-author their role and contribution in an ever changing world.

The most effective EP practice is unlikely to ever be written up and published. Highly effective psychologists may be taking an esoteric, contingent and collaborative approach to their work that is effective and yet, ironically, is unlikely to be captured formally and routinely, however effective it may be. It is suggested that social constructionism may provide the discursive means towards reaching the full potentiality of the lived experience of the profession of Educational Psychology and methodology such as Q offers a method of inquiry that, through dealing with words and numbers, render it highly attractive. Further application of Q-methodology to EP practice issues would be of high practical use.

It seems held in broad agreement that the most suitable service models are those based on collaborative educational psychology, e.g. consultation, and the

epistemology that can match the new and ever emerging social world EPs work in is social constructionism. The EP as coaching psychologist offers a potential logical extension upon such models. The findings within this study offer a route towards a form of collaborative practice that places the client in a dynamic of active co-constructive and an ethic of participation.

11). Summary and conclusions

The findings of the study are, the author claims, well-warranted descriptions of what makes for effective Solution Focused Coaching from the point of view of coachees, who in this study were school staff. Q analysis creates a workable model of the viewpoints held by the coachees and this opens up the potential for new and more effective ways of psychological coaching in schools. The statements held in consensus indicated a focus on coachee's strengths and skills, and on what is helping at present; of giving strength-based feedback; and on identifying elements of goals being in place as being a common basis for Solution Focused Coaching; this positive emphasis was found in all three viewpoints that emerged. It is suggested that these consensus statements support Grant's (2006) claim that the very tenets of SFBT may provide a basis for psychological coaching.

Whilst from the coachee's point of view their resources are critical to a successful outcome in Solution Focused Coaching, other potential active ingredients have been able to be captured with a high degree of verisimilitude through the rich descriptions of the three factor viewpoints. These three viewpoints suggest an underlying "simple structure", that the study reached "finite diversity" and that Q-methodology was a suitable tool to answer the research questions.

Given the emergence of three clear and distinguishable viewpoints, co-constructing an effective psychological coaching dyad with school staff becomes a practical reality; the underlying structure of the viewpoints suggests that building a coaching dyad that matches the perspective of the coachee is possible and does not need to be left to chance or guess work, nor does it have to be based wholly on the preferences or views of the psychologist.

Further to this the findings can be theorized through reference to the psychotherapy outcome literature. Through an exploration of the therapeutic outcomes literature- literature that emphasizes therapeutic alliance, alongside client's strengths and resources- the notion of a "coaching alliance" is brought into play. This takes the co-construction of the coaching dyad towards the idea that it may be the very sense of alliance, coupled with the focus on strengths that the consensus statements signposted, that makes coaching effective. It is proposed that armed with three key viewpoints, that accounted for nearly all the participants in the study, a practical way of mindfully co-constructing alliance between the psychologist and the coachee opens up. The knowledge unearthed in this study offers a scaffold for psychologists reflexive practice and it is suggested that the co-construction of a bespoke coaching dyad may provide a route way into the active creation of a coaching alliance, that when combined with a focus on clients strengths, provides a foundation for highly successful coaching.

Educational psychology is undoubtedly rich in lived experience of what works, much of which will never be edified or brought into the academic or political arena that at times seeks to shape the profession. To quote Geertz, "we all have very much more of the stuff than we know what to do with (knowledge of what works), and if we fail to put it into some graspable form, the fault must lie in a lack of means, not of substance" (Geertz, 1986: p373). The challenge to the profession is how they re-author their experience in ways that achieve the re-construction the profession has long required. In Nottinghamshire, Solution Focused Coaching has been one attempt at achieving this.

Q-methodology offers a formal tool that, as in this study, is able to challenge the coherence between the descriptions and beliefs of practice held by EPs. Such perturbation challenges the individual EPs to generate a new coherence- one that is communally and locally convened (perhaps even almost idiographic by design), synergistic and collaborative.

It is apt to conclude with the summaries of each factor viewpoint, these summaries being a route into the full Q analysis of each viewpoint, and offering the coaching psychologist much food for thought in their work with school staff.

1. In factor viewpoint 1 the coach provides a strong positive regard and validates, appreciates and listens to the teacher. The work should be confidential, and the starting point the teacher's own needs, not the organization. Aiming for change is very strongly not on the agenda, nor are these teachers active in co-constructing the coaching process.
2. Factor viewpoint 2 did not see confidentiality is not important, nor is feeling safe and able to talk openly, or feeling properly listened to. These teachers do not need the coach on side and their own needs are not the starting point. The work should be focused on bringing about change and the teacher is assertive in co-constructing the coaching.
3. Factor viewpoint 3 combines themes from the other two factors- teachers with this view want to be able to raise any topic to do with school, including their work and personal lives. Whilst the teacher does not wish to be co-construct coaching, change is on the agenda.

12). References

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14). Appendices

<p>I value the coach giving a written record</p> <p>01</p>	<p>At the end of each session we will agree tasks that will help me to practice change</p> <p>02</p>
<p>the coach will help me detail my goals and the first small steps towards them</p> <p>03</p>	<p>there will be a set number of sessions, and this will help as we will know how much time we have to work together</p> <p>04</p>
<p>the coach shares the rationale behind their approach to the work with me</p> <p>05</p>	<p>the work should take a holistic approach and the overlap between work life and personal life is able to be a topic for discussion</p> <p>06</p>

<p>the work will help organise my thinking and plan priorities</p> <p>07</p>	<p>the work should really be about me, rather than it be another external change agenda. The starting point should be my needs.</p> <p>08</p>
<p>The coach and I would sometimes share some normal day to day conversation...as some problem-free talk helps</p> <p>09</p>	<p>the work will introduce new ways of seeing issues, new ways of understanding</p> <p>10</p>
<p>we will work out what will be different when things are better</p> <p>11</p>	<p>we will develop a range of possible solutions, a variety of ideas that I can then draw on</p> <p>12</p>
<p>I can raise any matter with my coach to do with school, not just things to do with my teaching</p> <p>13</p>	<p>the work has to be confidential</p> <p>14</p>
<p>will be exploring what other people will notice about me and my work that will tell me things have improved</p> <p>15</p>	<p>at the end of each session we take the time to summarise what we have covered and the small steps I might take towards my goals</p> <p>16</p>

<p>at the very beginning I will be asked what are my best hopes are for this work</p> <p>17</p>	<p>the goals of the work are an on going topic of discussion</p> <p>18</p>
<p>we will identify the indications, however small, of those elements of my most important goals that are already in place</p> <p>19</p>	<p>it is important that I have some choice in who coaches me</p> <p>20</p>
<p>my coping skills will be topic for discussion and we will talk about how I am managing to cope in my present situation</p> <p>21</p>	<p>choosing the gender of the coach is important to me</p> <p>22</p>
<p>together through talking I will discover more about the strengths and skills I have and the things that work for me- as these can be used to reach my goals</p> <p>23</p>	<p>I don't so much want answers-sessions offer the a chance to sit back and really reflect on whats going on</p> <p>24</p>
<p>the coaching relationship will be a topic for discussion- we will talk together about what is working well and how our work can be better</p> <p>25</p>	<p>I will answer questions that take me through a process of personal change</p> <p>26</p>

<p>I will be supported in elaborating on my personal approach- how I go about things, my style, the differences I make</p> <p>27</p>	<p>we will work out what feelings I will experience that would tell me the work is worthwhile</p> <p>28</p>
<p>the work will be collaborative- we will be equal partners sharing ideas and constructing solutions together</p> <p>29</p>	<p>I want to be recognised that I am doing the best I can under the circumstances I am in</p> <p>30</p>
<p>I won't be judged, I will be appreciated</p> <p>31</p>	<p>during each session we will check up on progress made between sessions- looking out for small signs of progress and what is around that is helping</p> <p>32</p>
<p>I will gain a better understanding of my skills, my strengths and my achievements, so I can build on this</p> <p>33</p>	<p>I want my hard work and best efforts to be validated and recognised</p> <p>34</p>

<p>the work is about thinking outside the box- its a space to talk about change and possibilities</p> <p>35</p>	<p>I want to develop an image of what it would look like when the things that concern me are fully resolved</p> <p>36</p>
<p>we work somewhere private and away from work</p> <p>37</p>	<p>Its important to me that I am helped to arrive at my own solutions</p> <p>38</p>
<p>we would keep having sessions until I feel I have made enough progress</p> <p>39</p>	<p>we will talk about things that are helping at present, and possible ways I could build on that</p> <p>40</p>

<p>the coach will be interested in what I have been doing to improve things</p> <p>41</p>	<p>feeling emotionally comfortable with the coach is essential to me</p> <p>42</p>
<p>the discussion sessions last a full hour</p> <p>43</p>	<p>I will have chance to say what wont work well for me in our work together</p> <p>44</p>
<p>I will be helped to think about how to fully activate and tap into my existing knowledge and skills</p> <p>45</p>	<p>we work in quiet room, with no interruptions</p> <p>46</p>
<p>I will feel properly listened to and understood by the coach</p> <p>47</p>	<p>I should feel very safe and able to talk openly</p> <p>48</p>

<p>being told the positive things the coach notices about me- what I say, what I do- can be really powerful and build my confidence to make changes for the better</p> <p>49</p>	<p>I will be using a journal to support the work- by keeping notes between sessions to support my personal reflection</p> <p>50</p>
<p>I will feel the coach is on my side</p> <p>51</p>	<p>the coach writes to me between each session to give me feedback and encouragement</p> <p>52</p>
<p>I find it most useful to make my own notes during the sessions</p> <p>53</p>	<p>the use of observation should be the teachers choice, as it can be better if sessions focus on issues beyond what happened in a focus lesson</p> <p>54</p>
<p>we should know how the school came to be offered coaching support and whether there are wider whole school aims or if the project can be driven by teachers own goals</p> <p>55</p>	

**“Consultation” versus the “traditional” role of
educational psychologists; a survey study of
Inclusion Support Service personnel’s views about
what is most valued in educational psychologists
(page 207)**

Research Project submitted July 2007

1). Abstract

This report describes a small-scale quantitative survey study of how Special Educational Needs support services personnel value the role of the educational psychologist. The study considered whether those activities derived from a consultation model are valued more highly than activities that reflect the “traditional” educational psychologist role and also how educational psychologists view these contrasting ways of working. The findings indicate that Special Educational Needs support services personnel rate consultation significantly more highly than the “traditional” educational psychologist role. In fact all of the descriptors of the educational psychologist working through a consultation model were more highly rated than even the highest rated activity derived from the “traditional” model. The members of the Educational Psychology Service management team were found to have a high degree of internal consistency in how they understood the educational psychologist role in terms of the paradigms of consultation and the “traditional” role. The implications for continued service development in Nottinghamshire are discussed and an argument is made for consultation being viewed as encompassing all that an Educational Psychology Service does, rather than as a part of a menu of activities an Educational Psychology Service can offer.

2). Contents

1). ABSTRACT	208
2). CONTENTS	209
LIST OF TABLES	210
3). INTRODUCTION	211
4). LITERATURE REVIEW	214
4.1. THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST	215
4.1.1. The "Traditional" Educational Psychologist role and Consultation	215
4.1.2. Agreeing a Definition of Consultation	217
4.2. EVALUATING THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST ROLE	220
4.2.1. Separating Process from Content	220
4.2.2. The Evaluation of Consultation	221
4.2.3. Contributing to the Literature- Evaluating Teachers' Perceptions in Relation to the Consultation Process	223
4.3. CONCLUSION OF LITERATURE REVIEW	225
5). METHOD	226
5.1. THE QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DEBATE	226
5.2. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY	227
5.3. THE STAGES OF THE STUDY	228
5.4. APPARATUS	229
5.4.1. Developing the Survey Items	229
5.4.2. Coding the Descriptors - "Traditional" versus Collaborative Consultation	232
5.4.3. Scoring Procedures	232
5.4.4. Piloting the Research Instrument	233
5.5. PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING	235
5.5.1. Sampling	235
5.5.2. Participant Characteristics	235
5.6. PROCEDURE	236
5.7. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL GENERALISATION	237
5.8. RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	238
6). RESULTS	239
6.1. TRADITIONAL VERSUS CONSULTATIVE MODELS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE	240
6.1.1. The Expert Panel	240
6.1.2. Descriptive Statistics	242
6.1.3. Exploring the Descriptors	245
6.1.4. T test Analysis of the Descriptor Groups	246
6.1.5. Chi-Square Analysis- looking more closely at the ratings	247
6.1.6. Summary of Results	250
7). DISCUSSION	251
7.1. THE MOVE TOWARDS CONSULTATION	252
7.2. EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS: THE DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTION	254
7.3. CONCLUSION OF DISCUSSION	256
8). IMPROVEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS	257
9). REFERENCES	259
10). APPENDIX	263
10.1. THE QUESTIONNAIRE TOOL	263

List of Tables

TABLE 1 THE 22 DESCRIPTORS 232

TABLE 2 EXAMPLE OF A DESCRIPTOR AND THE RATING SCALE 233

TABLE 3 EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST DESCRIPTORS GROUPINGS 240

TABLE 4 CONSTRUCTIONS OF “TRADITIONAL” VERSUS COLLABORATIVE CONSULTATION 241

TABLE 5 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS- RANKED BY MEAN RATING..... 244

TABLE 6 PAIRED SAMPLES STATISTICS..... 245

TABLE 7 PAIRED SAMPLES TEST..... 245

TABLE 8 PAIRED SAMPLES STATISTICS..... 246

TABLE 9 PAIRED SAMPLES TEST..... 246

TABLE 10 TRADITIONAL DESCRIPTORS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT THAN THAT MIGHT BE EXPECTED BY
CHANCE ALONE ($p<0.05$)..... 249

TABLE 11 TRADITIONAL DESCRIPTORS SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT THAN MIGHT BE EXPECTED BY CHANCE
ALONE ($p<0.05$)..... 249

TABLE 12 CONSULTATION DESCRIPTORS SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT THAT WHAT MIGHT BE EXPECTED BY
CHANCE ALONE ($p<0.05$)..... 249

3). Introduction

Reflection upon the role and contribution of educational psychologists has concerned the profession of educational psychology for some time. Debate over the direction of the professional has been on-going since the late 1970s and more recently in their national survey of schools Kelly and Gray (2000) suggested that there were conflicts between what schools are looking for and what educational psychologists want to offer. In the same year the government research report on the role and good practice of educational psychologists suggested further exercise should take place to map out the validity of core functions of Educational Psychology Services (DfEE, 2000) and more recently Stobie (2002) provided evidence that educational psychologists were still finding it difficult to describe their role and that diversity in practice was increasing. These questions are now mediated through the government programme of remodelling and professional change in the children's services work force- 'Every Child Matters'. The implementation of this legislation has led to the re-structuring of local authorities into children's services- combining social and educational services. The most recent Department of Education and Skills review of educational psychologist role and function suggested that this change places educational psychologists more centrally within *community contexts* where schools may form only one of the settings in which they work (DfES, 2006). One view that could be taken therefore is not only that educational psychology is a profession lacking role clarity, but is also one which exists in rapidly changing contexts.

With this in mind, difficult questions about the value added by educational psychologists can no longer be evaded (Baxter and Frederickson, 2005). This time of radical change for all services working with children in the UK places a stress upon the importance of educational psychologists being able to articulate the distinctive contribution they make. Questions of role and function inevitably bring with them a greater requirement of an evaluative focus within the work of educational psychologists; in short the need to demonstrate the achievement of improved outcomes for pupils along with being clear about what it is that we do.

