



“All singing from the same hymn sheet”?

**An Exploration of the Lived Experiences of Joint Work between Irish
Mainstream Primary School Teaching Staff and NEPS psychologists to
Facilitate Inclusion between 2015-2020.**

Caoimhe McCarthy

Supervised by Dr Margaret Egan and Dr Keeley White

*A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Educational Psychology, Inclusive and Special
Education, Mary Immaculate College (University of Limerick), In Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology*

Submitted to Mary Immaculate College, 30th of April 2022

Word count: 32,868 words (exclusive of tables, figures, and appendices)

Abstract

Background. The role of the NEPS psychologist is said to have evolved in recent years in response to the global inclusion movement. In Ireland, the introduction of Circular 0013/2017 provided primary schools with greater autonomy to allocate resources based on the needs of the student, as identified by school staff rather than professional diagnoses. Currently, the NEPS psychologist is said to employ a consultative model of service, working closely with teachers to ensure that the needs of students are met. Despite the interdependent nature of their relationship, the existing literature has not explored the joint work between NEPS psychologists and teaching staff in an Irish context.

Aims. The aim of this research was to explore the lived experiences of joint work between NEPS psychologists and mainstream primary school teaching staff to facilitate the inclusion of all students. Furthermore, it also aimed to outline the existing strengths within the working relationship and to identify any possible facilitators or barriers that may impact upon the process.

Methods. A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design was employed for the current study. Online surveys and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from NEPS psychologists, principals, class teachers and special education teachers. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse quantitative results and Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2021) was used to generate themes from the qualitative data. Results were then merged and mapped onto the third generation of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 2001).

Findings. Key findings included the impact of joint work on everyday practices within schools, as well as the attitudes of staff towards the inclusion of individual students. Facilitators and barriers for joint work are also discussed.

Conclusions. Implications for policy and practice, including an extension of the problem-solving framework that is used by NEPS psychologists during consultation, are outlined to further support the development of inclusion. Additionally, future research opportunities are presented, with the aim of supporting professional and organisational development.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my own work and has not been submitted for the purpose of obtaining any other qualification. This thesis was submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

Signature of Candidate: *Caoimhe McCarthy*

Caoimhe McCarthy

Student Number: 11117346

Date: 30/04/22

Wordcount: 32,868 words (excluding tables and figures)

Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank all of the teachers, principals and psychologists who participated in this study. I thoroughly enjoyed learning from the insights that you all provided. Your contribution to this research is invaluable and very much appreciated.

A very special thank you to my research supervisors Dr Margaret Egan and Dr Keeley White for their consistent support and guidance throughout this research journey. It was a privilege and a pleasure to work with such experienced and yet such kind and considerate mentors.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr Therese Brophy, Dr Siobhan O'Sullivan and Dr Johanna Fitzgerald who so generously offered their time and advice in relation to the current research. In addition, I would like to thank Dr Margaret Farrelly and Dr Aoife McLoughlin for all of their input throughout the programme.

To my parents, who have provided me with all of the support necessary to fulfil my ambition of completing this doctorate and have also listened and advised me every step of the way, I cannot thank you both enough. To my sister, who originally encouraged me to apply, thank you for the constant motivation. To my brother, who cheered me on every step of the way and helped me to celebrate in style, thank you.

To my friends, who have taken on the roles of cheerleaders over the past three years, thank you. In particular, to Lisa, Caitlin, and Eoin who have all kept me going with their words of wisdom and motivation, thank you.

To my fellow trainees in the DECPsy programme, thank you for all of the chats that were had in person, over the phone, through text and over Zoom and Teams. I could not have asked for a better group to undertake this journey with, and I am so proud of our combined and separate achievements.

Evan, I am not sure where to even start, but thank you for being so thoughtful, for listening to me ramble on and distracting me when I needed it. Your encouragement, patience and understanding, as well as your unfailing ability to make me laugh have been so appreciated over the last three years. I am so excited for our next steps together!

Table of Contents

1.0. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Research Area and Rationale	1
1.2. The Relevance of the Bio-ecological Model.	1
1.3. Aims of the Research	2
1.4. Researcher Positionality.....	2
1.5. Paradigmatic Stance.....	3
1.6. Structure of the Thesis	3
2.0. The Review Paper	5
2.1. Overview of the chapter.....	5
2.2. Research Area	5
2.3. Key Terms.....	5
2.3.1 Special Educational Needs.....	5
2.3.2. Mainstream Primary Schools.....	5
2.3.3. School Self-Evaluation.....	6
2.3.4. Joint Work & Collaboration.....	6
2.3.5. Lived Experience.	7
2.3.6. Educational Psychologists and NEPS psychologists.	7
2.3.7. The Continuum of Support.	8
2.3.8. Consultation.	10
2.3.9. A Foucauldian Perspective on Joint Work.....	11
2.3.10. Inclusion.....	12
2.4. Educational Policy and Legislation	12
2.4.1. Inclusion within the Irish Context.....	12
2.4.2. Inclusion versus Economic Prosperity: Competing Agendas?	14
2.4.3. Moving Forward: Special Classes or the School Inclusion Model?	15
2.4.4. Impact of SETAM for Teachers.	16
2.4.5. Impact of SETAM for the NEPS psychologist.	16
2.4.6. Impact of Legislation for the School Psychologist: International Context.....	17

2.5. Systematic Review.....	18
2.6. Review Question.....	18
2.7. Search Strategy	18
2.8. Critical Analysis Framework	24
2.9. Participants.....	28
2.10. Design	28
2.10.1. Study Designs.	28
2.10.2. Aims.....	29
2.10.3. Sampling and recruitment procedures.	29
2.11. Data Collection and Analysis.....	30
2.11.1. Measures.	30
2.11.2. Analysis.....	31
2.12. Synthesis of Findings.....	32
2.13. Discussion.....	37
2.13.1. Summary.....	37
2.13.2. Findings in relation to the Irish Context.	37
2.14. Limitations of the review.	38
2.15. Rationale for the Current Research.....	38
2.16. Overarching Research Question	39
3.0. The Empirical Paper	40
3.1. Introduction.....	40
3.2. Research Questions.....	40
3.3. Methodology	41
3.3.1. Theoretical Framework: Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT).	41
3.3.2. Research design and paradigm.....	45
3.3.3. Ethical considerations.	45
3.3.4. Participants.....	45
3.4. Data Collection Methods.	47
3.4.1. Survey Design.....	47

3.4.2. Survey Pilot.....	47
3.4.3. Survey Recruitment and Data Collection.	47
3.4.4. Semi-structured Interview Protocol Development.....	48
3.4.5. Semi-structured Interview Pilot.	48
3.4.6. Semi-structured Interview Recruitment & Data Collection.....	49
3.5. Data Analysis	49
3.5.1. Quantitative Analysis.....	49
3.5.2. Qualitative Analysis.....	49
3.6. Findings.....	51
3.6.1. Research Question 1: How does joint work between NEPS psychologists and staff support the inclusion of all students?.....	51
3.6.2. Research Question 2: What are the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder for joint work?	55
3.6.3. Research Question 3: How are structures, resources, and supports used to facilitate successful joint work?.....	66
3.6.4. Research Question 4: What expectations or rules influence the joint work of NEPS psychologists and school staff?.....	69
3.7. Summary of Findings.....	72
3.8. Discussion	75
3.8.1. Research Question 1: How does joint work between psychologists and staff support the inclusion of all students?.....	76
3.8.2. Research question 2: What are the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder for joint work?.....	81
3.8.3. Research Question 3: How are structures, resources, and supports used to facilitate successful joint work?.....	83
3.8.4. Research Question 4: What rules, regulations, expectations, or norms influence the joint work of NEPS psychologists and school staff?	83
3.9. Potential Barrier to the Implementation of Recommendations.....	84
3.10. Limitations	85