So what is working well? Perhaps an answer to these questions is that many services have embarked upon a process of self-defining (Wagner, 2000) and there has been a proliferation of services expressing their basis for service delivery in terms of a consultation model (Watkins, 2000). An example of this is Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service who began a programme of work around their role and function through the development of a consultation framework for educational psychology practice. As part of this work Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service had chosen to enter into an investigative discourse around the questions of

- (i) What is valued by service users and
- (ii) What can we derive from theory as being effective psychology for bringing about beneficial change?

By building on the best of what was a tacit model of effective psychological practice the aim of this work was to establish a framework of shared practice and service delivery based on a consultation model. It was felt this model matched the complexity of the work undertaken by the service and was in line with its professional discourse. In progressing this work questions arose over how the work of the Educational Psychology Service was viewed and of what was seen to be most effective in our work. The Educational Psychology Service works as an integral part of a wider Inclusion Services Group, which brings together those specialist teacher services associated with Special Educational Needs support services with the Educational Psychology Service. The joined up approach to the delivery of these services, where sharing and collaboration are the norm, has led to questions being asked over the role and function of the different parts of the Inclusion Services Group. The value of a clear model of psychological practice can easily be appreciated if one calls to mind the historical and national context detailed earlier in this section, and the context of a integrated Inclusion Services Group. Given this the following research question was developed:

How do Special Educational Needs support services personnel rate “traditional” and consultative models of educational psychologist practice?

In conclusion to the introduction, this study investigates the views of fellow Special Educational Needs support service professionals and how they perceive the contrast between consultation and the “traditional” educational psychologist role. These colleagues are uniquely positioned as both service users and role partners and by exploring which roles are most valued, and through comparing views of roles derived from consultation and the “traditional” educational psychologist role, the study hopes to add value to the debate over educational psychologist role, albeit within the context of Nottinghamshire. This study has also considered educational psychologists’ understanding of the contrast between consultation and the “traditional” educational psychologist role, though this was not a key objective within the study.

The next chapter, the literature review, will consider what is understood by the consultation approach and how this way of describing the educational psychologists’ role contrasts with the “traditional” educational psychologist role: The increasing importance of evaluating the work of educational psychologists, and approaches to this, are also considered.

4). Literature Review

From Chazan et al's *The Practice of Educational Psychology* (1974) to the recent review of the functions and contributions of educational psychologists (DfES, 2006), attempts to capture *what* educational psychologists do (or should do) have been fraught with difficulties. A shared view of *how* they should do it presents, perhaps, an even greater challenge! The professional discourse around *what* educational psychologists do and *how* they do it can be explored through a number of key constructs which serve to help show where educational psychology has come from and potential future directions; these constructs being the "traditional" educational psychologist role, consultation and evaluation. By structuring the literature review around these constructs the aim is to flesh out a picture of the past, and opportunities for the future.

4.1. The Changing Role of the Educational Psychologist

4.1.1. The “Traditional” Educational Psychologist role and Consultation

As the profession of educational psychology moves on within the context of *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004) there is a value in knowing where it has come from and the opportunities that lay ahead. The influence of psychometrics, the child guidance movement, and the importance of behavioural approaches have all since had a direct effect on the way psychology has been practised in the UK (Leadbetter, 2006) and the history of the profession of educational psychology provides useful insights into the dominant paradigms that have influenced the role and training of educational psychologists over the years.

Looking back at the literature, Chazan et al's *The Practice of Educational Psychology* (1974) reflects a period where an understanding of the educational psychologist emphasised the educational psychologist as expert assessor of the individual child, and moreover expert assessor of what is wrong with the individual child. Dessent's (1978) account of the historical development of school psychological services notes that the development of special educational facilities and the associated mental testing movement provided the initial impetus for the development of the profession of educational psychology. The later growth of the child guidance movement led to the location of the EP in a psychiatric clinic setting, and contributed to the further constriction of the role to that of tester and the prevalent psychological model was one of individual pathology. The profile of EP work which was associated with that position was identified in the Summerfield Report (DES, 1968): a preponderance of individual clinical, diagnostic and therapeutic work, and a relative absence of advisory, preventative or in-service training work. The report identified such a profile as a problem, yet 10 years later, Gillham (1978) described a profile that had not changed. Gillham's call for a re-structuring of educational psychology promoted work at a systems level and the trend since then appears to be one of broad confusion with echoes of history still easily detected in our present, despite the

questioning of the relevance of a model of educational psychology based on a deficit model. Leadbetter (2006) suggests that a “traditional” approach is still apparent in the approach of educational psychologists and involves a child deficit model. Ashton and Roberts’ (2006) recent study into the educational psychologist role appears to draw on an understanding of the construct of the “traditional” role which is tacit and related to such notions as individual assessment, the use of closed tests, advice giving and involvement in statutory assessment.

Cameron and Monsen suggest that at the beginning of the twenty first century many educational psychologist practitioners appear to be experiencing something of an identity crisis (Cameron and Monsen, 2005) and the distance the profession have travelled since the late nineteen seventies seems debatable. Legislation in relation to education, and especially to special educational needs, has continued to embody a focus on individual assessment and there is the suggestion that educational psychologists have, to some extent, colluded with this for a range of reasons, some articulated and some not (Wagner, 2000).

These professional difficulties that have beset educational psychology have not been entirely without a cohesive response. More often than not the adoption of a consultation model appears to be interchangeable with the notion of moving on from the “traditional” model that has been debated extensively (Leadbetter, 2006). In fact, Clarke and Jenner (2006) suggest that the agenda for moving away from the “traditional” paradigm of child deficit, and the various activities that reflect that paradigm, to one of problem solving and finding solutions, is what consultation is trying to achieve. Indeed, the DfEE review of educational psychology practice in 2000 strongly commends consultation as an appropriate model for practice. This all begs the question- what is consultation?

4.1.2. *Agreeing a Definition of Consultation*

Given that consultation appears to be an attempt by educational psychologists to define a new role, the understanding of the term "consultation" has significant implications. Indeed some use the term consultation in contrast to "direct work" (with individual children); others use it to refer to work that concerns itself not with individual children at all but with organisational aspects of schools. Sometimes consultation is included as part of a menu of activities an Educational Psychology Service can offer, or conversely it is presented as being the entirety of what an Educational Psychology Service does. Conoley and Conoley (1982) describe four models of consultation (mental health consultation, behavioural consultation, advocacy consultation and process consultation), outlining what is involved in each model, its realisation in practice and ethical considerations. It has been suggested that consultation, as practised by the LEA EP, may have some elements of the four models described by Conoley and Conoley, but none is adequate for the EPs context (Wagner, 2000).

It is important therefore to outline "consultation" as understood in the context of this study. Firstly, it is worth saying that the terms "collaborative consultation" and "consultation" are considered as being interchangeable. They are able to refer to *a process in which educational psychologists converse or interact with other adults in ways that result in beneficial change* (McNab, 2001). Others in the profession have considered working definitions of consultation as it relates to the delivery of Educational Psychology Services. The work of Wagner (1995, 2000) on school consultation has provided much practical direction around what a model of consultation as service delivery might well look and there are a number of articles written by educational psychologists using and developing a consultative approach in their respective services (such as Dickinson, 2000; Kerslake and Roller, 2000; Munro, 2000). Hanko, who stresses the potential value of a psychotherapeutic underpinning to collaborative consultation with teachers, provides further helpful direction (Hanko, 1999). Wagner considers consultation a voluntary, collaborative, non-supervisory approach, established

to aid the functioning of a system and its inter-related systems (Wagner, 2000). Wagner goes on to describes it as follows:

Consultation in an Educational Psychology Service context aims to bring about the difference at the level of the individual child, group/class or organisational/whole school level. It involves a process in which concerns are raised, and a collaborative and recursive process is initiated that combines joint problem exploration, assessment, intervention and review (2000, p.11).

The term consultation is an attempt to encapsulate those constructs, actions and processes that make up a discourse of professional educational psychologist practice. It is a basis for organising, leading, developing and evaluating the work of educational psychology services. Consultation therefore may address problems at any level: individual children, classes or groups of children, aspects of the organisation or functioning of schools, staff development, Educational Psychology Services themselves, or problems facing Local Authorities. If an Educational Psychology Service uses this model of service delivery, one could accurately say that everything the service does is collaborative consultation. Watkins (2000) describes how colleagues in large numbers of services have run “in-house” development sessions on consultation and how the majority of initial training courses address the development of consultation.

This understanding of consultation contrasts with the recent use of the term in the DfES review of the functions and contribution of educational psychologists (DfES, 2006), where consultation is presented as being a part of a menu of activities that an Educational Psychology Service may offer. This locates consultation as part of *what* educational psychologists do; the definition proposed above is firmly seated within a discourse of *how* to “do” educational psychology. The confidence to assert this is derived from an examination of the key psychological models upon which consultation is based and the realisation that these models relate to the psychology of bringing about beneficial change-whatever the context or level of the work. This returns us to the notion that consultation refers to *a process in which educational psychologists converse or interact with other adults in ways that results in beneficial change*.

Educational psychologists who work in this way may use, in the process of consultation with the relevant adults, methods derived from therapeutic systems such as solution-focused brief therapy, personal construct psychology, and cognitive behaviour therapy; consultation is a process more akin to therapy than to mere discussion. It will even allow for EPs working therapeutically to sit in the same theoretical framework as those involved in organizational change at Local Authority level. The power of such an approach, where activities at all levels and contexts are underpinned by shared psychologies, is clear to see.

4.2. Evaluating the Educational Psychologist Role

4.2.1. Separating Process from Content

There has been some debate about what constitutes the most valid measure of effectiveness of the work of an educational psychologist. This study has drawn on a viewpoint offered by McNab (2001) who invited Educational Psychology Services to avoid confusing the evaluation of service delivery with the scientific study of the effectiveness of an intervention (or treatment). Such an invitation emphasises the difference between the process of consultation, (which in itself is an intervention) and interventions agreed through consultation (such as a circle of friends approach for example, or a particular literacy intervention). This view emphasises that whilst an educational psychologist might want a teacher to use an intervention that is known from research to be effective, it was the research that established the effectiveness of the intervention: the service delivery is a separate matter. Evaluation models should take this into account and this study can be seen as being taken forward in the spirit of McNab's framework for approaching evaluation as it is focused upon the educational psychologist and *how* they work, which in turn is derived from a model of service delivery. Whilst interventions (or treatments) would be apparent in both 'traditional' and consultative models of service delivery, in consultation the model of working is an intervention in its own right. In fact the consultation process can be viewed as the educational psychologists primary intervention tool. As such it would also be the primary focus for evaluative frameworks focused on the work of educational psychologists.

4.2.2. The Evaluation of Consultation

Timmins, Bham, McFadyen and Ward (2006) suggested four key themes exist in the literature around inquiry into consultation:

- Accounts of professional practice of consultation
- Evaluations of consultation by outcomes in relation to SEN processes
- Evaluations which explore the process of consultation
- Studies of the perceptions of consultation

Timmins et al (2006) suggested a contribution to the literature might include the exploration of the perceptions of teachers in relation to the consultation process, or the changes in teacher thinking and behaviour which occur during the process. There appears sparse consideration of these areas in the literature. Previous studies focused on eliciting views on the educational psychologist role have taken a variety of approaches in terms of their sample population and focus. Ashton and Roberts (2006) summarised that this has included:

- Educational psychologists looking at themselves and stating what they feel their role is
- Educational psychologists asking other educational psychologists what they do
- Educational psychologists asking children about what educational psychologists do
- Educational psychologists asking school staff about what educational psychologists do
- Professional organisations reviewing educational psychologists work

There appears to be a dearth of research into the views of colleagues whom tend to sit alongside educational psychology services in Special Educational

Needs supports services, and whom may be uniquely placed to help identify the effective contribution of educational psychologists.

4.2.3. *Contributing to the Literature- Evaluating Teachers' Perceptions in Relation to the Consultation Process*

In an attempt to make a further contribution to the literature this study has focused upon teachers' perceptions in relation to the consultation process through comparing consultation and the "traditional" model of educational psychology. The evaluation of a *"process in which educational psychologists converse or interact with other adults in ways that result in beneficial change"* (McNab, 2001) might begin by asking what effect the process has on the adults, or consultees, involved. Moreover a service working through a consultation model might consider consultee confidence a key measure of effectiveness. One example of this has been Evans (2005) approach to the evaluation of consultation using rating scales to evaluate a group consultation model. The study unpacked the consultation process into three key focus points which reflected the key principles of the group consultation approach- efficient and effective practice; working in cooperation and partnership with others; and empowerment of teachers. Using a 10-point rating scale against a set of questions relating to these key principles of consultation, Evans asked:

- Efficient and effective practice-to what extent were you able to draw up a plan of action responding to your concerns?
- Working in cooperation and partnership with others-to what extent were you able to benefit from the skills and experience of colleagues in formulating your ideas and planning strategies?
- Empowerments of teachers-to what extent were you able to contribute your skills and experience to the concerns of colleagues?

This study aims to build on such work using rating scales and descriptions of the educational psychologist role with such an inquiry focusing on different approaches to service delivery. Finding out how activities are rated, and whether there are patterns that reflect a consultation model or the "traditional"

paradigm, would contribute to body of research, with generalisability limited to Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service.

4.3. Conclusion of Literature Review

With many services choosing to take their practise forward through a consultation model it seems important to reflect upon how key role-partners, in this case Special Educational Needs support service personnel, view the educational psychologist role. The Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service leadership team were mindful that achieving real and lasting change in how educational psychologists work would be challenging and as such it was felt valuable to investigate current perceptions on the role of the educational psychologists, to help provide impetus for change. It was anticipated that this investigation of participants' perception of educational psychologists work could be one of two things: salutary or useful. It would be salutary if those elements of the educational psychologist role associated with consultation were perceived favourable. Conversely, if the role-partners perceive that most value is added through the "traditional" model, which is incongruent with the service direction, knowing this would be useful to inform how we take consultation forward. It is worth noting that in a recent study of educational psychologists' contribution the consultation model pursued by the service that was the focus of the research was not evaluated as being "something that Special Educational Needs Coordinators' would miss"- in fact most Special Educational Needs Coordinators' valued the "traditional" educational psychologist roles (Ashton and Roberts, 2006).

The purpose of the study was therefore to investigate the value placed on the work of educational psychologists by finding out whether those activities that can be derived from a consultation model are valued more highly than activities which reflect a "traditional" paradigm. The study also took an exploratory look at how educational psychologists themselves view these contrasting ways of working.

5). Method

5.1. The Quantitative and Qualitative Debate

This study is based upon the subjective notion of individual viewpoints and this draws the study into the debate between the differing methodologies of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Whilst there appears to be a natural dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative forms of research (Richardson, 2000) the ideological divide between quantitative and qualitative approaches has arguably become less clear cut (Robson, 2002), and there is increasing support for the notion that many of the ideological differences are more apparent than real and that there can be in fact advantages in combining these approaches (Robson, 2002; Bryman, 1998a; Tashakkori and Teddie, 1998). Whilst over the last fifty years the differing epistemological bases of idealism and realism have led to debates over methods and methodology many researchers now play down the distinction between the methods, and suggest that differences are mainly of a technical nature, (Bryman, 1998). Indeed studies in the sociology of scientific knowledge have tended to show that 'science' is not conducted in the 'scientific' manner generally assumed (Robson, 2002). The apparent dichotomy that quantification leads to hard data, whilst qualification leads to deep data, perhaps now simply begs the question "what do you do if you prefer data that is real, deep and hard" (Zelditch, 1978). What is ultimately important is that the methodology selected should depend on the research question. The first step in this is to establish a clear epistemological stance.

5.2. The Epistemological Basis of the Study

A quantitative approach matched the demands of the research question and provided a basis for the methodology of the study. A non-experimental fixed design was adopted within the study; a survey using a questionnaire instrument as the method of choice. The central features of the instrument were to be the use of fixed term.

The methods of quantitative research, such as social survey, experiment, official statistics, 'structured' observation, and content analysis, have perceived advantages. Such data can be representative, allows the testing of hypotheses, offers precise measurement and handling of large dataset, and provides reliability of observations and of measure (Bryman, 1988). This provides a strong basis for validity. The data collected would be "hard" and quantitative with the theory placed at the beginning of the enquiry to be tested, rather than generated through the research. The aim, in accordance with a quantitative research paradigm, was to 'produce a set of cumulative generalisations based on the critical sifting of data' (Silvermann, 2000). It is important to note that any generalisations produced in this study would be applied to Nottinghamshire Inclusion Services Group rather than Special Educational Needs support services as a whole.

5.3. The Stages of the Study

The study was undertaken in stages- firstly a questionnaire was developed based on a set of descriptors of educational psychologist activities. These descriptors needed to be able to capture the educational psychologist role and a broad approach was taken to enrich the questionnaire tool, involving:

- Theoretical frameworks behind collaborative consultation that informed the development of the service model,
- Field work with a mixed group of stakeholders to generate descriptions of educational psychologist activity,
- Conceptions of the “traditional” educational psychologist role in literature and as understood by experienced educational psychologists,
- A review of the literature around educational psychologist role definition.

The second stage was a pilot and use of the research instrument in fieldwork. The third and final stage involved an analysis of the findings.

5.4. Apparatus

The researcher's central task in using a survey approach is to link the research questions to survey items. The survey tool developed through this study drew on a piece of collaborative work within the Nottinghamshire Inclusion Services exploring the contributions of each of the services within the Inclusion services Group. This work, detailed below, was a valuable starting point in developing the survey items.

5.4.1. Developing the Survey Items

The survey tool provided descriptions of the educational psychologist role, both in terms of the "traditional" model and consultation. Thought had been giving to "borrowing" those descriptors of educational psychologist activities used in earlier studies, such as the recent DfES review of the functions and contributions of educational psychologists (DfES, 2006). The decision was taken to embark on generating original descriptors as it was considered to be a truer reflection of actual context in which the educational psychologists were working. This reflects Bakeman and Gottman's view that borrowing coding schemes is like borrowing someone else's underwear (Bakeman & Gottman, 1997)!

The development of the role descriptors that would act as survey items started with a collaborative meeting between members of the Behaviour Support Team, Inclusion Support Service and Educational Psychology Service which explored the developing role of each service and the unique and key contributions of each. The group also considered those activities and approaches that were generic and shared. Three main grade educational psychologists, a senior educational psychologist, and the principal educational psychologist engaged in this work and a similar range of practitioners and managers were engaged from the Inclusion Support Service and Behaviour Support Team.

This exercise produced a rich picture of educational psychologist activity, both from the psychologists point of view and also lay people, albeit stakeholders and role partners. Other services consultation frameworks and literature related to the educational psychologist role were used to extend this rich picture. One particularly useful source of information was the framework for consultation developed by Kensington and Chelsea Educational Psychology Service (Wagner, 1995), which provided an expression of the “traditional” educational psychologist role in contrast to a consultation model.

As the questionnaire was based upon self-completion there was a need to ensure that complexity was kept to a minimum, with care being taken over the ordering of the questions. The wording was essentially important and it would be true to say that the descriptors were revised several times. There was some “nesting” as a broad picture of educational psychologist activity was constructed. Whilst mutually exclusivity was not essential, a balance was needed between those that related to a “traditional” role and those relating to consultation. For the questionnaire tool to answer the research questions it needed to present the fullness of the educational psychologist role in terms of the “traditional” model and consultation and avoid alluding to implicit value judgements over the descriptors. The starting point for this was ensuring the words used on the questionnaire avoided evaluation apprehension; a sense there was an implied correct answer.

A panel of experienced educational psychologists agreed on 22 descriptors which it was felt accurately captured the “traditional” educational psychologist role and the consultation model (see

Table 1 The 22 Descriptors).

Table 1 The 22 Descriptors

<i>educational psychologists add value and make a key contribution through</i>
<i>Framing their work within an understand of how to promote change</i>
<i>Working with the "person most concerned" (e.g. teachers) to effect change</i>
<i>Working directly with the child or young person to effect change</i>
<i>Using written reports to effect change and advise others</i>
<i>Using explicit problem solving skills</i>
<i>Facilitating discussions and asking questions that promote change</i>
<i>Taking a systemic, broad and contextual approach to solving problems</i>
<i>Using their knowledge of psychology to make a difference</i>
<i>Providing specialist counselling to children and young people</i>
<i>Using specialist tests and assessments unavailable to others</i>
<i>Gate keeping specialist resources, such as HLN</i>
<i>Taking a holistic view of children's difficulties (i.e. looking both within and outside of the school)</i>
<i>Focusing their work on individual pupils only</i>
<i>Effecting change with schools at the organisational level</i>
<i>Having an in-depth knowledge of child development</i>
<i>Having an in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning</i>
<i>Having expertise in behaviour management</i>
<i>A key expertise in assessment</i>
<i>Using their experience as teachers to advise teachers in schools</i>
<i>A key expertise in problem solving</i>
<i>Using their interaction to help bring about beneficial change</i>
<i>Making a significant contribution in difficult meetings</i>

5.4.2. Coding the Descriptors - "Traditional" versus Collaborative Consultation

Firstly the descriptors were coded as being either derived from the "traditional" educational psychologist role or a consultation model. The allocation of a particular descriptor to either of the two groups was validated through an expert panel of the author, a principal educational psychologist and a senior educational psychologist. The panel independently coded the descriptors as either "traditional" or collaborative consultation. A de-brief exercise was undertaken to allow the opportunity for the expert panel to explore their judgements over where each descriptor belonged and the tacit understandings behind these views.

5.4.3. Scoring Procedures

A summative rating approach based on a Likert scale (Likert, 1932) was used. As Robson (2002) observes this had the advantage of being relatively easy to develop, can look interesting to respondents and people often enjoy completing a scale of this kind.

A four point rating scale was used: agree strongly, agree, disagree and disagree strongly. The rating scale had the word agree or disagree placed at the beginning of the phrase to minimise the risk of participant confusion in how they were rating the descriptor. An example is shown below in Table 2.

Table 2 Example of a Descriptor and the Rating Scale

<i>Working with the “person most concerned” (e.g. teachers) to effect change</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree
	Strongly			Strongly

As descriptors were written in an affirmative way, stating what the educational psychologist would be doing, weights of 1,2,3, and 4 were assigned to the alternatives, with the direction of rating going with the positive statements, i.e. agree strongly is 4, disagree strongly was 1.

The analysis of data involved a statistical test of significance between the ratings of each individual descriptors and how the ratings for the “traditional” role descriptors compared with the consultation descriptors. It was felt that such an analysis would be technically acceptable and answer the research questions.

The final research instrument is included in the appendix (appendix 1).

5.4.4. Piloting the Research Instrument

The aim of this pilot was, as Robson (2002) suggests, eliciting constructive comments on wording and asking for any thoughts that occur on other aspect of the questionnaire, for example, layout and response format (Oppenheim, 1992). Educational psychologists were engaged through a service email notice board

and feedback was taken on the style, lay out, contents and approach to the questionnaire. A number of revisions were made including;

- Subtle changes to the presentation of the questionnaire, for example the font size.
- Many small changes in language were suggested which helped with the clarity and readability of the questionnaire, such as avoiding overly technical language.
- The importance of not presenting the descriptors in a way that they appear overly polarised so that it would become obvious that there were two “types” of descriptors- one of which would be obviously pejorative.
- The descriptors were set out in a random mixed order.

A great deal of thought was also spent on framing the questionnaire with a key question. The phrase used was,

educational psychologists add value and make a key contribution through...

This phrase was used both on the questionnaire itself and in developing a script to ensure consistency when explaining the aims of the study to participants.

The final design stage involved a final careful check that there are no spelling mistakes, a professional layout had been used and that spacing and presentation were clear. The opportunity was taken to pilot the questionnaire with a group of teachers from the Behaviour Support Team. Feedback from this small group of teachers confirmed that the final questionnaire had face validity and made sense.

5.5. Participants and Sampling

5.5.1. Sampling

The population focus for this study was the Inclusion Support Service, a specialist teaching service that, along with a Behaviour Support Team and the Educational Psychology Service, form the Inclusion Services Group in Nottinghamshire. Following a review of support services and special provision the Inclusion Support Service was developed from a cohort of teachers in Special Schools and the service began in September 2001. The total sample frame was accessible and a 100 percent return rate was achieved supporting the reliability and internal generalisation of the study, allowing the study to be generalised across the context of the county. 21 participants completed the questionnaire.

5.5.2. Participant Characteristics

The participants were all experienced and specialist special educational needs teachers who work closely with and alongside educational psychologists. The sample was made up of 19 women and 2 men. As a key role-partner in the work of educational psychologists the Inclusion Support Service were uniquely positioned with three potential roles in relation to the Educational Psychology Service. These were:

- Service users
- Partners in delivering a service
- Observers of the educational psychologist role in schools.

It was felt that each of these roles enhanced the value of measuring the views and perspectives of the Inclusion Support Service.

5.6. Procedure

A series of *appreciative inquiry* seminars with the Inclusion Support Service were planned as part of the process of developing the Educational Psychology Service consultation model and the questionnaire was included as an activity during two seminars that the author facilitated. Two members of the Inclusion Support Service were not able to be in attendance. They completed and returned the questionnaire through the internal post of the County Council.

The questionnaire was introduced as an investigation into what is valuable about educational psychologists. The script for introducing the questionnaire stressed that there was no right or wrong answers and that what the participants was being asked to do was consider how educational psychologists add value and make a key contribution.

Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire individually without conferring and to place completed questionnaires face down in a box left in the room. To ensure respondent confidentiality and avoid any bias, the researcher then left the room. After the seminar ended a colleague was able to feedback that the questionnaires had been completed individually, without any obvious conferring or discussion.

The questionnaires were checked shortly afterwards in case a section had been missed through a respondent turning over two pages, for example.

5.7. Internal and External Generalisation

The internal generalisation of the study was high given involvement of the total sampling frame. Generalisation to the wider national population of Special Educational Needs support services and their views of educational psychologists is not claimed. Nevertheless the generalisation required by the research question was satisfied by the study.

5.8. Reliability, Validity and Ethical Considerations

Whilst planning this study Robson's (2002) framework of guidance for permissions, access and ethical issues was drawn upon. This outlines ten questionable practises in social research, for example involving people without their knowledge or consent or coercing them to participate. These questions were adopted as a resource upon which to reflect throughout the research process, and especially at the design stage. A number of relevant threats to reliability and validity were accounted for in the methodological process. These are detailed below.

- Participant error was minimised through pre-testing and piloting of the questionnaire tool.
- Scrutiny by colleagues both inside and outside of the service was used to counter the potential for researcher bias in the construction of the questionnaire.
- Confidentiality was built into questionnaire and the administration process to ensure there was not a Hawthorn Effect. Care was taken to use language in the descriptors that did not lead the participants. During the procedure the researcher left the room after introducing the questionnaire to create "space" for participants to be honest about their views, and to complete and return the questionnaire in a way that protected confidentiality.
- Researcher investment in the results, which was clearly for them to be favourably towards collaborative consultation, was taken into account through the analysis of the data which statistical in nature and relatively straightforward. This reduces the possibility for bias at that stage of the study.

6). Results

6.1. Traditional versus Consultative Models of Professional Practice

6.1.1. The Expert Panel

There was 100 percent reliability between the ratings of the expert group. The 22 descriptors are set out in Table 3 below.

Table 3 educational psychologist Descriptors Groupings

Collaborative Consultation	Traditional Model
<i>Framing their work within an understand of how to promote change</i>	<i>Using specialist tests and assessments unavailable to others</i>
<i>Working with the "person most concerned" (e.g. teachers) to effect change</i>	<i>Providing specialist counselling to children and young people</i>
<i>Taking a holistic view of children's difficulties (i.e. looking both within and outside of the school)</i>	<i>Using written reports to effect change and advise others</i>
<i>Effecting change with schools at the organisational level</i>	<i>Working directly with the child or young person to effect change</i>
<i>Using explicit problem solving skills</i>	<i>Gate keeping specialist resources, such as HLN</i>
<i>Facilitating discussions and asking questions that promote change</i>	<i>Focusing their work on individual pupils only</i>
<i>Taking a systemic, broad and contextual approach to solving problems</i>	<i>Having an in-depth knowledge of child development</i>
<i>Using their knowledge of psychology to make a difference</i>	<i>Having an in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning</i>
<i>Making a significant contribution in difficult meetings</i>	<i>Having expertise in behaviour management</i>
<i>A key expertise in problem solving</i>	<i>A key expertise in assessment</i>
<i>Using their interaction to help bring about beneficial change</i>	<i>Using their experience as teachers to advise teachers in schools</i>

A central endeavour in the service development work undertaken by Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service work has been to take educational psychologists tacit understandings of their role and raise them to a conscious level. This process was mirrored in this study through a de-brief exercise involving the expert group discussing those guiding concepts that allowed them to decide whether a descriptor sat within the "traditional" or consultation paradigms.

Table 4 summarises that discussion and the themes that arose.

Table 4 Constructions of “traditional” versus collaborative consultation

Collaborative Consultation	Traditional Model
A emphasis is placed on process	Bio-medical model
Client is viewed the expert	Within child explanations
Underpinned by social constructionist model	Educational psychologist as expert advice giver
Contextual understanding of behaviour	Emphasis on assessment and use of closed tests
Educational psychologist is working at different levels	Working at individual pupil level only
Working with person most concerned	

6.1.2. Descriptive Statistics

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics of each descriptor. These have been placed in ranked order using the mean rating of each descriptor. There were 21 participants, with 22 descriptors rated by each participant. These statistics point to a clear pattern; those descriptors of educational psychologist role derived from a consultation model are rated more highly than those reflecting the “traditional” role. Some data was missing as a participant failed to complete ratings of two of the descriptors.