3.11. Conclusion	85
4.0. The Critical Review	88
4.1. Overview.....	88
4.2. Personal Reflection on Research Process and Findings	88
4.3. Strengths and Critique.....	90
4.3.1. Paradigm.	90
4.3.2. Theoretical Framework.....	90
4.3.3. Design.	91
4.3.4. Sample.....	92
4.3.5. Methodological Rigour	96
4.3.6. Data Collection.	97
4.3.7. Analysis & Interpretation.....	99
4.4. Ethical Considerations	103
4.5. Implications for Policy Relating to Joint Work	104
4.5.1. Expansion of NEPS Service.....	104
4.5.2. Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments.....	104
4.6. Implications for Practice within the NEPS Service	104
4.6.1. Systemic Work.....	104
4.6.2. Prioritisation and Distribution.....	105
4.6.3. Consultation.	105
4.6.4. Working with Parents.	106
4.6.5. Group Consultation.....	106
4.7. Directions for Future Research	107
4.7.1. Joint Work in Special Class Settings.	107
4.7.2. Student and Parent Experiences.....	107
4.8. Distinct Contribution & Originality.....	107
4.9. Impact Statement	108
References.....	110

List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Continuum of Joint Working</i>	7
Table 2 <i>Search Terms Used</i>	20
Table 3 <i>Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria and Rationale</i>	21
Table 4 <i>Overview of WoE Ratings</i>	25
Table 5 <i>Research Questions</i>	40
Table 6 <i>Five Key Principles for Studying Activity Systems</i>	43
Table 7 <i>Demographic Information for Interview Participants</i>	46
Table 8 <i>Six Phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis</i>	50
Table 9 <i>Primary Contradictions and Recommendations for the Current Research</i>	75
Table 10 <i>Implications for Policy, Practice and Directions for Future Research</i>	85
Table 11 <i>Comparison of this Study with Items and Dimensions for Information Power</i>	94
Table 12 <i>Checklist for Good Reflexive TA Compared with the Current Research</i>	101

List of Figures

Figure 1 <i>The Continuum of Support Model</i>	9
Figure 2 <i>The NEPS Four-Stage Problem Solving Framework</i>	10
Figure 3 <i>PRISMA Chart Depicting Search Strategy</i>	23
Figure 4 <i>First Generation Activity Theory Model</i>	41
Figure 5 <i>Comparing Psychologist and Staff Views Using Third Generation Model</i>	44
Figure 6 <i>Survey Responses for The Question: At What Level of The Continuum of Support Do You Most Frequently Engage in Joint Work?</i>	53
Figure 7 <i>Survey Responses for the Question: Do You Feel that the Inclusion Needs of the Child(ren) were Generally Met as a Result of Engaging in Joint Work?</i>	54
Figure 8 <i>Survey Responses for the Question: How Often Have You Worked with the NEPS psychologist?</i>	65
Figure 9 <i>Visual Depiction of Themes Compared to CHAT framework</i>	74
Figure 10 <i>Comparison of the Four-Step Problem Solving Framework with Single Loop Learning</i>	77
Figure 11 <i>Comparison of the Proposed Five-Step Problem Solving Framework with Double Loop Learning</i>	79

Figure 12 <i>Bridging the Gap Between Individual Casework and More Systemic Work at the Group and Organisational Levels</i>	80
Figure 13 <i>Visual Depiction of Contracting Before Engaging in Five-Step Problem Solving Process</i>	82
Figure 14 <i>Information Power—Items and Dimension</i>	93

List of Appendices

Appendix A: <i>Summaries of Included Studies</i>	126
Appendix B: <i>Studies Excluded from the Review and Rationale</i>	136
Appendix C: <i>Overview of Woe A</i>	139
Appendix D: <i>Example of Completed Coding Protocol for Qualitative Studies</i>	140
Appendix E: <i>Example of Completed Checklist for a Questionnaire Study</i>	144
Appendix F: <i>Overview of WoE B</i>	149
Appendix G: <i>Overview of WoE C</i>	150
Appendix H: <i>The Adapted Eight-Step Model of Activity-Oriented Design Methods</i>	151
Appendix I: <i>Ethical Approval from MIREC</i>	156
Appendix J: <i>Demographic Information for Survey Participants</i>	157
Appendix K: <i>Semi-structured Interview Protocol</i>	159
Appendix L: <i>Stages of Thematic Analysis, Sample of Initial Coding and Sample Theme Synopsis</i>	162
Appendix M: <i>Sample of Direct Quotes, Final Codes, Subthemes and Themes for Each Research Question</i>	167
Appendix N: <i>Thematic Maps in Relation each Research Question</i>	173
Appendix O: <i>Additional Findings which did not apply to Research Questions</i>	178
Appendix P: <i>Extracts from Reflexive Journal</i>	180

List of Abbreviations

ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CoS	Continuum of Support (framework)
CT	Class Teacher
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EHC	Education, Health, and Care (Plans) (UK)
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
GAM	General Allocation Model
HSE	Health Service Executive
IDEIA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (USA)
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
MIREC	Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
OT	Occupational Therapist
SCPA	Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments
SENO	Special Educational Needs Organiser
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co Ordinator
SERC	Special Education Review Committee
SET	Special Education Teacher
SETAM	Special Education Teacher Allocation Model
SIM	School Inclusion Model
SLT	Speech and Language Therapist
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SSP	Student Support Plan
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
UNCRPD	United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organiser

1.0. Introduction

1.1. Research Area and Rationale

The current research explores how joint work between NEPS psychologists and teaching staff facilitated inclusion for children in mainstream Irish primary schools between 2015 and 2020. In particular, the paper aims to understand how the introduction of Circular 0013/2017 (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2017) may have influenced the interactions between these two cohorts. This circular awarded school staff the autonomy to allocate resources, accommodations and supports to their students on the basis of their presenting needs, rather than a professional diagnosis (Kenny et al., 2020). This landmark circular is situated in the broader context of a global progression away from the medical model of disability. Under this previous framework, educational, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties were often considered to be centred within the child themselves, and hence, psychological involvement was primarily concerned with assessment and diagnosis (Farrell, 2010). It has been suggested that a move towards the social model of disability, which emphasises the impact of sociocultural and environmental factors on the presenting difficulties, could, in theory, revolutionise the practice of the NEPS psychologist (Howe & Griffin, 2020). In fact, Farrell (2010) has argued if ‘... school psychologists abandon the medical model, they could, work more effectively at the systems level and/or through adopting school-based consultation’ (p 587). However, despite these assertions, there has been a dearth of research which has sought to understand the impact of these significant policy revisions on the interactions between NEPS psychologists and teachers or principals in an Irish context.