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics- ranked by Mean rating

	Grouping	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean Rating	Std. Deviation
<i>Making a significant contribution in difficult meetings</i>	Consultation	21	3.00	4.00	3.8095	.40237
<i>Facilitating discussions and asking questions that promote change</i>	Consultation	21	3.00	4.00	3.8095	.40237
<i>Using explicit problem solving skills</i>	Consultation	21	3.00	4.00	3.7143	.46291
<i>Taking a holistic view of children's difficulties (i.e. looking both within and outside of the school)</i>	Consultation	21	3.00	4.00	3.6667	.48305
<i>Taking a systemic, broad and contextual approach to solving problems</i>	Consultation	21	2.00	4.00	3.5714	.59761
<i>Using their knowledge of psychology to make a difference</i>	Consultation	21	3.00	4.00	3.5714	.50709
<i>Framing their work within an understand of how to promote change</i>	Consultation	21	3.00	4.00	3.5238	.51177
<i>Using their interaction to help bring about beneficial change</i>	Consultation	21	2.00	4.00	3.5238	.60159
<i>Working with the "person most concerned" (e.g. teachers) to effect change</i>	Consultation	21	1.00	4.00	3.4286	.81064
<i>A key expertise in problem solving</i>	Consultation	21	3.00	4.00	3.3810	.49761
<i>Effecting change with schools at the organisational level</i>	Consultation	20	2.00	4.00	3.1000	.64072
<i>Having an in-depth knowledge of child development</i>	Traditional	21	1.00	4.00	3.0476	.80475
<i>Working directly with child or young person to effect change</i>	Traditional	21	2.00	4.00	2.8571	.79282
<i>Having expertise in behaviour management</i>	Traditional	21	1.00	4.00	2.7143	.71714
<i>Having an in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning</i>	Traditional	21	1.00	4.00	2.6667	.85635
<i>Using written reports to effect change and advise others</i>	Traditional	21	1.00	4.00	2.5714	.81064
<i>Providing specialist counselling to children and young people</i>	Traditional	21	1.00	4.00	2.5238	.98077
<i>A key expertise in assessment</i>	Traditional	21	1.00	4.00	2.3810	.86465
<i>Using their experience as teachers to advise teachers in schools</i>	Traditional	21	1.00	4.00	2.2381	.70034
<i>Focusing their work on individual pupils only</i>	Traditional	21	1.00	4.00	2.1429	.72703
<i>Gate keeping specialist resources, such as HLN</i>	Traditional	20	1.00	4.00	2.0500	.82558
<i>Using specialist tests and assessments unavailable to others</i>	Traditional	21	1.00	4.00	2.0476	.86465

6.1.3. Exploring the Descriptors

A series of paired sample t tests were undertaken to establish at what point the lowest rated descriptor of consultation showed to be statistically significantly higher than “traditional” descriptors. Significance was achieved between *effecting change with schools at the organisational level* and *having expertise in behaviour management*. This meant that the lowest rated descriptor of consultation was still significantly higher than the third highest rated descriptor of the “traditional” role ($t=2.438$, $df= 19$, $p<0.05$, two tailed).

Table 6 Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	organisationalwork	3.1000	20	.64072	.14327
	childdevelopment	3.0500	20	.82558	.18460
Pair 2	organisationalwork	3.1000	20	.64072	.14327
	directlyyoungperson	2.9000	20	.78807	.17622
Pair 3	organisationalwork	3.1000	20	.64072	.14327
	behaviourmanagement	2.6500	20	.67082	.15000

Table 7 Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	organisationalwork - childdevelopment	.05000	.94451	.21120	-.39205	.49205	.237	19	.815
Pair 2	organisationalwork - directlyyoungperson	.20000	.69585	.15560	-.12567	.52567	1.285	19	.214
Pair 3	organisationalwork - behaviourmanagement	.45000	.82558	.18460	.06362	.83638	2.438	19	.025

6.1.4. T test Analysis of the Descriptor Groups

Paired samples t tests were used to assess if there was a significant difference in how Special Educational Needs support service personnel rated “traditional” and consultative models of educational psychologist practice.

Two approaches were undertaken;

- Firstly, the sum of each participant’s ratings for the descriptor groupings of consultation and “traditional” were analysed. This created an overall score for consultation and “traditional” for each participant (t=10.602. df= 20, p<0.0005, one tailed).
- Secondly, the ratings were gathered beneath the descriptor groups as a single string of ratings. This created 226 ratings beneath each descriptor group (t=16.368. df= 225, p <0.0005, one-tailed). Table 8 and Table 9 present the results of the analysis in SPSS.

Table 8 Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Consultation	3.5575	226	.57253	.03808
	Traditional	2.5000	226	.84984	.05653

Table 9 Paired Samples Test

Paired Differences							
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			
1.05752	.97126	.06461	.93021	1.18483	16.368	225	.000

This analysis shows that the differences between consultation and “traditional” have statistical significance and that the ratings for consultation were significantly higher than for “traditional” on both t tests.

6.1.5. Chi-Square Analysis- looking more closely at the ratings

A “Chi-Square” goodness of fit test was undertaken to investigate which of the dependent variables, the 22 descriptors, have ratings that appear to be unlikely to be due to chance. Statistical significance is reached where the probability figure (“Asymp.sig”) is less than 0.05. The aim of this analysis was to test whether the ratings seem to suggest a pattern of views unlikely to be to do with chance.

Table 10 shows those “traditional” descriptors where the ratings do not differ from what might be expected by chance. This could be taken to suggest that there is not a definite view either way about that particular activity in terms of it being how an educational psychologist adds value and makes a key contribution

Table 11 shows those “traditional” descriptors where the ratings do differ from chance. That means that there is a pattern in the ratings and that perhaps there is a pattern to this view.

Table 12 shows that all of the consultation descriptors ratings differ from what might be expected by chance. Therefore how these descriptors were rated is unlikely to have been due to chance factors. This suggests cohesion in the positive ratings about how educational psychologists add value and make a key contribution i.e. through a consultation approach. The mean ratings are also included to illustrate the direction of the ratings pattern i.e. a positive pattern.

Table 10 Traditional descriptors not significantly different than that might be expected by chance alone ($p<0.05$).

	<i>Providing specialist counselling to children and young people</i>	<i>Having an in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning</i>	<i>A key expertise in assessment</i>
Chi-Square(a,b)	2.810	7.381	6.238
df	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.422	0.061	0.101

Table 11 Traditional descriptors significantly different than might be expected by chance alone ($p<0.05$).

	<i>Working directly with child or young person to effect change</i>	<i>Using specialist tests and assessments unavailable to others</i>	<i>Focusing their work on individual pupils only</i>	<i>Having an in-depth knowledge of child development</i>	<i>Using written reports to effect change and advise others</i>	<i>Gate keeping specialist resources, such as HLN</i>	<i>Using their experience as teachers to advise teachers in schools</i>	<i>Using specialist tests and assessments unavailable to others</i>	<i>Having expertise in behaviour management</i>
Chi-Square(a,b)	8.143	12.714	16.143	10.810	16.143	18.000	16.905	12.714	14.238
df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.043	0.005	0.001	0.013	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.005	0.003

Table 12 Consultation descriptors significantly different that what might be expected by chance alone ($p<0.05$).

	<i>Framing their work within an understand of how to promote change</i>	<i>Working with the "person most concerned" (e.g. teachers) to effect change</i>	<i>Using explicit problem solving skills</i>	<i>Facilitating discussions and asking questions that promote change</i>	<i>Taking a systemic, broad and contextual approach to solving problems</i>	<i>Using their knowledge of psychology to make a difference</i>	<i>Taking a holistic view of children's difficulties (i.e. looking both within and outside of the school)</i>	<i>Effecting change with schools at the organisational level</i>	<i>A key expertise in problem solving</i>	<i>Using their interaction to help bring about beneficial change</i>	<i>Making a significant contribution in difficult meetings</i>
Chi-Square(a,b)	21.095	16.143	28.714	37.095	20.714	21.857	25.667	15.600	23.381	18.810	37.095
df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000
Mean rating	3.5238	3.4286	3.7143	3.8095	3.5714	3.5714	3.6667	3.1000	3.3810	3.5238	3.8095

6.1.6. Summary of Results

- Overall, consultation was rated significantly higher than the “traditional” role.
- When ranked by mean ratings, descriptors of educational psychologist role reflecting consultation were consistently rated more highly than the “traditional” role. In fact the lowest rated consultation description was more highly rated than the highest rated “traditional” role descriptor.
- The lowest rated descriptor of consultation was found to significantly higher than the third highest rated descriptor of the “traditional” role.
- All the descriptors related to consultation, and a number related to the “traditional” role, reflected a “goodness of fit” in the sense that the patterns of ratings were unlikely to be due to chance. This invites speculation that there is a degree of cohesion in the positive ratings about how educational psychologists add value and make a key contribution i.e. through a consultation approach.

7). Discussion

This discussion will consider two key themes: the move towards consultation models of Educational Psychology Service delivery; and the current debate over the distinctive contribution of educational psychologists. It will conclude by considering the importance of warranting educational psychology practice.

7.1. The Move Towards Consultation

The key aim of this study was to investigate how Nottinghamshire Special Educational Needs support service personnel, the Inclusion Support Service, rate “traditional” and consultative models of educational psychologist practice and the findings suggest that a consultation approach best captures how the educational psychologists role can add value and make a key contribution in Nottinghamshire. The activities that make up consultation were rated highly and therefore clearly valued. The two highest rated descriptors, *making a significant contribution in difficult meetings* and *facilitating discussions and asking questions that promote change*, strongly encapsulated a consultation approach.

So what does this mean for psychological practice in Nottinghamshire? The DfEE Working Group (2000a, p.4) found that “there is some mismatch between what Educational Psychology Services think they should be doing and what service users perceive as their role” so it is encouraging to see that the model pursued by Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service is highly rated by the Inclusion Support Service. This contrasts with some other Educational Psychology Services where after adopting consultation as their model of service delivery they have found that service users place higher value or importance on activities associated with the “traditional” role (Ashton & Roseberry, 2006). This study offers support to the direction taken by Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service in its development of a consultation model.

The assumption that as a profession we have a responsibility to carry out research to help determine what is effective invites a careful look at the changing practices of educational psychologists. The picture beyond Nottinghamshire is that consultation is an established practice within the varied work patterns of educational psychologists (Leadbetter, 2006) and the literature suggests that the impact of consultation needs to be researched more systemically from the consultees’ perspective, to add to the evidence base. This study is able to contribute to a context specific evidence base and supports the

promotion of the consultation model further within the context of Nottinghamshire. That colleagues who work closely with educational psychologists value consultation shows how the educational psychologist who takes a collaborative, interactionist and solution-focused perspective can believe they are making contribution that is valued.

7.2. Educational Psychologists: The Distinctive Contribution

How to achieve a measure of professional distinctiveness has been the subject of considerable debate within the profession of educational psychology. This debate has been fuelled further by the change agenda associated with Every Child Matters and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Division/Children's Workforce Unit (Smith, 2005) inquiry into the distinctive contribution of educational psychologists that has asked the question "what is it that educational psychologists bring to the situation that is different from what others bring?"

This study has not focused on this question though the findings do tell us that colleagues who work alongside us discern that there is a difference between "traditional" educational psychology and consultation. A key challenge appears to be that the descriptors most highly rated in this study capture a way of working that would by no means be the sole prerogative of the practising educational psychologist leading to the question- is it the case that educational psychologists are now offering something that other professionals may also claim to do- joint problem solving? This situation may be confounded by the fact that consultation is necessarily open handed and de-mystifying of the educational psychologist role and contribution, and the psychology we use in our work. Therefore it may be that the psychologies behind consultation, which stress collaboration and partnership and see the psychologist working in an open handed manner, relate too readily to the fact that educational psychologists do things that others may also do. This may be hardly surprising, given that in human life psychology is ubiquitous. Recent critical examinations of the debate over distinctiveness (e.g. Cameron, 2006) recognise that collaborative models of psychological practice may blur the distinctiveness of the educational psychologist contribution, *especially* when it is most effective.

As educational psychology looks to a future not dominated by the "traditional" role the reasons for its historical prevalence have been examined; for example

it is clear it offered a secure basis for arguing how we are unique (Wagner, 2000). What seems clear is that future service development work should recognise Every Child Matters and include a convincing answer to the question “what do educational psychologists bring to a situation that is different from what others bring?”

7.3. Conclusion of Discussion

Warranting psychological practice through “furnishing rationales as to why a certain voice...is to be granted superiority...on the grounds of specific criteria” (Gergen, 1989: 74) offers a firm basis to the leadership of an Educational Psychology Service. Prior to this study the voice of consultation was granted superiority in the aims of the Nottinghamshire service development and the warrant for this decision was the body of theory, research and practice accounts relating to consultation. It was the purpose of this study was to know more about the practice of educational psychologists and contribute to the development of a service delivery model. The claim is made that consultation can be seen as an appropriate model of service delivery, according to the evidence within this study.

The basis for this, or warrant, is the crucial link between the findings and the conclusions drawn from them: the findings being that a relevant group (support service personnel whom work closely and regularly with educational psychologists) saw those activities derived from a consultation model as being more effective than those activities described as “traditional” educational psychology; the conclusion was that consultation is therefore a better model of service delivery than the “traditional” model. That statistical analysis found all the descriptions derived from consultation to be rated higher than even the highest rated description from the “traditional” role is a pattern of results that stands up to scrutiny and inspection. Therefore it is concluded that this study of the work of educational psychologists within the context of Nottinghamshire offered salutary feedback on the direction the service has taken towards a consultation model.

As the educational psychologist role changes it is important to ensure that the models upon which practice is based are robust yet flexible. This may be ensured through the use of inquiry that warrants new developments as part of on-going service development and contributes to evidence base of practice.

8). Improvements and Developments

An element of this study that went well was achieving a good response rate. If the sampling frame had been extended to include all of the Inclusion Services then a richer and larger data set would have been accessed. The limited number of participants limited the statistical analysis of the data and a larger sample size would have allowed greater variety in how to analyze the data. One such alternative statistical analysis would have been to undertake a factor analysis, which would have required over 80 participants. A factor analysis is designed to analyze interrelationships and key factors that explain the data and would have been an appropriate approach.

The use of a summative rating approach in the study as the core construct around which the questionnaire tool was based had limitations. The use of a Q-sort would have been an alternative route. This technique is used to measure the relative position or ranking of an individual on a range of concepts and is often used with individuals or small groups. It would have been a viable methodology within this study.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the educational psychologist role and it was necessary to consider issues of validity in regard to the evaluation process. On reflection a triangulation method would have increased validity (for example Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall, 1994). Relying on a single method of data collection may have led to bias or distorted findings. Robson (2002) suggests the use observational tactics, as the directness of these can complement the information gained by virtually any other technique.

The categorising of the descriptors into either “traditional” educational psychology or consultation could have been firmly rooted in a methodological process and then formed an aspect of the research question. How the expert panel categorized the descriptors was informally analysed. This analysis had some face validity though a lot more that could have been done in this area to

increase validity.

To conclude, there are many opportunities for further research which arise from this study including:

- Further detailed research on how educational psychologists construct the “traditional” role versus collaborative consultation
- Investigation into the values educational psychologists place on how they work
- A wider investigation in Nottinghamshire as to the views held by service users and stakeholders (e.g. the wider inclusion services, wider children’s services) of educational psychologists, in terms of the “traditional” role versus collaborative consultation
- An exploration of whether the factors that were most valued in this study might capture the distinctive contribution of educational psychology

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10). Appendix

10.1. The Questionnaire tool

<i>educational psychologists add value and make a key contribution through</i>				
<i>Framing their work within an understanding of how to promote change</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Working with the "person most concerned" (e.g. teachers) to effect change</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Working directly with child or young person to effect change</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Using written reports to effect change and advise others</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Using explicit problem solving skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Facilitating discussions and asking questions that promote change</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Taking a systemic, broad and contextual approach to solving problems</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Using their knowledge of psychology to make a difference</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Providing specialist counselling to children and young people</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Using specialist tests and assessments unavailable to others</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Gate keeping specialist resources, such as HLN</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Taking a holistic view of children's difficulties (i.e. looking both within and outside of the school)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Focusing their work on individual pupils only</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Effecting change with schools at the organisational level</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Having an in-depth knowledge of child development</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Having an in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly
<i>Having expertise in behaviour management</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree Strongly

A key expertise in assessment				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
Using their experience as teachers to advise teachers in schools				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
A key expertise in problem solving				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
Using their interaction to help bring about beneficial change				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
Making a significant contribution in difficult meetings				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
Please indicate which service you are part of							
Behaviour Support Team	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inclusion Support Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inclusion Support Service EYs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Educational Psychology Service	<input type="checkbox"/>
						PDSS	<input type="checkbox"/>
						EWS	<input type="checkbox"/>
						NLC	<input type="checkbox"/>

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**What works for schools in challenging circumstances;
a qualitative study of teachers' views on their
experiences of effective school improvement and the
messages this gives
(page 262)**

Research Project submitted July 2005

Abstract

This study is based upon a phenomenological analysis of eleven interviews with primary school staff from a small group of schools in challenging circumstances. This study gives new knowledge of the experiences of teachers. A phenomenological approach derived from Amadeo Giorgi was used to uncovering the meaning of an LEA improving schools project as experienced by a teachers through the identification of essential themes and create a local theory of what works. The focus of these interviews was their perceptions of what the LEA did that worked whilst they were part of the project. Some interesting possibilities and areas for further research emerged in as far as it would appear that teachers tell us that collaborative models work best. The study discusses how school consultation as a model of educational psychology appears congruent with what teachers described as being effective support. The analysis suggests that educational psychologists should feel confident drawing upon the well-articulated frameworks of psychological practice related to school consultation.

Contents

ABSTRACT	263
CONTENTS	264
TABLE OF FIGURES	264
1. INTRODUCTION	265
2. LITERATURE SURVEY	266
2.1 Introduction.....	266
2.2 School Improvement.....	266
2.3 Organisational Development.....	268
2.4 The Research Question.....	270
3. METHODOLOGY	272
3.1 Sampling.....	276
3.2 Participants.....	276
3.3 Validity.....	278
3.4 Procedure.....	279
3.5 Analytical Approach.....	280
3.6 Reliability.....	281
3.7 Generalizability.....	281
3.8 Ethical Issues.....	281
3.9 Decisions Made in the Course of the Study.....	282
4. DATA	283
4.1 Introduction.....	283
4.2 Main Section.....	285
4.3 Conclusion of Analysis.....	289
5. DISCUSSION	293
5.1 Improvements and Developments.....	297
6. CONCLUSIONS	298
REFERENCES	

Table of Figures

1 Ten questionable Practices in Social Research.....	281
2 Non-redundant Meaning Units, Interviews1, items 1 to 5.....	285
3 Essential Descriptions for meaning units, Interview 1, items 1 to 5...	285
4 Essential Descriptions.....	287
5 Categories and Properties with direct psychological expressions.....	291
6 Summary of <i>Process of creating and maintaining goals</i>	295

Diagrams

1 Categories and Properties.....	290
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1. Introduction

This qualitative analysis of primary school staff perceptions of LEA support provided through an LEA improving schools project takes a phenomenological approach to finding out what teachers view as being “effective support” for school improvement when their school was in challenging circumstances whilst working in a school in challenging circumstances (i.e. having received a label of school with serious weakness or a failing school). Using interviews undertaken through appreciative questioning (i.e. asking participants to talk about what worked) the participants “descriptions” have been combined to form a single “description”, from which a collective theory was derived. In turn this collective theory has been related to underlying social-psychological factors.

The topic was chosen as a part of an LEA working group, which comprised educational psychologists and other SEN support service staff and school advisors from the LEA Advisory and Inspectorate Service. The study aimed to elicit teachers' views, perceptions and understandings of effective LEA support in bringing about successful change in 4 primary schools in special measures and provide new understanding and ideas about the psychology of organisational development in schools in challenging circumstances.

This report has set out against a checklist of sections suggested in Robson (2003).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Since the Warnock Report (DES,1978),the role of the EP has been closely linked to the statutory assessment process and to working with individual children. Historically work with individual children identified as having special educational needs has accounted for a large proportion of an EP's workload in a large number of services (Thomson, 1998).

However, it has been recognised within the profession that the contribution of psychological theory and practice can be effective if applied more widely. Indeed, the Division of Educational and Child Psychology's framework for practice (DECP,1998) states that: 'The DECP wishes to see clear guidelines that regard the contribution of educational psychology to quality individual casework as continuing to be important, but which facilitate a radical shift of balance to increase effective preventative work at the level of whole schools and wider organisations'(p. 4). Some examples have been described in practice journals include consultation (Wagner,2000 ,Bozic,2004) and systemic / organisation approaches (Timmins, Shepherd, and Kelly, 2003; Bettie, Frederickson and Sharp, 2003). The potential for a more explicit contribution by educational psychologists to schools at the organisational development level is clear to see.

2.2 School Improvement

The agenda for school improvement has probably been the dominant theme of government educational policy in the last tens years. Schools in challenging circumstances (i.e. schools that do not sustain improvement or whose attainments are below governmentally prescribed levels) have received increasing policy and to some extent research attention in recent years (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll and Russ, 2004). Such schools are often colloquially referred to as *hard to shift* – this being those schools whose attainments at key points of assessment, for example in year six of primary schooling, are below

levels prescribed by central government as *floor targets*. It is hardly surprising that there is a strong correlation between the *hard to shift* phenomenon and improving schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, though with the recent advent of a focus upon value added we are learning that there are also schools in less challenging contexts who do not sustain improvements.

The research attention towards schools in challenging circumstances appears to detail what such schools can do to improve, describing the outputs and outcomes associated with improving schools in challenging circumstances. What the research does not do is detail *how* a School Improvement Service can approach the school in challenging circumstances. In short despite this growth in activity in the field of school improvement there appears to be little evidence and investigation over what constitutes an effective framework for undertaking organisational development work with schools. Gray (2000, p. 33) concedes "*we don't really know how much more difficult it is for schools serving disadvantaged communities to improve because much of the improvement research has ignored this dimension- that it is more difficult, however, seems unquestionable*".

What evidence there is suggests that facilitative rather than commanding approaches would seem to be work best (e.g. Seeley, Niemeyer and Greenspan, 1990). It would seem that links are made between school improvement professionals modelling those leadership and change approaches that are said to work when employed by schools themselves. Key sources of evidence also emphasise a differentiated approach to supporting schools (Stoll and Fink, 2002).

One description of what is effective school improvement support can be found in the annual report of HMCI of Schools 2003/04 which reports that an advisory role is pivotal to an LEA's support for schools and describes the conditions in LEAs which correlate with a profile of improving schools (e.g. quality of strategic education plans, strong leadership and decision making, effective procedures for monitoring, challenge and intervention, quality of partnership with schools). The pattern of failing to model exactly how the LEA should go about this work is

continued though as this report does not give any clarity about what kinds of school improvement interventions by LEAs have been most or least successful.

In summary it is suggested that whilst there is much research upon “within-school” factors associated with improvement in schools in challenging circumstances, and research has also focused upon the conditions necessary for change such as Harris and Chapman (2004), there is a dearth of research into how to work with schools as an organisation and moreover what school’s find works for them. Generally there appears to be little in the way of research into the reflections of those who received the support, and what they found effective.

Therefore this study aimed to investigate the approaches adopted by school improvement professionals in Nottinghamshire LEA, so we could know more about what works from the perspective of those whom received intervention. The final defining feature of this study is that it asked the teachers what they felt worked well, bringing an appreciative eye to the work of the LEA.

2.3 Organisational Development

Organisational work with schools rests within an area of theory called organisational development (OD). There is a huge amount of published work in this area. The culture of organisational development emerged out of the science of psychology in the 1940s (Bush and Kassam, 2005). Beckhard (1969) defines OD as “planned interventions in the organisations processes” (p.9). Porras and Robertson (1992) describe OD as a practice for “enhancing individual development and improving organisational performance, through alteration of organisational member’s on-the-job behaviours” (p.272). Cummings and Worley (2001) say that OD “moves beyond the initial efforts to implement a change program to a longer-term concern for stabilising and institutionalising new activities within the organisation” (p.3). Such a behavioural focus has many exceptions. Burke (1993) views OD as highly concerned with “culture change” and, to some extent, changing culture is about changing ideas. In much of the OD practice, consultants bring “new ideas” in

the form of knowledge tested practice and research, into the client system so that the focus is more on implementing externally validated knowledge than on creating internally generated knowledge.

There is a growing interest in an approach in OD work, which is described as a “new lens for seeing old issues” (Bush and Kassam, 2005); that is appreciative inquiry (AI). The first seminal article on AI was published in 1987 (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987) and there is now a wealth of books on applications of AI in the field and also on the underlying processes of the approach. The AI approach takes a critical view of traditional action research and problem-solving approaches to planned change primarily by arguing that they do not lead to a new knowledge but instead to (re) creating the processes they claim to be studying. AI is suggested as a method of inquiry for generating new ideas and the emphasis in the literature on AI is upon inquiry into the positive and searching for the best of what is in the organisation. In a theoretical statement on AI, Cooperrider and Whitney (2001) articulated a social constructionist view of organisations, that is, that organisations are socially, coconstructed realities, and so AI attempts to engage as many members of the organisation as possible in articulating desirable collective futures. AI posits that as we inquire into human systems, we change them and suggests a four-stage process of OD, or 4-D cycle (discover, dream, develop, deliver); appreciating what is, imagining what could be, determining what should be and creating what will be. . It has been argued that the act of simply sharing stories of the positive can lead to profound transformations in relationships (Bushe, 2001b; Cooperrider and Whitney, 2001) and AI practice is, in short, the collection of “stories” from system members and other stakeholders about their best experiences.

This model challenges many traditions of OD by eschewing the traditional of being problem focused. Yet there is evidence that the AI approach can make a major contribution to achieving transformational change in organisations (Bush and Kassam, 2005).

An interpretation of the contrasting ideas within OD relevant to the field of education are the views of Tim Brighouse (Brighouse and Woods, 1999) who proposed that organisational and change management strategies may be framed across three generic domains; problem solving, ensuring compliance and appreciative inquiry. Brighouse suggested that much of the OD work with schools (and specifically work related to the *Standards Agenda* in school improvement) reflected the paradigm of ensuring compliance. Brighouse's went on to posit that appreciative inquiry could provide an appropriate framework for approaching change in the complex social system that is a school.

At this point it is worth overlaying the notion of the role of the educational psychologist, and the kind of frameworks used in modern educational psychology service delivery, with OD work. For educational psychologist this work is often referred to as systemic work and a particularly relevant framework related to such systemic work is consultation. This literature survey will not detail the emergence or background to consultation in educational psychology, as the focus of this study is upon those broad psychologies associated with OD work (in schools). It is useful to put a marker down by saying that the profession have considered working definitions of consultation and such a definition helps to locate consultation within the field of OD work, and for it to be placed with those models associated with facilitative as opposed to commanding approaches. Wagner, whose work has had great influence on the development of consultation in educational psychology, describes it as follows:

Consultation in an EPS context aims to bring about the difference at the level of the individual child, group/class or organisational/whole school level. It involves a process in which concerns are raised, and a collaborative and recursive process is initiated that combines joint problem exploration, assessment, intervention and review (2000, p.11).

The emphasis on a "collaborative and recursive process" (2000, p.11) helps us see that as we learn about what works in OD work with schools there exists a framework for educational psychology practice where such learning can be considered and interpreted. In other words educational psychologists should be concerned with OD work in schools and have a major contribution to make.

Given this the aim of this study was to learn something new about OD in a small group of schools in Nottinghamshire, and to see what that might tell us about future possibilities. It would be of interest to see whether those who received the intervention point us in the direction of a commanding approach to change or, as Brighouse implicitly suggested, found a facilitative model to be most effective.

2.4 The research question

The research question helps to anchor this work into a psychological perspective, namely the role of psychological theory in OD work with schools. Therefore this study is asking;

What can teacher experiences of effective school improvement tell us about OD work with schools in challenging circumstances?

3. METHODOLOGY

I approached this study by considering which methodological approach would offer best fit and be most suited to the task at hand. I considered the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative methods, as derived from the epistemological bases of idealism and realism. The historical subtext to the established debate regarding the epistemological basis of social science research requires consideration as one considers how to conduct enquiry.

When considering the nature of enquiry from contrasting epistemological bases one must consider the different research methods and techniques that have been developed and also look towards different philosophical starting points for the study of social phenomena and the very position of theory within such study. For this study I have adopted a qualitative method. Whilst experiments, particularly those involving randomised controlled trials, are viewed by many as the gold standard for social research (e.g. MacDonald, 1996; Oakley, 1996) there has been an increasing recognition of the value of some very different approaches to social research.

In this study people are the focus of the study, within a social context. The qualitative methodology used herein places central importance upon the role of language given that it is the fundamental instrument by the world is represented and constructed. The preference for word and images in qualitative research over numbers is perhaps reflective of the fact that whilst numbers are sometimes useful, they can conceal as well as reveal social processes.

There exists an apparent dichotomy between the epistemological notions that quantification leads to hard data whilst qualification leads to deep data, which begs the question "what do you do if you prefer data that is real, deep and hard?" (Zelditch, 1978). I knew that I would be using interview as the basis for this study and as such I considered how best to approach making sense of the data I would be collecting.

I considered approaching this study using a grounded theory approach. Strauss and Corbin (1998) outline the requisite characteristics of a grounded theorist- the ability to step back and critically analyse situations; the ability to recognise the tendency towards bias; the ability to think abstractly; the ability to be flexible and open to helpful criticism; sensitivity to the words and actions of respondents; and a sense of absorption and devotion to the work process. Whilst reflecting on the process within a grounded theory I discovered that the aim is "to discover, name, and categorise phenomena according to their properties and dimensions" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998); it follows that the aim of gathering data requires the collection process to remain open to all possibilities.

Approaching this study through a 'grounded theory' approach, such as a "Straussian analysis" offered a route. A characteristic of the grounded theorist to is acknowledge a tendency for bias. I felt this was an important issue in the study; in as far as I was going into it with some pre-conceived and experientially based ideas about the nature of supporting schools effectively. The procedure being adopted, and its rigorous application, would have to serve both to ensure that the theory derived from the data is more likely to resemble reality rather than be derived from concepts based upon experience and as such I was drawn to it.

Whilst I was attracted to grounded theory as I considered the scope of the study, not least the realities of the time frame for it, I began to realise that if I was to undertake the study in the way I had set out to that a grounded theory approach would not be appropriate. I decided against this given that grounded theory seems particularly suited to understanding material in a field of interest that does not have a body of well-established theories. The field of OD is rich in theory and the aim of this study was not to develop a new theory, but rather to learn about what had happened in the schools and relate this to the field OD. I knew that I was going into this study with a tighter framework and some clear ideas about how to conduct interviews, working from an established sampling frame. I knew that I would be undertaking a series of interviews that would necessitate a schedule of interviews and careful management of the study. I also knew that I would be left with a large body of transcripts to work

with. Within the context of grounded theory, theory is described as a "set of well-developed categories that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social, psychological or educational phenomenon" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; page 22). I needed an analytical tool for handling masses of raw data and therefore I began to look at other methodologies and found one that seemed viable and suitable, derived from the field of descriptive phenomenology.