1.2. The Relevance of the Bio-ecological Model.

Previously, educational psychology has been criticised for a preoccupation with the individual student, whereby learning difficulties were perceived to be a consequence of internal deficits with little regard for the impact of external environments (Burns, 2013; Farrell, 2010). Gutkin (2012) has argued that the practice of educational psychology must adopt an ecological perspective in order to move beyond this medicalised model of service. Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) Bio-ecological Model of Human Development asserts that the development of the individual is influenced by the activities or ideologies of a number of nested ecological systems.

The first system is known as the ‘micro-system’, and this refers to contexts such as the school, the home, or other environments which are directly and consistently experienced by

the individual. The ‘meso-system’ describes the interactions between two distinct micro-systems, such as the school and the home. Gutkin (2012) suggested that educational psychologists have a duty to expand their focus beyond the individual and focus instead on classrooms, schools and communities in order to affect change for a larger number of students, through the use of universal strategies and interventions at this micro- and meso-systemic levels. This assertion is further supported by Burns (2013) who also advocated for the use of a response to intervention model when supporting students with additional needs.

The ‘exo-system’ consists of environments which may be less frequently or never directly experienced, but which nonetheless can be affected or may affect the micro-system and the subsequent development of the individual. In the case of the current research the joint work between a NEPS psychologist and a class teacher may constitute an exo-systemic interaction. The ‘macro-system’ refers to the wider value systems, social norms and organisational powers or institutions which define the cultural context in which the individual exists. Finally, the ‘chrono-system’ accounts for the pattern of personal, environmental, and legislative transitions or events which impact upon the individual. In fact, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) have stated that “the life course of the individual is embedded in and shaped by the historical times and events that they experience...” (p.1020). Indeed, it is acknowledged that modifications at the micro-, meso-, and exo-systems are often shaped by advances at the macro- and chrono-systems level.

1.3. Aims of the Research

The aim of the current research is to provide an insight into how the joint working relationship between NEPS psychologists and teaching staff in mainstream primary schools has developed between 2015 and 2020, during which time the DES Circular 0013/2017 was introduced. More specifically, the research strives to use participant experiences to develop a conceptualisation of the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder, as well as the facilitators, barriers, and outcomes for joint work.

1.4. Researcher Positionality

My interest in this research stems from my own previous experience as a primary school teacher, as well as my current position as a trainee psychologist. Between 2015 and 2019, I taught in mainstream classes, and also assumed the roles of resource teacher and special education teacher. During this time, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to work with three different NEPS psychologists. However, it was not until I began my training on the

doctorate programme that I began to reflect on the contradictions between my own experiences of joint work as a teacher and subsequently as a trainee psychologist. In particular, I noted that my understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the NEPS psychologist had shifted from an expert advisor to more of a consultative coach. Thus, my personal motivation for undertaking this research was to compare and contrast my differing experiences of joint work as a teacher and as a trainee psychologist with those of other stakeholders. In addition, whilst I had recognised the implications of DES Circular 0013/2017 for my own professional practice as a special education teacher, I had not observed any significant changes in relation to my joint work with the NEPS psychologist at that time. Notably, this experience differed from expectations in the literature which predicted that the practice of school psychology was set to transform in response to this more inclusive circular. Therefore, I decided to use DES Circular 0013/2017 as the basis of the inquiry, in order to ascertain if others had experienced a change in their joint work between 2015 and 2020.

1.5. Paradigmatic Stance

The constructivist paradigm was adopted for the current research. Ontologically, constructivism rejects the concept of a single objective truth, but instead suggests that reality is socially constructed wherein each individual may ascribe a different meaning to a single event or activity (Mertens, 2014). Hence, this paradigm aligned with the researcher's own world view, given her differing experiences of joint work as a teacher and subsequently as a trainee psychologist. Moreover, constructivism emphasises the importance of collating and comparing data from multiple stakeholders to ensure that a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon is developed, which in the case of the current research ensures that the voices of both NEPS psychologists and teaching staff are explored. From an epistemological standpoint, the constructivist paradigm also highlights the benefit of researcher subjectivity and reflexivity when co-creating knowledge with participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thus, this stance provided scope to recognise the experiences of the researcher as an asset which could be used to develop a more in-depth conceptualisation of the activity under study (Creswell, 2003).

1.6. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into three main sections including the review paper, the empirical paper, and the critical review. The review paper will include a systematic review of published literature which aims to provide a comprehensive overview of research pertaining to the international practices of school psychologists as well as their interactions with mainstream

school staff. The empirical paper will outline the methodology and findings of the current study in line with the traditional structure of a research article. The critical review will allow for reflection and critical appraisal of the study findings within the context of the empirical literature. Finally, the thesis will conclude with a short statement on the significance of the current research for the future joint working of NEPS psychologists and primary school staff.

2.0. The Review Paper

2.1. Overview of the chapter

This chapter begins with a brief synopsis of the research area, followed by descriptions of key terms and an overview of the development of policy for inclusive education in Ireland, as well as the impact of policy on the role of the NEPS psychologist. Next a systematic review of the literature pertaining to the existing work of the school psychologists in a variety of countries, as well as their interactions with mainstream teaching staff will be presented. Finally, the rationale for the current research will be outlined, followed by a statement of the overarching research question.

2.2. Research Area

The current research seeks to understand the lived experiences of joint work between NEPS psychologists and mainstream primary school teaching staff to facilitate inclusion. Despite the interdependent nature of their relationship, the existing literature has not explored the joint work between the NEPS psychologist and teachers or principals in an Irish context. This study aims to fill this gap and provide an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of all stakeholders, by collecting both qualitative and quantitative information.

2.3. Key Terms

2.3.1 Special Educational Needs. It is argued that all children have needs in line with Maslow's (1981) Hierarchy of Needs, including the need for love, safety, and encouragement. In addition to these typical needs, special educational needs have been defined in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN; 2004) as potential barriers to participation and success in education and are categorised as physical, mental health, sensory and learning needs or any other disability which may cause the individual to learn differently to other children. Thus, children with special educational needs may also require supplementary support, teaching, and resources in order to overcome these barriers and gain access to the same educational experiences as their classmates (Flood, 2013).

2.3.2. Mainstream Primary Schools. A mainstream primary school refers to a school which caters for both typically developing children and those with special educational needs, aged between 5 and 13 years old (National Council for Special Education [NCSE], 2013). The class teacher has first line responsibility for the education of all children in the class and hence,

differentiation of teaching approaches and the curriculum are encouraged to ensure that all learning needs are met (Department of Education and Science, 2000). Additional teaching which supports the work of the class teacher may be provided to children with identified needs by a special education teacher (SET) within the classroom or in one-to-one, or small group settings (DES, 2017). Alternatively, children with diagnosed difficulties or disabilities may be taught in a class which is designated for that specific cohort, for example, a school may have a special class for children who have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder or those with speech and language difficulties (McCoy et al., 2014). The principal of a mainstream primary school has overall responsibility for the education of all children in the school and is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of policies, plans and supports to ensure the inclusion of children with special educational needs (Department of Education and Science, 2000).

2.3.3. School Self-Evaluation. The School-Self Evaluation (SSE) Process is a form of internal review which is conducted by the members of the school community and aims to enable staff to effect meaningful change at a whole school level. All primary and secondary schools within the Irish state are required to engage with the SSE process under DES Circulars (2012, 2016a) 0039/2012 and 0039/2016. It encompasses six iterative stages including, identify focus, gather evidence, analyse and make judgements, write and share report and improvement plan, put improvement plan into action, monitor actions and evaluate impact (Department of Education and Skills, 2016c). It is intended to be a “collaborative, inclusive and reflective” process, whereby staff compare teaching and learning and/or leadership and management with statements of effective practice and identify, plan and implement changes accordingly (Department of Education and Skills, 2016c, p 10). Thus, the SSE process is seen to complement the existing work of all government agencies involved in schools, including the inspectorate who conduct external evaluations of schools and teachers.

2.3.4. Joint Work & Collaboration. Collaboration has been widely defined in the literature as the coordinated joint working of at least two parties to define and solve problems (Curtis et al., 2008; Roschelle & Teasley, 1995). Furthermore, collaboration is viewed as a convergence of understanding which requires the formulation, monitoring, and repairing of knowledge to ensure that it is consistently and mutually agreed (Roschelle, 1992). Notably, it has been argued that in order for a process to be truly collaborative, it must be symmetrical or non-hierarchical, wherein, both sides are seen to have equal expertise and influence, as well as shared goals and ownership of the problem (Dillenbourg, 1999; Dougherty, 2013). However,

it is acknowledged that joint working does not always occur on this level playing field. Hence, Lacey (2013) suggests that collaboration is at the upper end of a four-point continuum of joint working, and is preceded by liaison, co-operation and co-ordination (See Table 1). The author also argues that in order to effectively ensure the inclusion of children with special educational needs, teachers, and professionals, such as the psychologist, must ensure that they are working as a collaborative team. This aspiration aligns with the recommendations made in the Inclusive Education Framework wherein, school leaders are advised to engage in collaborative problem-solving with other professionals to ensure the successful implementation of inclusion (NCSE, 2011 , p. 22).

Table 1

Lacey's (2013) Continuum of Joint Working

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Liaison: initiating and maintaining contact with other individuals or organisations. 2. Co-operation: the minimum manner of joint working, e.g., providing information, not interfering with the other's work etc. 3. Co-ordination: organising, scheduling, and adjusting their own work to ensure a balanced approach is established. 4. Collaboration: the most advanced system of joint working: mutual sharing of skills, information, and expertise form the basis for integrated decisions and actions

2.3.5. Lived Experience. The current research defines lived experiences as participants' interpretations of social actions conducted by themselves and other social agents (Daher et al., 2017). For example, in relation to this study, the participant may engage in reflective thinking in order to draw meaning from their encounters with a psychologist or member of primary school staff. These interpretations will then be compared to determine the presence of potentially recurrent themes which may characterise participants' overall experiences of joint work (Mapp, 2008).

2.3.6. Educational Psychologists and NEPS psychologists. Educational psychologists have been described as scientist-practitioners with the capacity to implement psychological skills and relate psychological theory to schools and other educational and health settings (Cameron, 2006; Fallon et al., 2010, p14). Their role has been summarised into five key duties namely assessment, consultation, intervention, research, and training; each of which

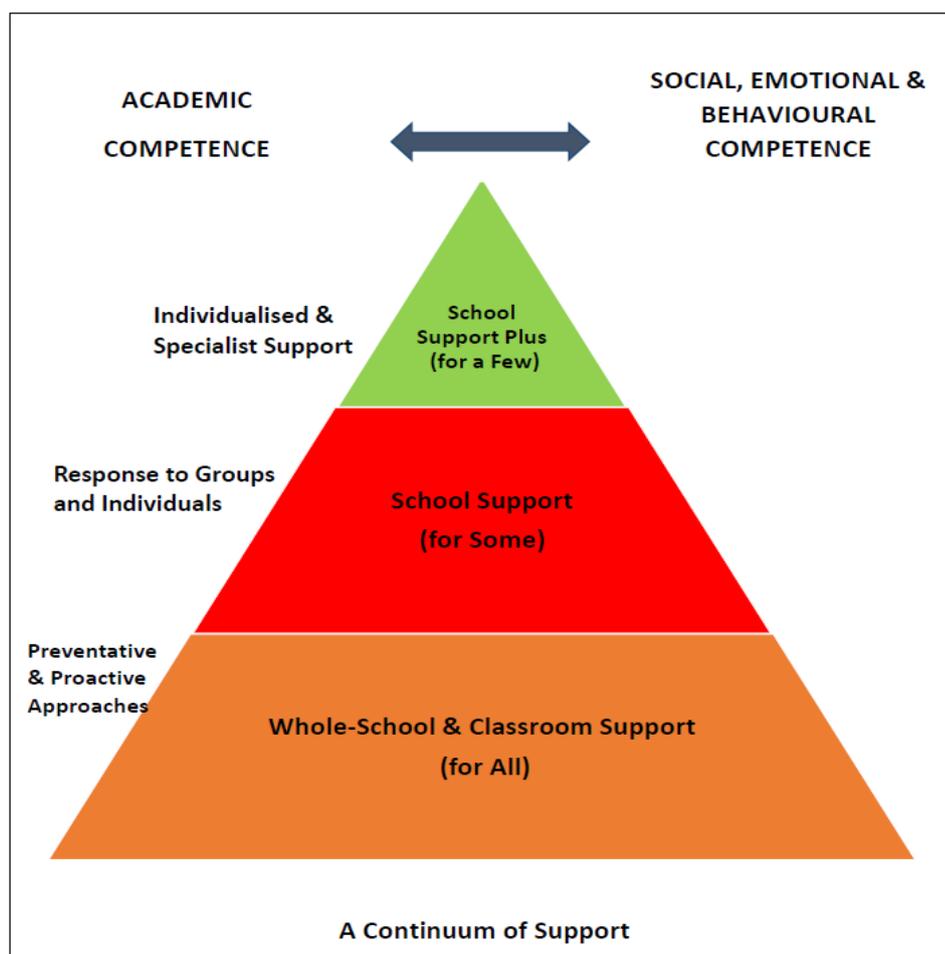
can occur across the systems, group, and individual levels (Fallon et al., 2010; Farrell et al., 2006). In Ireland, educational psychologists can work in a variety of settings including Children's Disability Services as well as Child and Family Psychology Services within the Health Service Executive. For the purposes of this paper, psychologists employed with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) will be referred to as NEPS psychologists. The stated aim of the NEPS is to empower teachers to meet the needs of students, whilst also ensuring the best possible outcome for young people in learning, behaviour, and social emotional competence (NEPS, 2010). Hence, the consultative model of psychological provision, which is currently prioritised by the NEPS (2010), is reported to strive for collaboration between teachers, parents and psychologists, with each stakeholder contributing their own divergent, yet equally valuable, knowledge and skills to the problem-solving process (Newman & Rosenfield, 2019; Wagner, 2000). Psychologists employed with the NEPS are reported to have approximately twenty primary and secondary schools on their caseload, and typically engage in planning and review meetings with each of these schools in September to create an agenda for the academic year (Crowley, 2007). They are described as carrying out the five key functions common to educational psychology but also provide critical incident support to schools where necessary (Crowley, 2007; NEPS, 2019b). In the event that a psychologist employed with the NEPS takes leave from their position, the schools allocated to this psychologist can apply for funding to commission individual private psychological assessments through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA). The Department of Education and the NEPS (2021b) acknowledge that this scheme is not a substitute for the full range of psychological services which are generally available to schools but is instead viewed as an interim measure to "meet current urgent needs for psychological assessment of children and young people" (p. 1).