Given this I explored other qualitative approaches, in particular descriptive phenomenological approaches. Phenomenology has its origins in the thinking of the German philosopher Husserl and the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, that which Crotty (1996) calls the classical phenomenologist approach. According to Van Manen (1990) it is an exploration of 'the essence of lived experience'. With the development of post-positivist approaches phenomenology has been adopted by different disciplines as an appropriate way of exploring research questions, which led to a different way of knowledge being constructed. Phenomenology does offer ways of understanding not offered by other research methodologies and in contrast to the scientific method it is interpretive. There are no universally accepted models for such analysis and Polkinghorne (1983) offers four qualities to help evaluate the power and trustworthiness of phenomenological accounts: vividness, accuracy, richness and elegance.

I was looking for a direct approach to the key focus of this study; what is the teachers experience like? At the heart of a phenomenological approach is the attempt to understand phenomena (Robson, 2002) and in this instance that seemed to match exactly what I was setting out to do. I wanted to understand how school improvement professionals effectively support schools in challenging circumstances.

I finally rested on a descriptive phenomenological analytical tool outlined by Amadeo Giorgi (1985). Giorgi's meaning condensing approach would allow me

to deal with a large amount of text and deliver an analysis that would capture the experiences of the participants in a meaningful way. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe such tools as steering a researcher's thinking away from the confines of both the technical literature and personal experience, instead in the phenomenological paradigm, the primary focus is on understanding the meanings of human experience of particular relevance to the context with this consisting of studying culture from the informant's point of view, and attempting to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular contexts (Bailey 1997). The aim of this study was to seek an understanding of the change processes involved in supporting a school to improve, whilst that school was in what is termed *challenging circumstances*. A Giorgian analysis would provide the methodology to achieve that.

The study centred around the use of interview technique. In contrast to the survey interview, where questions and answers are analogous to stimuli and response, the phenomenological interview engages in a dialogue which continues until both are satisfied that the interviewee's meaning has been adequately understood by the interviewer rather than ask a single, standardised question (Kvale, 1983). Interviews were undertaken with staff from four primary schools during the summer term of 2005 as part of a wider research project focused upon effective support for schools in challenging circumstances. The interviews provided a set of descriptive data and the phenomenological analysis an opportunity to illuminate the intentional meaning of the participant in detailed, descriptive, qualitative accounts. The aim of the analysis was to give new knowledge of the experiences of teacher's and new views of how to meet the needs of schools in *challenging circumstances*.

3.1 Sampling

The lead of the research project, a Senior Advisor/ School Inspector from Nottinghamshire County Council, engaged a small group of schools in this work. The schools had all taken part in the ISP and had managed to move out of being a school in *challenging circumstances*. The wider sampling frame was difficult to establish. Given the dynamic nature of schools moving in and out of

the ISP, and the interplay between schools being “placed” in the project by the LEA or being moved into the project due to an OFSTED judgement, it was difficult to say over a period of time what the sampling frame was. Further to this was the fact that some schools, which had made good progress, would request to stay in the project for a period of time to support the sustaining of the progress they had made. After initial contact from the Senior Advisor the author briefed the schools around the aims of the study. This involved negotiating access and confidentiality and outlining a timeline of the study to the schools, including a feedback loop once the analysis had been undertaken. There was a tension between this opportunity sample and the aims of the study, which were to learn about the experiences of schools in challenging circumstances. The sample would therefore be most accurately described as an opportunity sample and to counter the methodological tensions around this a balanced sample of participants were drawn from this opportunity sample of schools.

In summary, 4 schools were identified, all of who had been “placed” into the project after an OFSTED judgement and had worked their way back to full autonomy.

3.2 *Participants*

16 interviews were planned in all, four individuals in each school (a member of the senior leadership team, an experienced member of staff, a member of staff recently qualified or recent to the school, a member of support staff, such as a TA, or school secretary).

The sampling of staff within the schools was driven by there being 4 days of interviewing and the wish to achieve a diagonal slice of staff, from head teachers through to classroom teachers and a school governor. The pragmatics of the research came into play with schools being offered half day windows for interviewing.

14 interviews were undertaken, with staff ranging from head teachers to classroom teachers to school governors.

3.3 Validity

Whilst to some degree the concept of validity and the status of research as truth lies at the heart of the debate about postmodernism, there existed some important questions to answer about the degree to which this study would be valid, that is it captures the state of affairs, that it captures established and true relationships.

Early in the study a threat to validity was identified. The author found they had developed a particular interest in solution-focused and appreciative approaches to change management, an interest that emanated from their practice as an EP. The potential for bias, that as interviewer I might search for what I wanted to find, was present. The author acknowledged the potential for biased or leading questioning in their own personal theory on what works in schools and commissioned a skilled and experienced EP to undertake the interviews. This was supported and funded by the LEA and helped to promote the objectivity of the study.

It was also felt that this added additional protection towards confidentiality within the study and managed the potential sensitivity that one of the research team members involvement meant that they were enquiring into the efficacy of their colleagues work. We were aiming to gather individual service users stories about their experiences, and as such the potential for sensitive professional information to come to the surface was there.

3.4 Procedure

An experienced Senior Educational Psychologist was commissioned to undertake the interviews. A de-brief took place to consider the questions that had been used to start dialogue in the interviews. An example of how the interviews were framed was;

“Well I’m actually an educational psychologist, but that’s not particularly it, this is just some work that I am doing for the LEA, they wanted somebody to do these

interviews to try and find out more about what helps, what support people found helpful... what they might like in terms of the sort of support the LEA can give to schools in terms of improvement, raising attainment”.

Such an introduction was used before turning on the tape recorder, to ensure that the participants understood their role in the study, its aims and felt able to give their consent for involvement before the interview process begin.

Adopting an ethnographic approach, the participants were introduced to the study with a standardised script and the questions that followed focused on the same point: what are the individuals' perceptions of the support they received and, importantly, of what worked? Convergent interviewing technique was used and began in a very open-ended way and in many ways the interviewer was the interview instrument. This approach involves the talk being maintained with the interviewee without asking specific questions. This was to increase the likelihood that the data came from the interviewee's experience, not from the questions asked. The interviewer's brief was to use questioning to capture perceptions of experiences of support, often asking further very similar questions to drill deeper into the subjective experience of the interviewee's.

The interviewer knew neither the schools nor the school improvement professionals involved. They had no on-going involvement in this area of work. The interviews were taped and transcribed and the analysis began with the transcribed data.

3.5 Analytic Approach

Analysis was undertaken according to the Giorgian phenomenological method, referred to as meaning condensing (Giorgi, 1985). The directions for this approach were taken from Kvale's Interviews (1996) and also from examples of its application in research. One feature of this empirical method is that it serves to analyse extensive and complex interviews texts and this was important, as the analytical stage of the study started with a large amount of transcribed data to work with.

Phenomenology, which is rooted in the philosophical tradition developed by Husserl is an approach that analyses people's life experiences. His philosophy emphasised descriptions of the meaning of human experience. Given this, the Giorgian method of analysis aims to uncover the meaning of a phenomenon as experienced by a human through the identification of essential themes. In essence this methodology allows the construction of a qualitative description of the phenomenological experience. In this case that experience is being supported by the ISP and importantly what worked, from the point of view of the teachers'?

In Giorgi's method the interview transcript is referred to as the description. Once a set of interview transcripts has been obtained there are 4 stages of analysis. These are:

1) The researcher reads the entire description order to get a sense of the whole. The researcher reads the entire description of one subject in order to get a sense of the whole.

2) The researcher reads through the data a second time and marks those places in the description where a transition in meaning occurs from a psychological perspective. The meanings between transitions are called "meaning units". The researcher reads through the data a second time and marks those places in the description where a transition in meaning occurs from a psychological perspective. The meanings between transitions are called "meaning units" and should represent the natural "meaning units" expressed by the interviewee.

3) The researcher returns to all of the meaning units and interrogates them for what they reveal about the phenomenon of interest. Once the researcher grasps the relevance of the subject's own words, he expresses this relevance in as direct a manner as possible and the theme that dominates the natural units is stated as simply as possible. This is called the transformation of the subject's lived experience into *direct psychological expression*. This process leads to the statements being arranged thematically.

4) Normally a situated or general structure of the experience is presented as the final step, perhaps organised in categories, and the categories organised into properties, derived from the themes of the direct psychological expression. This means that the meaning units may lose their temporal position, instead being arranged to draw together themes and ensure that the analytic process leads to the most direct psychological expression from the initial descriptions.

3.6 Reliability

Whilst some researchers would regard the concept of reliability as inappropriate to a qualitative design (Robson, 2003) there is some value in reflecting on the extent to which the study is reliable. The various sub stages in analysis, the steps of organising and analysing the data, created the potential for coder reliability to be weak, given a single coder, the author. The key steps in analysis were:

1. Creation of meaning units,
2. Organising the data into those units which were non-redundant and relevant to the research question
3. Creating essential descriptions for each meaning unit
4. Organising these essential descriptions into themes (categories) and sub themes (properties)
5. Condensing the essential descriptions into a direct psychological expression for each sub theme.

At each stage there was the necessity to ensure reliability and “the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions” (Hammersley, 1992: 62). Being part of a wider project team focused on effective school improvement the author was able to draw on colleagues to undertake work with some samples of the data at the key stages where reliability was most at threat. It was felt that step 2, which involves the rejection of data, step 3 where an essential description is created from the data and

steps 4 and 5 where data is categorised and a direct psychological expression created for each property were key areas for focus.

3.7 Generalizability

The study does not aim for findings that are more generally applicable, for example in other contexts, situations or times, or to persons other than those involved. Rather the aim is the construction of a qualitative description of the phenomenological experience, in this case being supported by the ISP.

3.8 Ethical Issues

The interviews took place with a range of receivers of support from the ISP including a Head Teacher, School Secretary, School Governor, TAs, SENCo, Deputy Head and whilst planning this work I used a framework of guidance for permissions, access and ethical issues from Robson (2002). This outlines ten questionable practises in social research, (table 1, below). These questions were adopted as a resource upon which to reflect throughout the research process, and especially at the design stage.

It was important to stress that the research group from which this project was initiated considered these issues. In particular we discussed issues of confidentiality and sensitivity in relation to the interviews and what potential steps that might be undertaken to address them.

Table 1- Ten Questionable practices in social research- Robson, 2002

1. Involving people without their knowledge or consent.
2. Coercing them to participate.
3. Withholding information about the true nature of the research
4. Otherwise deceiving the participant.
5. Inducing participants to commit acts diminishing their self-esteem.
6. Violating rights of self-determination (e.g. in studies seeking to promote individual change.
7. Exposing participants to physical or mental stress.
8. Invading privacy
9. Withholding benefits from some participants (e.g. in comparison groups).

Full confidentiality was assured to those whom took part in the study. 16 interviews were planned in all, four individuals in each school (a member of the senior leadership team, an experienced member of staff, a member of staff recently qualified or recent to the school, a member of support staff, such as a TA, or school secretary).

3.9 Decisions Made During The Course Of The Study

I was able to begin my preparations for study 1 during the summer term 2005. These preparations meant that by September 2005 the permissions and planning for interviews had taken place. 14 interviews been undertaken during the autumn term 2005, and the transcription of 14 individual interviews were completed during the spring term 2006. 16 interviews were planned with 14 successfully undertaken, due to a staff absence on the day of interview.

4. DATA

4.1 Introduction

The interviews created 54 pages of transcript and nearly 30, 000 words of descriptions. The descriptions were combined into a single description as the study was not concerned with comparisons between schools, but rather schools that have experienced the ISP so all the data would be treated as one source. It is important to note that the study is not making a comparison between schools or ways of working, or pertaining to be representative of schools in Nottinghamshire as a whole. Similarly the methodology is not about comparisons between say head teachers and class teachers. Therefore all the data was able to be analysed as one whole data set. I am interested in the range of factors that represent what was found to be helpful, not different views or comparisons of view or approach. Therefore the 14 interviews were combined into one sample for analysis, to develop a shared collective theory on what works.

The stages of analysis involved a structured approach to “condensing” the meaning of the descriptions, and through the 4 stages of analysis the amount of text being dealt with was steadily reduced.

Two key colleagues supported this process, a senior member of the LEA Inspectorate and a Senior Practitioner EP involved in the LEA School Improvement Board. At various stages of analysis I called upon their views. This was particular relevant to the stage of removing the redundant meaning units, and then was creating the direct psychological expression of the remaining descriptions. This supported the reliability of the study.

The final stage of analysis through the direct psychological expressions being combined and processed into key categories and properties are included in this report as a table below.

A more quantitative approach towards the analysis was discounted as it was felt that the participants would be likely to have very integrated concepts and constructs, versus highly un-integrated, which would lead to lots of words being used or repeated. It was felt that a phenomenological approach which would carry forward the actual words and constructs use by participants but also condense their experiences into output which would shed light on the psychological processes underlying school improvement work, would be of most value.

4.2 Main Section

The process of analysis can be exemplified through an example of the staged process of meaning condensing.

Key points in the analysis process are the removal of redundant meanings units and the processing of this data that is left into a direct psychological expression. Table 2 is a sample of 5 meaning units retained at stage 2 as non-redundant items. The reader will notice that the meaning units are potentially stripped down into the essence of what is being said and this is an important tenet of the methodology- each stage is a progressive move towards getting to the very essence of the participants description. It is important to bare in mind that the methodology is designed for dealing with large quantities of text, where almost by necessity a reduction, or more accurately a condensing of the contents towards the key questions or questions, is necessary.

Table 2- Non Redundent meaning units- Interview 1, items 1 to 5

1. I think having an external pair of eyes has....What's been particularly beneficial?
2. I think having that continuity with the literacy consultant,
3. having an external pair of eyes
4. somebody who is very very focused on literacy, somebody who can work closely with my literacy co-ordinator and deputy head (one and the same) and try to look at ways we can tackle and climb this huge mountain that we've got to climb without people getting overwhelmed and feeling "were rubbish at all of this" and "where the hell do you start?" Just to refocus the staff and get them on to a small area of it that we can try and build on as time goes on.
5. Obviously having Paul Mountain as our link inspector, he's got quite a good understanding of the school, of the problems that the schools got a lot of special needs in this school.

Table 3 demonstrates the next stage of analysis, stage 3, where an essential description is produced for each non-redundant meaning unit.

Table 3- Essential Descriptions for each meaning unit- Interview 1, items 1 to 5

1. An external pair of eyes
2. Continuity with the consultant
3. An external pair of eyes
4. Creating a focus on a area to help to chunk the work
5. Having a good understanding of the school

At this stage in the analysis 94 essential descriptions represented the data (table 4). These essential descriptions create a body of data, which would now be able to be approached through a process of open coding, categorising the 94 items, to approach the final stage of analysis, the direct psychological expression.