2.3.7. The Continuum of Support. The NEPS supports schools to implement a response to intervention framework known as The Continuum of Support (See Figure 1; NEPS, 2007b). The continuum advises that children who are identified as potentially having academic, physical, behavioural, social, or emotional difficulties are first supported at the Classroom Support level by the class teacher, who will observe the child, gather information, create an action plan, and monitor its effectiveness. The NEPS has published an extensive collection of resources which provide teachers with information and guidance on best practice to support a variety of difficulties that may arise in their classrooms. If the child continues to exhibit difficulties the teacher is advised to move to the School Support stage of the continuum,

wherein they will engage in a problem-solving approach with the special education teacher (SET) by systematically gathering data to develop a School Support Plan. This plan may then be jointly implemented, monitored, and evaluated by the class teacher and SET to evaluate the progress of the child. In some cases, children may require more intensive support at this stage and the teacher is then advised to move to the School Support Plus level of the continuum. This may involve joint work with other professionals, such as speech and language therapists or the NEPS psychologists, to engage in problem solving, intervention and assessment work for the child in question (NEPS, 2007b, p.7). This indirect service provision is reported to enable school staff to seek support from the NEPS psychologist at any stage of the continuum (NEPS, 2019b).

Figure 1

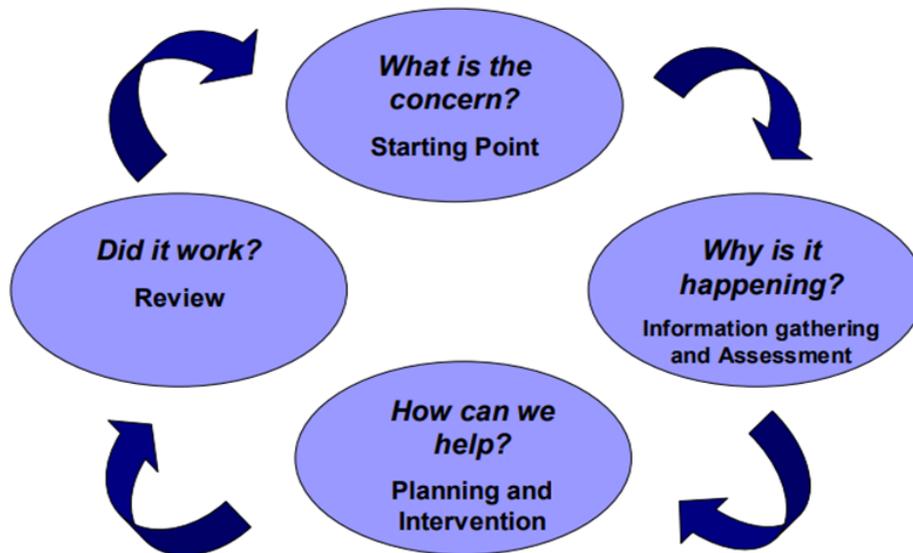
The Continuum of Support Model (NEPS, 2010, p. 13).



2.3.8. Consultation. The NEPS have adopted an overarching consultative model of service in conjunction with the Continuum of Support. The purpose of consultation within school psychology is to enable teachers and parents to enact change at the individual, group, or systems level, using a “collaborative and recursive process that... combines joint problem exploration, assessment, intervention and review” (Wagner, 2000, p. 11). Indeed, it could be argued that the success of this indirect service provision could be measured by the extent to which the psychologist can empower those closest to the student to adapt to, and support the presenting needs (Gutkin & Curtis, 2009). Thus, the roots of the consultative model can be found in the ecological paradigm, wherein a child’s development is considered not only in relation to their own individual characteristics, but also within the environments in which they exist such as the home and school, and the interactions between these different contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). At the classroom support and school support levels the NEPS psychologist is reported to engage in teacher consultation, group consultation and organisational consultation, pertaining to broad or general issues at each of these stages (Nugent et al., 2019). Whilst teacher and organisational consultation are usually conducted within a single school system, group consultation is described as a discrete service which provides a forum for teachers from different schools to meet and problem-solve under the supervision of a NEPS psychologist (Nugent et al., 2014). Casework consultation is reported to occur at the school support plus level, and may involve joint discussion, assessment and intervention to support the specific needs of an individual student (Nugent et al., 2019). NEPS psychologists are noted to generally employ a four-stage problem solving framework when consulting with teachers and principals at all levels of the continuum (see Figure 2; NEPS, 2007b, p. 5). The NEPS have outlined the four stages of this process, which include defining the concern, gathering information to ascertain potential contributory factors for the difficulty, implementing an intervention or plan to ameliorate the situation, and reviewing the process to determine its efficacy. Nugent et al. (2019) advise that although this model is distinct to the NEPS, it does align with the core elements that are common to all consultative models, and thus, can be used to build the overall capacity of the school system to tackle similar problems that may arise at the individual, group, or organisational levels. Thus, this four-stage problem solving cycle provides a framework to understand the organisation of activities conducted during joint work. However, it is important also to consider frameworks which may seek to understand or conceptualise the interactions and/or relationship between both stakeholders and this is explored in more detail in Section 2.3.9.

Figure 2

The NEPS Four-Stage Problem Solving Framework (NEPS, 2007b, p. 5).



2.3.9. A Foucauldian Perspective on Joint Work. Foucault has been cited as stating that educational institutions, such as primary and secondary schools, operate in what have been referred to as “blocks of capacity-communication-power” (Deacon, 2006, p 178). Whilst this description was originally intended to describe interactions between students and teachers it can also be usefully applied to the joint work between educational psychologists and teachers. The consultative model of service that has been adopted by the NEPS service employs communication and problem-solving to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of teachers with regards to inclusive education (Nugent et al., 2019). However, Deacon (2006) noted that this emphasis on capacity-building and communication does not necessarily diminish the role of power within schools, but merely serves to further obscure this aspect of the relationship dynamic. Additionally, Deacon (2006) proposed that teachers are subject to the power of unnamed others, who are said to exert a “critical gaze” over their professional practices and decisions (p 184). Thus, it could be argued that Foucault’s (1995) theory of panoptic gaze may be applicable to this cohort. In particular, it appears as though surveillance is used as a disciplinary tool, as the efficacy of teaching practices and hence, the identity of the school are routinely evaluated through the analysis of standardised assessment results, external inspection, and internal self-evaluation (Raaen, 2011; Webb et al., 2009; Çeven et al., 2021). The

Department of Education retains the responsibility for creating and evaluating standards of practice within all Irish primary and secondary schools and it enforces this through external inspections, as well as the promotion of the internal School Self-Evaluation process (Department of Education and Skills, 2016; 2015). Therefore, given the centrality of politically defined agendas, within the educational system, it is important to consider how power operates within joint work between NEPS psychologists and teaching staff. On one hand, it could be questioned whether the NEPS psychologist, as an employee of the Department of Education, might exercise power by scrutinising and regulating teaching practices to ensure that they align with the standards set out by their governing body. Alternatively, the results of a recent Irish study conducted by Skerritt et al. (2021) seem to suggest that outside actors or professionals often support teachers and principals to understand how policy might translate to their own schools. Thus, rather than acting as an external inspector, it could be suggested that educational psychologists are uniquely placed, given their in-depth knowledge of each school's presenting needs and strengths, to act more as a supportive advisor in relation to the internal School Self-Evaluation process. The psychologist would therefore be utilising their power to provide guidance and information in order to assist with the interpretations and implementation of policy changes or mandates, whilst also being cognisant of the unique context of each school community, as well as the needs of individual students and their families.