Table 4- Essential Descriptions

1. An external pair of eyes	47. the LEA providing a process where you report you progress
2. Continuity with the consultant	48. regularity of support and feeling that the consultants/inspectors know the school
3. An external pair of eye	49. positive feedback, both formal and informal
4. Creating a focus on a area to help to chunk the work	50. staff meetings and training in response to a particular need in the school
5. Having a good understanding of the school	51. regular meetings to review progress
6. Accessing other supporting mechanisms	52. support when making up the OFSTED action plan
7. Developing the use of TAs	53. setting manageable timelines and helping coordinators to achieve the actions
8. Focusing teachers minds	54. helping with the action plan
9. Built up a relationship with the staff and an understanding of the school through continuity	55. writing the OFSET action plan
10. Being a driving force for continuous improvement	56. they gave us some hope
11. The work with the literacy consultant and support for a new build.	57. the consultant support and the quality of the relationship
12. Staff meetings to get the school working together	58. having a good relationship and a fast response to requests for help
13. Looking at where we are now and where we need to go next, push things forward	59. the consultant support in being upbeat and boosting confidence, giving positive feedback
14. Showing examples from other school	60. consultant support and prompt response to queries
15. Help in pointing out where to start, what path to take to improve	61. paired observations
16. Access to resources	62. getting someone else's point of view
17. Access to additional monies	63. connecting me to other situations outside of the school
18. Additional INSET	64. focused INSET support and immediate follow up
19. Access to resources	65. the success was the relationship with the link inspector
20. Keeping the school focused and on-track	66. the support was done with us rather than to us, we negotiated what we needed
21. Sit down and thrash out what the problems are and begin to build solutions, bringing their experience to bear.	67. the use of external consultants so school did not feel watched over
22. Having time to work with the literacy consultant and having their support in terms of key messages to the staff	68. the positive nature of everyone involved
23. reinforcement of managements own views about priorities	69. the determination and the drive of the link inspector, having a good relationship and working together with trust and honesty
24. consistency of support from the consultant	70. it was real involvement not third party involvement
25. we feel supported	71. the support was an integral part of the plan
26. helping highlight that change happens in small recognisable steps	72. Using an external consultant to undertake a mini OFSTED inspection, but with feedback containing suggestions and ways forward
27. support from the team and working together	73. having a key support figure working closely with the school who used a "do with" not a "do to" approach
28. LEA is like a driving force to keep the school on track	74. being given the knowledge of what is available
29. boosted staff confidence, helped staff to work as a team	75. relationship with the link inspector feeling supported and that the link spector championed the schools cause
30. brought us back together	76. support from the consultants
31. valuing staff and their role in the school	77. planning collaborative INSET and support from the literacy and numeracy consultants
32. watching how TAs are working in class and advising teachers on use of TAs	78. having mentoring support (head teacher)
33. focused training for TAs and helping TAs and teachers to work as a team	79. Inspector and consultant support
34. working with the consultants and team leaders	80. being able to contact them when needed
35. introducing ideas and ways of working	81. a critical friend, deciding our own agenda and things not being dictated to us. We have decided what is best for the school to achieve its aims
36. observations from the inspectors to help staff feel they are on track	82. being able to call on a variety of people and not being led through the process but rather guiding
37. helping to develop team working in school	83. they helped us to achieve what we wanted to achieve
38. bringing new ways of working into the school, developing team working between the TAs and teachers	84. working together and alongside and being able to request specific support
39. getting a plan together in response to the OFSTED; involving teachers in the plan so that they had ownership	85. support fitted around the schools needs and availability
40. having a one key person to help develop the plan	86. the support helped us to reflect and plan a way forward
41. providing training and writing interim reports	87. flexibility and responsiveness
42. knowing support is there is helpful	88. having an on-going dialogue about ideas and ways forward
43. honesty and openness over sensitive issues such as competency	89. allowing us to take it our way but feeling guided
44. positive feedback to build up staff confidence	90. being approachable, coming into the staffroom and being relaxed
45. giving positive feedback after lesson observations	91. the fact that they are approachable and non threatening and that you can do things when you are comfortable with them
46. having an outsider giving positive feedback after observation	92. starting from where we are at
	93. we have worked together, done with not done to. We have felt listened to, not dictated to

Through analysis of the essential descriptions there appeared to be a recurrent structure. Three key categories emerged;

- *Approach*
- *Inputs and activities* and
- *Outcomes and effects*

Organising the essential descriptions into the 3 categories was an incredibly helpful stage in the analytic process, as it provided the data with a sense of shape. This then allowed a further level of analysis. Within each category there were further emerging structures that allowed for the creation of properties for each category. This process organised the essential descriptions further and allowed the bunched descriptions to be compared to check for redundancy due to repetition in meaning, or where essential descriptions could be combined and the meaning further condensed.

Working with the essential descriptions in this manner moved the data towards thematic organisation. With repetitive data removed the data was moving towards a direct psychological expression.

4.4 Conclusion of Analysis

The final stage of analysis is a thematic and direct psychological expression of the essential descriptions and is based on two key items; diagram 1 (Diagram 1- Categories and Properties), a summary picture of the main messages and findings of the study, and table 5 (Table 5- Categories, properties with detailed direct psychological expressions), which provides the detail behind these categories and properties. Diagram 1 offers an outline of what might usefully be viewed as part of a meta-theory for effective school improvement, albeit at a localised level and built from the descriptions of the service receivers. The graphic representation of the categories and properties of the data offers some sense of the scope of this theory and, when viewed concurrently with table 5, aids the analysis of psychological theory that may relate to the findings. What seems clear is that those who are in receipt of support for school improvement talk in detail about the importance of goals and relationships, repeatedly referring to their own self-efficacy. These appear to be quite significantly integrated concepts for teachers when they are asked about what works for school improvement. This sense of what works has been broadly categorised as *approach*. Further to this a range of *inputs and activities* seem to spill out, and provide the second category. The properties herein offer a series of objective observables, those things that are seen to have been done or offered, and moreover, those which the receivers of support view as being useful. The final category, *outputs and effects* provides an insight into what the participants view as the difference being made by the school improvement work, or the difference they observed. Table 5 presents the direct psychological expressions, the final stage of the meaning condensing analysis and takes the participant's descriptions to a final thematic phenomenological representation of the data. It provides the basis for the categories and properties presented in diagram 1. This allows a critical assessment of the relationship between the data and the final analytical stages, and the coding of the data into categories and properties that form the basis for a localised theory of what works.

3.2.School practice developed
3.3.Staff perception that supported
Diagram 1- Categories and Properties

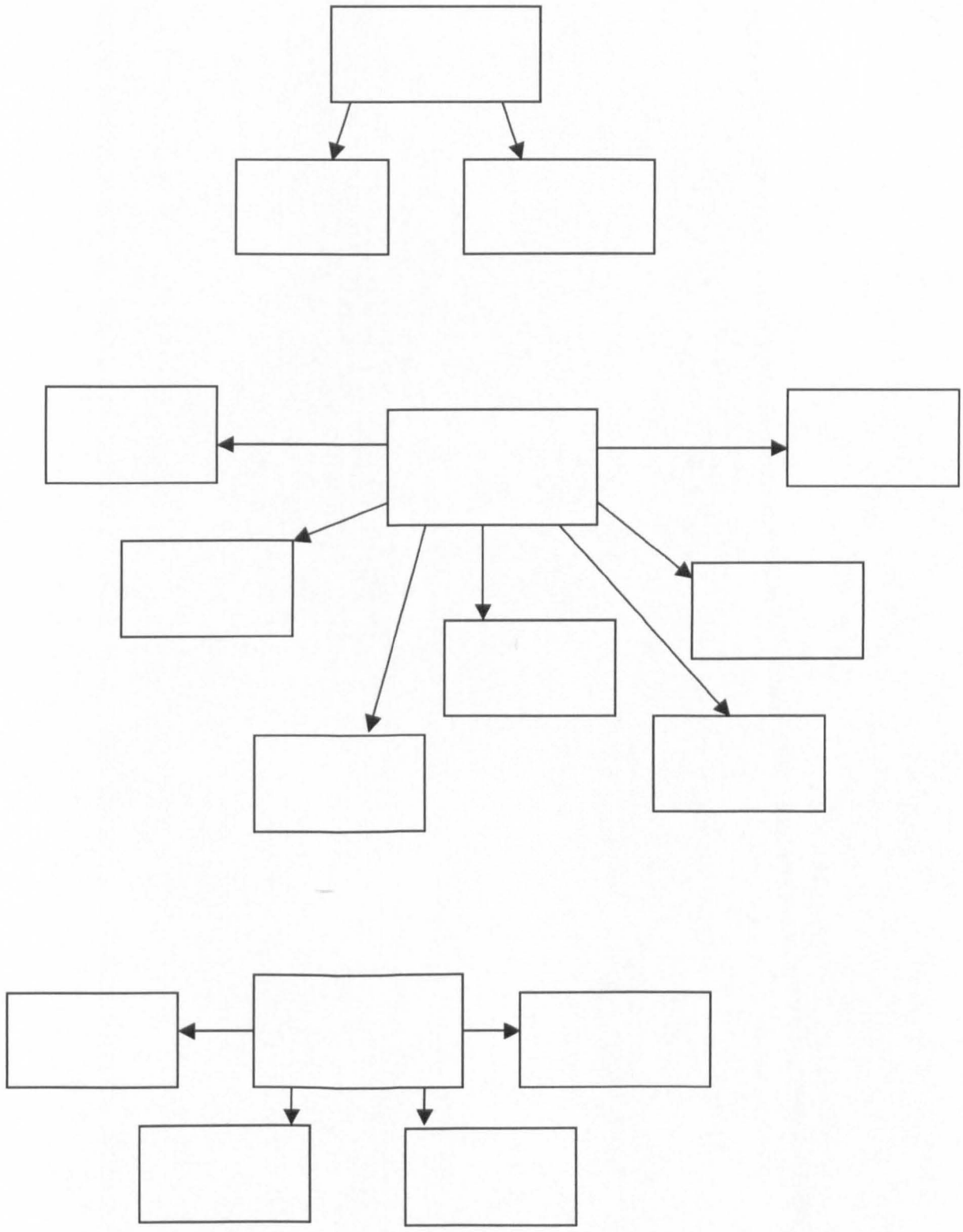


Table 7- Categories, properties and direct psychological expressions

1. Approach

1.1. Process of creating and maintaining goals

- 1.1.1. Starting from where we are at they help in pointing out where to start and what path to take to improve.
- 1.1.2. Looking at where we are now and where we need to go next to push things forward.
- 1.1.3. Creating focus areas helps to chunk the work.
- 1.1.4. Allowing us to take it our way but feeling guided.
- 1.1.5. They sit down and thrash out what the problems are and begin to build solutions, bringing their experience to bear and acting as a critical friend.
- 1.1.6. We have decided what is best for the school to achieve its aims and things are not being dictated to us.
- 1.1.7. The LEA is a driving force for continuous improvement, keeping the school focused and on-track.
- 1.1.8. They provide a process where you report you progress, helping highlight that change happens in small recognisable steps.
- 1.1.9. They built up a relationship with the staff an understanding of the school through continuity with regular meetings to review progress.
- 1.1.10. These set manageable timelines and helped coordinators to achieve the actions.
- 1.1.11. Their support in terms of key messages to the staff.

1.2. Characteristics of support relationship

- 1.2.1. The positive nature of everyone involved valuing staff and their role in the school having a good understanding of the school.
- 1.2.2. The fact that they are approachable and non-threatening, coming into the staffroom and being relaxed.
- 1.2.3. Having a good relationship and a fast response to requests for help with a key support figure working closely with the school and using a "do with" not a "do to" approach, and negotiating what we need.
- 1.2.4. They helped us to achieve what we wanted to achieve.
- 1.2.5. We have worked together, done with not done to, feeling listened to, not dictated to.
- 1.2.6. Working together and being able to request specific support there is an on-going dialogue about ideas and ways forward.
- 1.2.7. It was real involvement not third party involvement.
- 1.2.8. There has been honesty and openness over sensitive issues such as competency.
- 1.2.9. The support helped us to reflect and plan a flexible and responsive way forward.
- 1.2.10. It fitted around the schools needs and we were able to call on a variety of people being able to contact them when needed.
- 1.2.11. We were not led through the process but rather guided and the support was an integral part of the plan.

2. Inputs and Activities

2.1. Introducing new perspectives and ways of working

- 2.1.1. An external pair of eyes to get someone else's point of view and introducing new ideas and ways of working into the school through examples from other schools and connections to situations outside of the school.

2.2. Consultant and link inspector support

- 2.2.1. Consistent and regular support from the consultants/inspectors who know the school well.
- 2.2.2. The success was the quality of the relationship with the consultants/inspectors and

how they championed the schools cause.

2.2.3.The consultants were upbeat and boosted confidence, gave positive feedback and a prompt response to queries.

2.2.4.The determination and the drive of the link inspector and working together with trust and honesty.

2.2.5.Using an external consultant to undertake a mini OFSTED inspection, but with feedback containing suggestions and ways forward.

2.3.Observations and feedback

2.3.1.Having an outsider giving positive feedback after observation to help staff feel they are on track.

2.3.2.Positive feedback both formal and informal builds up staff confidence.

2.3.3.The use of paired observations.

2.4.INSET and focused developments

2.4.1.Additional collaborative INSET, training and support (from the literacy and numeracy consultants) and immediate follow up.

2.4.2.Helping TAs and teachers to work as a team and watching how TAs are working in class and advising teachers on use of TAs.

2.5.Supporting action planning

2.5.1.Support when getting a plan together in response to the OFSTED with help writing the OFSET action plan and interim reports, whilst involving teachers in the plan so that they had ownership.

2.5.2.Having a one key person to help develop the plan.

2.6.Staff meetings

2.6.1.Staff meetings to get the school working together and in response to a particular need in the school.

2.7.Management support

2.7.1.Reinforcement of management views about priorities.

2.7.2.Mentoring support (for head teachers).

2.7.3.Support over particular issues such as the need for a new build.

3. Outputs and Effects

3.1.Resources accessed

3.1.1.Being given the knowledge of what is available and access other supporting mechanisms, additional monies and resources.

3.2.School practice developed

3.2.1.Developing the use of TAs.

3.2.2.Focusing teachers mind.

3.3.Staff perception that they felt supported

3.3.1.We feel supported and our confidence is boosted,

3.3.2.Knowing support is there is helpful.

3.3.3.They gave us some hope.

3.4. Improved team working

3.4.1.Help to develop team working in school (including between the TAs and teachers).

3.4.2.This brought us "back together".

5. DISCUSSION

The research question helps to anchor this work into a psychological perspective, in this case the role of psychological theory in systemic work with schools. The question now begs how does this small local model of what works – that is what teacher experiences of effective school improvement- tell us about organisational level work with schools and fit within a broader psychological theory? What is going on here in psychological terms?

In the introduction Brighouse's proposed framework that organisational and change management strategies may be framed across three generic domains of problem solving, ensuring compliance and appreciative inquiry was referenced. It is worthwhile revisiting this broad framework and considering where the local model generated here has best fit.

At first glance the localised theory of what works that emerges from this study appears to have a fair degree of internal consistency. The commentary providing by the participants, that is their commentary upon that which worked, offers some significant signposts towards those theories of change and organisational development which stress self-efficacy of those encountering the change and therefore a focus on collaborative and facilitative process. Could it be further said therefore that the evidence within the direct psychology expression of the views is that receivers of school improvement support (through the ISP) viewed those approaches Brighouse describes as appreciative inquiry as being of most value?

Brighouse framed approaches to change in one of three ways; the problem solving model with an underlying assumption that an organisation is a problem or series of problems to be solved from which flows key activities including the identification of problems, analysis of causation, and analysis of potential solutions and the development of action plans; the compliance model which makes a clear directive statement over what is right, proposes single solutions,

facilitates regulation and inspection and is explicitly punishing of any public deviancy or delinquency; and appreciative inquiry which takes as its basic assumption that an organisation is a mystery to be embraced and further that each organisation will already contain many of the key features for successful operation.

Is this research signposting appreciative inquiry as fruitful psychological framework for OD work with schools? Underpinning the appreciative inquiry model are a series of fundamental assumptions relating to the process of how real change is facilitated, many of which would be familiar to a psychologist experienced in working through a solution focused framework. In being a model of such solution orientated thinking appreciative inquiry includes key ideas around

- Understanding historical causation is not vital to developing solutions
- Positive exceptions always exist to some extent
- Hence organisations already contain elements of the necessary strengths, skills and resources
- The organisation's goals are paramount
- Small change can lead to greater systemic change

In effect this model facilitates an organisational intervention which is non-blaming, imaginative and creative and is positive in allowing a move away from a problem saturated dialogue whilst recognising and encouraging organisational responsibility in the context of partnership with those charged with managing real and lasting change. In educational psychology such an approach would be able to be seen as being synonymous with consultation. If Brighouse's three domains provide a conceptual framework for an analysis of what receivers of support found effective and a basis for discussion around the way school improvement work is done and how educational psychological theory might find a place in this work, then does this research suggest that schools would find an approach reflective of the underpinnings of appreciative inquiry most effective? Further to this therefore does appreciative inquiry provide a framework for

educational psychology engagement in OD work with schools, within a wider framework of consultation?

In educational psychology such models perhaps fit most comfortably within the area of collaborative consultation or school consultation. Therefore, it is suggested that perhaps the most appropriate theoretical resting place for the framework elicited by this study is that of collaborative consultation, and the perspectives that underpin such an approach.

The work of Wagner (1995, 2000) on school consultation provides much practical direction around what a model of consultation service delivery might well look, as do a number of articles written by educational psychologists using and developing a consultative approach in their respective services (see Dickinson, 2000; Kerslake and Roller, 2000; Munro, 2000). The work of Hanco on the development of staff support and consultation groups within schools provides further helpful direction (e.g. Hanco, 1999).

To illustrate the links between this local model and the wider psychological theory of school consultation it is useful to look closely at the category *approach*. This category is organised through two properties and table 6 contains the key messages about what works in relation to the property *process of the creation and maintenance of goals*. The congruence with school consultation is clearly to see. The 11 points show a high degree of congruence with school consultation, with the collaborative underpinnings of both school consultation and the theory presented in the analysis of this study being amply demonstrated through the participants own constructions.

<p>Table 6- Summary of <i>process of creating and maintaining goals</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Starting from where we are at they help in pointing out where to start and what path to take to improve.2. Looking at where we are now and where we need to go next to push things forward.3. Creating focus areas helps to chunk the work.

4. Allowing us to take it our way but feeling guided.
5. They sit down and thrash out what the problems are and begin to build solutions, bringing their experience to bear and acting as a critical friend.
6. We have decided what is best for the school to achieve its aims and things are not being dictated to us.
7. The LEA is a driving force for continuous improvement, keeping the school focused and on-track.
8. They provide a process where you report you progress, helping highlight that change happens in small recognisable steps.
9. They built up a relationship with the staff an understanding of the school through continuity with regular meetings to review progress.
10. These set manageable timelines and helped coordinators to achieve the actions.
11. Their support in terms of key messages to the staff.

5.1 Improvements and Developments

Having given a methodological basis for the use of the use of Giorgain analysis, it does has some limitations. It is in essence a contents analysis approach and whilst it has uncovered some emerging possible structures in the data, a grounded theory approach might have served to provide a more cohesive and defensible end result in the form of a localised theory. Although it should be said that the volume of transcript that this study has been based upon did lend itself to an approach which would manage large volumes of text, and allow for the gradual working of these texts into something more accessible.

In terms of lessons to be learnt from the study, I would say as a matter of fact that I would have saved precious time if I had embarked on this project with a properly maintained research diary. Maintaining a mental map of where you are at with the inevitable multi-strands that begin be generated by a piece of work this size becomes impossible. Supporting ones thinking at both micro levels and the macro level of planning through a research diary is, I have learnt, essential.

Many qualitative researchers embrace the use of participant validation as a way to prove the validity of their research. When a participant agrees with the researcher's assessment, it is seen as strengthening the researchers arguments. Such an approach may have added to the validity of this study, though some authors have been critical of the use of participant validation (e.g. Ashworth, 1993) and warn against taking participants evaluations too seriously as it may be in their interest to protect their *socially presented selves*.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In answer to the original research question:

“What can teacher experiences of effective school improvement tell us about organisational level work with schools in difficulties?”

Some interesting possibilities and areas for further research have emerged:

- It would appear that teachers tell us that collaborative models work best
- Approaches at the heart of school consultation seem congruent with what teachers describe as being effective support whilst they were in challenging circumstances, and appreciative inquiry may be a useful framework for OD work with schools

It is particularly interesting also that though schools in challenging circumstances are perhaps as clear an example of the “deficit discourse” that can be associated with the school inspection and categorisation process (and which Brighouse related to a compliance model of change), teachers tell us that they value *collaboration* in these challenging circumstances.

In conclusion, it is suggested that the messages within this analysis provide a signposts for psychologists doing OD work with schools. They should feel confident to draw upon those well-articulated frameworks of psychological practice related to school consultation, and to work with them and the associated theories in context. Further to this, an emphasis on appreciative and solution-focused approaches might well serve educational psychologists well. There would appear to be real value in educational psychologists modelling approaches which in turn would be described as effective leadership in schools, that is facilitative rather than commanding approaches.

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**Dissemination and impact evaluation
(page 302)**

Submitted February 2011

Introduction

This assignment will consider the impact and dissemination of my doctoral research in two sections; section one will deal with the two pieces of research in years 1 and 2 (one quantitative and one qualitative) and section two my final thesis research and reflection upon the effects the doctoral programme has had on my own practice. The tone and style of this brief paper is informal therefore it will be written in the first person. This style is consistent with the intention to undertake some personal reflection on the dissemination and impact of my work.

Section 1- Pieces of quantitative and qualitative research

I undertook a small-scale quantitative survey study of how Special Educational Needs support services personnel valued the role of the educational psychologist. The study considered whether those activities derived from a consultation model were valued more highly than activities that reflected the “traditional” educational psychologist role and also how educational psychologists view these contrasting ways of working. The findings indicated that Special Educational Needs support services personnel rated consultation significantly more highly than the “traditional” educational psychologist role.

Throughout this study I maintained close links with the service Senior Management team of both the educational psychology service and also the wider Inclusion Services. The piece of research represents the first formal attempt to evaluate, internally, the contributions made by educational psychologists, from the point of view of our fellow support service members. This contact was mutually beneficial; I was able to learn from experienced practitioners in the other service areas and build a network of relationships as I was brought into contact with practitioners from the other services within the Inclusion Services Group. These were positive working networks that would bear much fruit in my later role as acting Head of the Inclusion Services.

The study was covering sensitive ground, as it involved value judgements of the work of the educational psychology service. With this in the forefront of my mind the results from the study were shared with the educational psychology service through various channels, in a progressive step-by-step approach. Initially the results were shared with the senior management team and then with the service leadership team, a group that comprised both the service management as well as senior practitioners and which led the development of the service model of service delivery. The positive nature of the results provided affirmation for the services 'direction of travel' in terms of the service model; the impact of the study, to a certain degree, was to legitimise the formalisation of the Service's model of service delivery into a collaborative-consultation model. Additionally, the members of the Educational Psychology Service management team were found to have a high degree of internal consistency in how they understood the educational psychologist role in terms of the paradigms of consultation and the "traditional" role, and uncovering this had a very positive impact.

The results were then shared with the whole Service as part of a Service day, and the effect of the findings was palpable. It created waves of confidence in the notion of the service coordinating its development around a consultation model. It was clear to see that psychologists who previously felt that retaining the status quo was preferable- the status quo, in my opinion, often being a situation where no one was really clear about what anyone really did- began to be drawn towards the more explicated mode, as this model had been affirmed by a key partner and observer of our work. Psychologists committed and positive about formalising the service model felt validated. The finding that all of the descriptors of the educational psychologist working through a consultation model were more highly rated than even the highest rated activity derived from the "traditional" model seemed to capture the imagination of the Service when the findings were presented to them.

In short the study findings served to resource further the course of action that the Service had initiated and which tentative steps were able to move towards a clear commitment and legitimise the change programme that the service had engaged with.

My qualitative study was based upon a phenomenological analysis of eleven interviews with primary school staff from a small group of schools in challenging circumstances. The focus of these interviews was their perceptions of what the LA did that worked whilst they were part of the project. A phenomenological approach derived from Amadeo Giorgi (1985) was used to uncover the meaning of an LA improving schools project as experienced by a teachers. The aim was to identify of essential themes and create a local theory of what works.

This piece of work was formally commissioned as part of a local authority review of the Improving Schools Programme that was run and delivered by the School Improvement Service. Whilst the piece of research had a very clear commission, it was much more difficult to complete the process in terms of disseminating the findings. The ever-changing school improvement agenda moved on a pace even during the relatively short life cycle of the study. I had the opportunity to share the emerging essential themes at a school improvement service staff day, however the original group that commissioned the work had been re-constituted and restructured by the time I had written up the work, and with new government agendas, such as the National Strategies, displaced opportunities to reflect on what was learnt in the study.

Section 2 - The final thesis and reflection on effects on my own practice

Embracing Q methodology

The methodology I used in my research was unusual. Q methodology was developed in England in the 1930s but its use in doctoral thesis in England is rare and mine is amongst a small group of theses at Nottingham University to employ Q as its principal methodology.

John Bradley, Principal Educational Psychologist Nottinghamshire Children's Services, introduced me to Q methodology following his attended a postgraduate summer school at the University of Essex in 2004, run by Professor Steven Brown of Kent State University USA. Steven Brown is

probably the most widely published Q methodologist active in social research. (Brown 1980, 2006a, 2006b). Through discussion with John and background reading I became convinced that Q not only matched my own epistemological commitments as a psychologist, but it also provided a quali-quantalogical approach that allowed me to marry an attraction towards both quantitative and qualitative approaches in research. As John was one year more advanced on the doctoral programme, he was able to give me a practical grounding in how to conduct Q studies and was at hand with advice during the data analysis stage.

Q fitted with the epistemological commitments I held; I had become a very keen advocate for social constructionism, and in particular the work of Ken Gergen (Gergen, 1985; 1989; 1994; 1994; 1995; 1995; 2001; 2004; 2006; Gergen and Gergen, 2002; Gergen and McNamee, 1992), finding the deliberations of Gergen, the Taos Institute (Taos Institute, 2010) and associated colleagues to be a defining vein of intellectual thought, which ultimately led me to a more thorough consideration of my own life, intentions and experiences. The depth of the impact of social constructionism on my intellectual life was profound. A variety of social constructionist ideas focus on the social field in general and it extends more specifically into psychological practice, with Q a tool that embraces a constructionist epistemology.

Engaging others in the research process and findings

The key location for the dissemination of the final thesis research was within the Nottinghamshire educational psychology service. Leading up to the active fieldwork period I had developed and brought into operation a solution-focused psychological coaching team to provide a service to the Nottinghamshire School Improvement Service, commissioning the educational psychology service to provide whole school coaching support to schools in challenging circumstances. A group of 13 EPs provided regularly committed time to this work, and it was to this group that the research was initially disseminated. During the fieldwork stage and the analysis, the dissemination of my work with coaching team included:

- Sharing the epistemological basis for the study.
- Engaging the EPs in the development of the concourse- the set of descriptions items used in Q to describe the participants full range of views on the phenomena in question.
- EPs were also asked to take part in the pilot stage of the study.

At the end of the research phase I was able to disseminate the key output from the study, the factor solution, which encapsulated the underlying structure of the viewpoints regarding what makes for effective solution-focused coaching. I was able to extend out from the educational psychology service into a range of settings. Dissemination activity included:

- The solution-focused coaching team
- The educational psychological service, at whole service day
- Induction workshops for newly in post head teachers, which I led for Nottinghamshire during 2008-2010
- At a large-scale conference for 120 deputy head and aspiring deputy head teachers during October 2010 for Nottinghamshire local authority.

The dissemination strategy matched the localised nature of the theory that the study developed. My main aim was bring the client voice to the centre of the work of the coaching team and help create a dynamic of more active construction, between the psychologist and their client, in this area work

Effects on my own practice

During my participation with the doctoral programme within my own practice the notion of the constructionist psychologist became a central concept. Towards the conclusion of the writing up phase I conceived of a series of principles connecting epistemological theory, my research and my psychological practice. I have included an outline of these ideas below:

- Educational Psychology would, put very simply, become more dialogical, rather than maintaining a position that is monological- in which the only audience for oneself is oneself- hierarchical, expert-orientated models of psychology would shift to ones of lateral configuration where clients and psychologists have more equal responsibility for the impact of the work of the psychologist.
- Psychological practice becomes explicitly based on co-construction and collaboration through discursive practice. Educational Psychology practice from this viewpoint may be thought of as a *semiosis* – the forging of meaning in the context of collaborative discourse (Gergen, 2004).
- The psychologist adopts a postmodern sensibility wherein the relational context is recognised as being the defining element that contains the potential for constraint and possibilities.
- Educational psychology as social construction suggests that the educational psychologist not hold a mirror up to the world “as *it is*”, rather the psychologist with their questions, prompts, invitations and enquiries, is working with wet clay, the shape of which becomes clear as the collaborative work unfolds.

By the beginning of the writing up stage of the doctorate I was entirely enchanted with this way of working and it provided the foundation for my work with Nottinghamshire educational psychology service. It was with these emerging notions in mind that I left the Nottinghamshire educational psychology service and moved with my partner and family to the North East of England in the Winter of 2008.

During the writing up period I worked part-time as main grade educational psychologist for two services in the North East of England. Working as a main grade educational psychologist ensured that I face the powerful reality a service context has for psychologist practice and I realized that I could not go back to working within service models where the wider systems of funding and statementing disallowed the psychologist the opportunity to work in ways that

had been the mainstay of the practice in Nottinghamshire and which had infused my research.

In an attempt to find a way forward that would allow me to carry forward from where I found myself I secured a senior advisor roll leading a inclusion section of a local authority school improvement service, hoping this role might give me a chance to use my skills more effectively. Within a short period it was clear that this role offered only further constraint to what I feel are now key, unalienable personal values and practices, captured to some degree in the ideas above. In October 2009 I resigned from local authority work and have since worked in independent practice.

In Conclusion

The doctorate carried me along on a journey. The highlights of this were collaborations with Gerv Leyden, my tutor in years 3, 4 and 5 and John Bradley, my line manager and mentor in Nottinghamshire. The six years of study and research have been the most personally engaging of my career. During the course of the programme I felt more and more assured in my ability to deal with the intellectual level intrinsic to a doctoral programme. Though I never overcame the difficulties I have with academic writing (and writing in general), I managed to submit a substantial piece of written work and passed the viva-albeit with a thesis "replete" (to quote the viva feedback) with typographical errors!

As a manager of other psychologists the experience of academic study translated into my work managing the service. I put forward that we fund a specific section of the service library dedicated to the core texts suggested by the tutors on the course. Also, John Bradley and I encouraged a number of EPs to take the leap and begin the course, and ensured that EPs who wished to engage with the programme would have a fully funded place. I was able to maintain this position throughout my tenure as deputy principal. John and I also helped to make EPs' work on the doctoral programme a regular fixture on the service CPD programme.

I feel that the research and critique skills employed and honed for my final thesis are regularly brought back in to my day-to-day work. I also find I am more rigorous in my exploration of issues and thus less wedded and defensive about my own ideas, and more aware of my own rhetoric.

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