2.3.10. Inclusion. The Inclusive Education Framework (NCSE, 2011) defines inclusion as a process which guarantees that all students and staff members are empowered to attend, participate, and succeed in the school. Hence, inclusion is not only concerned with students with additional needs, but with ensuring that the entire school community has equal rights and access to education through the provision of appropriate accommodations and structures (Ainscow et al., 2006; Booth et al., 2002).

2.4. Educational Policy and Legislation

2.4.1. Inclusion within the Irish Context. Throughout the twentieth century children with SEN were educated separately to their typically developing peers in special classes and schools (Kenny et al., 2020). However, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC; 1989) which was formally ratified in 1992, cited the exclusion of children from mainstream education on the basis of disability, as an act of discrimination. This was closely followed in the Irish context by a report from the Special Education Review Committee (SERC; 1993) which proposed the introduction of a continuum of inclusion, whereby

educational provision could range from fulltime placement in mainstream settings to special schools or classes depending on the needs of the individual (Crowley, 2007). Hence, the SERC Report (1993) served as the impetus for change in perspective and practice within the Irish educational system. This was closely followed by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), which advised that children with SEN should be integrated into mainstream settings where possible. These advances were subsequently reflected in the Education Act (1998) which delineates the rights of parents to send their child to a school of their choice and also outlines the State's obligation to provide equal access to inclusive education for those with SEN.

Undoubtedly, the most progressive legislation in terms of inclusive education came in the form of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN; 2004). The EPSEN Act enshrines into Irish law the rights of children with SEN to attend mainstream schools, with the exception of cases where this is deemed to contradict the best interests of the child or their classmates (Kenny et al., 2020). The rights-based mandate introduced by EPSEN was further solidified by the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD; 2006), in 2018, which directed states to ensure that children with SEN could access free and inclusive education within their own communities. The EPSEN Act also foreshadowed the introduction of DES Circular 02/2005 (DES, 2005a) which provided mainstream primary schools with guidance on the allocation of teaching resources for SEN provision and specified two routes through which supports could be allocated. The first was known as the General Allocation Model (GAM) wherein, learning support teaching hours were assigned to schools based on the number of students with learning difficulties, the number falling below the tenth percentile in a standardised reading or maths assessment, or the number with "high incidence" disabilities such as a mild general learning disability. The second route was an automatic entitlement to a specified amount of resource teaching hours for those with "low incidence" disabilities, for example, children who had been diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder were entitled to five hours of resource teaching per week (DES, 2005a). This system was heavily reliant on professional diagnosis as a prerequisite for the allocation of educational resources. Hence, it was condemned as inequitable for those who could not afford timely private assessments, but were instead forced to endure lengthy waiting lists in the hope of accessing supports (DES, 2016b; NCSE, 2014).

As an alternative the NCSE (2013) in their strategic review of special education supports, recommended early intervention, and an assessment process which evaluated the specific needs of the individual, in order to inform planning and intervention. Thus, the Special Education Teacher Allocation Model (SETAM) which provided schools with special education

teaching hours, based on the profile of the school rather than the diagnoses of individual children, was introduced with the publication of DES Circular 0013/2017 (DES, 2017). The SETAM was intended to be more equitable as it utilises a “frontloading” approach to allocate resources to schools based on factors such as the social context in which the school is situated, the gender balance of the students, and the results of standardised assessments. In addition, the posts of learning support teacher and resource teacher were combined into the new role of the special education teacher. Furthermore, each school was also given the autonomy to distribute special education teaching hours based on the needs of students, as identified by staff, rather than professional diagnoses (Kenny et al., 2020; NCSE, 2017).

In the same vein, DES Circular 0052/2019 (DES, 2019a) also provided schools with the responsibility for granting an exemption from the study of the Irish language for students who fell below the tenth percentile in a literacy attainment test, a duty which was previously held by the psychologist. Finally, Circular 0030/2020 (DES, 2020) also granted school principals the right to allocate Special Needs Assistants to students without a requirement for a medical or professional report. Thus, it could be suggested that the introduction of these policies, which have all served to deemphasize diagnosis, represents a progression away from the medical model of disability, and the emergence of a more needs-based framework of allocation and support.

2.4.2. Inclusion versus Economic Prosperity: Competing Agendas? In order to contextualise the introduction of these DES Circulars, which appear to facilitate more inclusive education, the co-occurring emphasis on standardised assessment results must also be considered. In recent years, the success criteria, for the educational arena, has been increasingly determined by economic and political changes, wherein taught content as well as opportunities for professional development have been modified to reflect this neoliberal agenda (Hargreaves, 1994; Raaen, 2011). In the Irish context, the publication of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results in which the literacy levels of Irish students were reported to drop from ‘above average’ to ‘average’ (Perkins et al., 2011) had a significant impact on the curriculum being taught in Irish schools. The PISA results prompted the roll out of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (Department of Education and Skills, 2011), which prioritised literacy and numeracy as key areas in need of development within Irish schools. This “narrowing” of the curriculum has been heavily criticised by Breacháin & O’Toole (2013) who describe the strategy as financially motivated, and have accused the Irish government of prioritising economic prosperity on a global scale over the holistic education of its students (p

404). This utilisation of schools as “engines of economic reform” aligns with Foucault’s (1978 as cited in Foucault, 2019) concept of governmentality, wherein officials determine the direction of educational development, in line with their own market-driven agendas and promote increased accountability of school staff in relation to these standards (Jankowski & Provezis, 2014, p 476). Moreover, Breacháin & O’Toole (2013) also argue that this limited focus on literacy and numeracy essentially serves to exclude those with additional needs, who may have otherwise flourished through the use of a broader and more balanced curriculum. Thus, it appears as if the introduction of seemingly more inclusive policy, such as DES Circular 0013/2017 (DES, 2017) has coincided with a move towards results-based accountability in Irish schools. It is postulated that the navigation of these two complex and potentially conflicting initiatives may pose a significant challenge for teachers and may indeed, impact upon the educational experiences of students.

2.4.3. Moving Forward: Special Classes or the School Inclusion Model? Despite the significant progress that has been made in terms of inclusive legislation and policy, the Irish education system has been accused of continuing to promote the segregation of children with SEN into special classes (Banks & McCoy, 2017; NCSE, 2019). A press release from the DES (2021a) confirms that the number of special classes in mainstream schools has increased by over three hundred per cent since 2011. It has been argued that these settings enable a flexible approach for the participation of students with SEN in the mainstream school (Norwich & Kelly, 2004; as cited in Travers, 2009). However, a comprehensive review of practice in Ireland reports that “...although students in special classes are physically located in mainstream schools, the extent to which inclusion is taking place is questionable...” (Banks & McCoy, 2017, p 458). Thus, the so-called “Irish Solution” wherein special classes were prioritised over the development of inclusive policy and practice in existing mainstream schools and classes has been heavily criticised (Banks & McCoy, 2017; Kenny et al., 2020). In fact, a report published by the NCSE (2019) strongly condemns this continued marginalisation of students with SEN and suggests that Ireland is not fulfilling its commitment to inclusive education, as set out in the EPSEN Act (2004), and Article 24 of the UNCRPD (2006; 2016). Therefore, the NCSE (2019) has advocated for the inclusion of all students in mainstream classes and are currently piloting the School Inclusion Model (SIM; Department of Education and Skills, 2019b). The SIM aims to build the capacity of mainstream schools through the provision of a variety of education and health supports, including the expansion of the NEPS and the development of NCSE Regional Support Teams (NCSE, 2020).

2.4.4. Impact of SETAM for Teachers. Prior to the introduction of DES Circular 0013/2017 (DES, 2017) schools and teachers were reported to experience an overreliance on the assessment services of the psychologist as well as a reduced sense of professional autonomy with regards to the distribution of SEN supports (Kinsella et al., 2014). Whilst the new needs-based model offered schools the responsibility and flexibility to allocate resources to their students as they saw fit, this change was not necessarily welcomed by all, with the Irish National Teacher's Organisation issuing a rejection of these new responsibilities at its conference in 2017 (Travers, 2017). Despite this initial reluctance, a more recent study has found that teachers have generally embraced the SETAM, with over 70% of those surveyed agreeing or strongly agreeing that it was effective in meeting the needs of their students (Curtin & Egan, 2021). However, it must be noted that the vast majority of these respondents also highlighted their need for further professional development in order to effectively assess the needs of their students. This concern was also raised by Travers (2017) who predicted that an overreliance on initial teacher education programmes and a lack of postgraduate training opportunities, which specifically target inclusive practice, would serve as a barrier to the implementation of this new system. Indeed, an inclusion audit carried out in one rural school found that whilst teachers welcomed the physical inclusion of all children in their classrooms, they also felt that a lack of training, time and resources had undermined their capacity to employ inclusive practices (O'Riordan, 2017). Hence, it has been suggested that in order to ensure that they are prepared to meet the challenges of a more inclusive classroom, Irish teachers require extensive professional development and support (Lodge & Lynch, 2004; O'Gorman & Drudy, 2010).

2.4.5. Impact of SETAM for the NEPS psychologist. As previously discussed, pursuant to Circular 02/2005 (DES, 2005b), children were required to have a diagnosis in order to avail of supplementary teaching hours. Thus, the NEPS psychologist was generally perceived as the "gatekeeper" of resources, with assessment monopolising the majority of their time (Parkinson, 2004). Consequently, DES Circular 0013/2017 (DES, 2017) and the subsequent introduction of the SETAM were expected to have significant implications for the psychologist, by relinquishing them from their contentious role as the "assessor" (Swan, 2014). Indeed, it has been suggested that the NEPS psychologist should now redirect their energy towards empowering teaching staff with regards to inclusive education, through the promotion of reflective practice as well as evidence-based assessment and intervention (Howe & Griffin, 2020; Parkinson, 2015). However, a recent case study conducted by Eames and Meehan (2020),

which sought to understand how the Irish State was meeting the needs of students with additional needs in primary schools, found that the interviewed principals continued to cite the main role of the NEPS psychologist as assessment. Moreover, these participants also voiced their dissatisfaction with what they perceived as the inadequate number of assessments being conducted under this new legislation. In fact, one principal commented that she felt "...children were let down by some [NEPS psychologists]" (p. 348). Thus, it seems as though there is significant ambiguity surrounding the roles and responsibilities of the NEPS psychologist in the context of the SETAM.

2.4.6. Impact of Legislation for the School Psychologist: International Context.

Historically, in both an Irish and international context, the role of the school psychologist was defined by their involvement in psychoeducational assessment (Fallon et al., 2010; Fleming, 2014). However, the global inclusion movement was cited as having "the potential to re-shape the identity of school psychology... around the world" (Alsoqaih et al., 2017, p 6). In the United States, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA; Government of the United States of America, 2004) was predicted to have significant implications for the role of the school psychologist (Naglieri & Kaufman, 2008). As a result of the Act, the IQ-discrepancy model, which compared the results of cognitive assessments with academic achievement, could no longer be used in isolation to diagnose learning disabilities. Hence, the use of psycho-educational assessment was expected to be significantly reduced and substituted with a response-to-intervention (RtI) framework (Allison & Upah, 2006). However, in a survey of practicing U.S. school psychologists, Walcott and Hyson (2018) found that in reality, respondents continued to rate assessment as their most frequently undertaken activity. It has been acknowledged in the literature that the nature of this evaluative work appears to have been revised to support the RtI model, as psychologists have also reported an increase in their use of curriculum-based assessments to inform planning and intervention (Benson et al., 2019). Nevertheless, it appears as though the traditional role of assessment continues to prevail over the provision of other psychological supports.

In the United Kingdom (UK) the introduction of the Green Paper (2011), was also expected to reduce the demands placed upon psychologists to engage in statutory assessment work, as children could avail of educational supports without a formal diagnosis (Passenger, 2013). As an alternative, under the Children and Families Act (2014), teachers were required to engage in a staged response-to-intervention approach, wherein, they could apply for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC Plans), to seek a diagnosis only as a last resort. Whilst

a notable decrease in SEN identification was reported between 2014 and 2016, Done and Andrews (2020) contend that this reduction is more demonstrative of government policies of economic austerity, rather than a successful adoption of the inclusion movement. In order to support this argument, the authors cite the recent upsurge in SEN diagnoses and EHC plans in both 2017 and 2018 (Government of the United Kingdom, 2018). Therefore, despite assumptions that the aforementioned legislation would change the profession of school psychology in the UK, its actual impact remains unclear (Boyle, MacKay, & Lauchlan, 2016).

2.5. Systematic Review

According to Wolfendale et al. (1992) “our definitions of what educational psychology is lies in our descriptions of what educational psychologists do” (p 1). Indeed, the everyday practice of the NEPS psychologist has been described as occurring on a dynamic continuum that can range from individual casework to consultation to more systemic support and development work (Crowley, 2007; NEPS, 2019b). However, as previously discussed the extent to which NEPS psychologists in Ireland and school psychologists abroad have actually veered away from their traditional assessment role has been questioned (Albritton et al., 2019; Castillo et al., 2012; Parkinson, 2004). Thus, this systematic review seeks to summarise the available information pertaining to the practices of the school psychologist including their interactions with mainstream school staff, in order to ascertain if this role really has changed in the last two decades.

2.6. Review Question

What is known about the existing work of the school psychologist and their interactions with teaching staff in mainstream schools?

2.7. Search Strategy

In order to address this question, a literature search was undertaken in June 2021. The following databases were used: APA PsycInfo, Academic Search Complete, British Education Index, EBSCOhost, Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson), Education Source, ERIC, General Science Full Text (H.W. Wilson), Humanities Full Text (H.W. Wilson), APA PsycArticles, Social Sciences Full Text (H.W. Wilson), UK & Ireland Reference Centre. Keywords included variations on the phrases “school psychologist”, “teacher”, “experiences”, “role”. Table 2 shows the exact search terms used. A filter was applied which limited results to journal articles which had been peer-reviewed and published in English between 2000 and 2022. 250 results

were found and after duplicates were removed 118 studies remained. Three additional studies were found at a later stage by analysing the reference lists of the included studies and through additional reading. Screening of the 121 titles and abstracts for relevance to the review question was conducted and resulted in the removal of 87 studies. The remaining 34 studies were then subject to in-depth analysis using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, which can be found in Table 3. Eighteen studies were retained for review. Seven of these studies were qualitative and the remaining eleven were quantitative survey studies. A flow diagram detailing the search process is shown in Figure 3. Details of included studies can be found in Appendix A and excluded studies (n=16) are listed in Appendix B.

Table 2

Search Terms Used

<i>Title</i>	<i>Not specified</i>	<i>Not specified</i>	<i>Not specified</i>
Educational Psychologist OR	Teacher OR	Roles OR	Experiences OR
School Psychologist OR	School Staff OR	Jobs OR	Perceptions OR
School Psychology	AND Educators	AND Responsibility OR Duty	AND Attitudes OR Views

Table 3

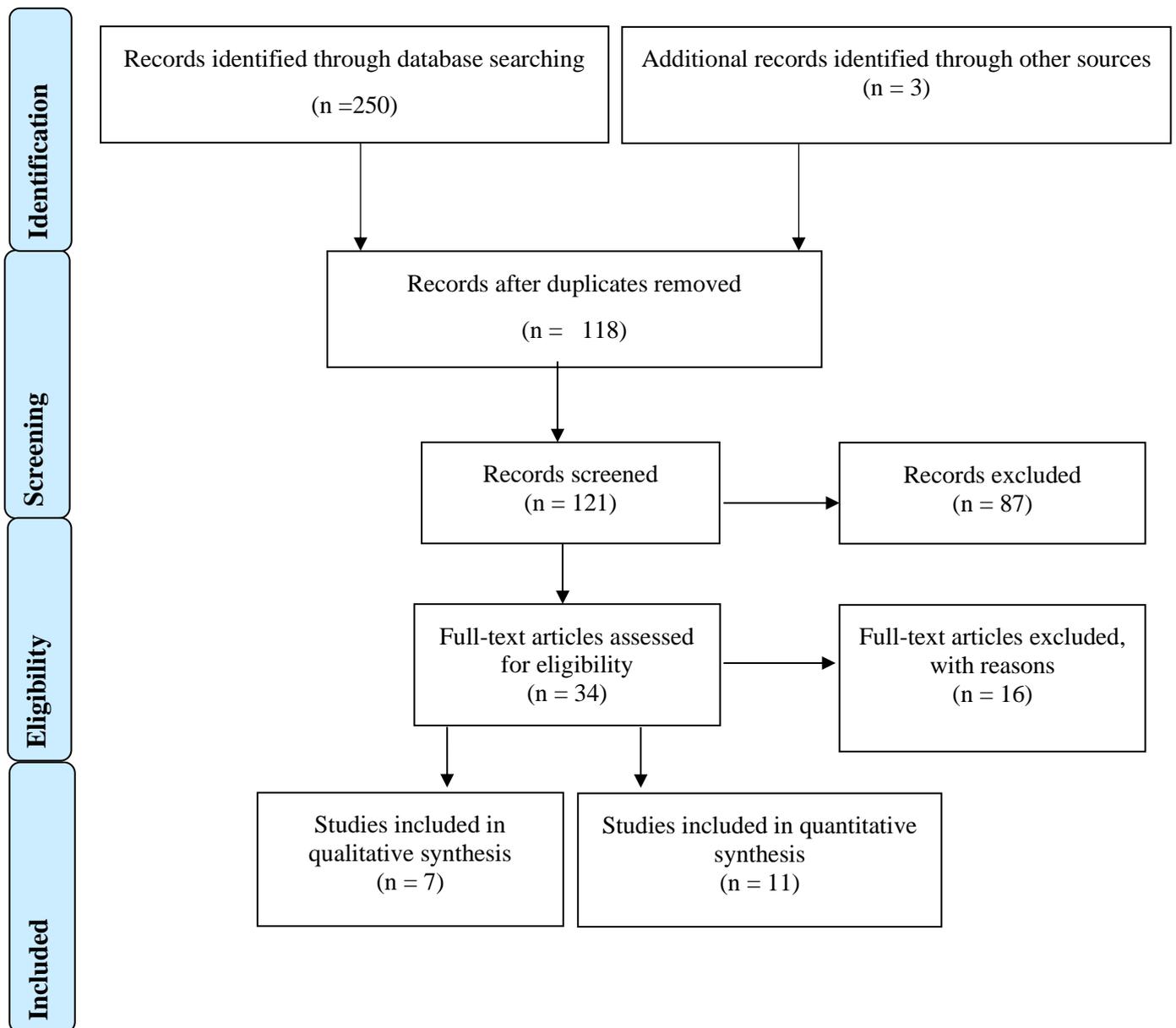
Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria and Rationale

Criteria	Included	Excluded	Rationale
Type of Publication	Peer reviewed primary research articles	Research articles which are not peer reviewed or not primary research	This criterion ensures overall quality and methodological rigour.
Year of Research and Publication	Studies conducted and published between 2000-2022	Studies not conducted and published between 2000-2022	The stated timeframe enabled a comprehensive review of the available literature.
Language	Article published in English	Article not published in English	This criterion ensures that all articles can be understood.
Design	Qualitative studies, survey studies and non-experimental research (Petticrew & Roberts, 2003)	Any studies which are not qualitative, survey studies, or non-experimental evaluation including case-control studies, cohort studies, randomised control trials or quasi-experimental studies	The current review seeks to understand the existing work of school psychologists and the typology of evidence outlined by Petticrew and Roberts (2003) suggests that the included research methodologies are the most appropriate for the review question.

Participants	Data has been collected from teachers in a mainstream setting and/or school/educational psychologists.	Data has not been collected from teachers in a mainstream setting or school/educational psychologists.	Teachers and school psychologists are the focus of the review question.
Outcome	The study aims to understand the existing work of the school psychologist and their interactions with teaching staff in mainstream schools	The study does not seek to understand the existing work of the school psychologist or their interactions with teaching staff in mainstream schools i.e., pilot studies and action research are excluded.	The review question focuses on the existing work of the school psychologists and their interactions with teachers.

Figure 3

PRISMA Chart Depicting Search Strategy



2.8. Critical Analysis Framework

The eighteen studies were evaluated using the Weight of Evidence framework (Gough, 2007). The framework consists of three sections; Weight of Evidence (WoE) A, B and C. WoE A assesses the quality of design and methodology, by adapting published coding protocol for qualitative designs (Letts et al., 2007) and quality criteria checklists for questionnaire or survey designs (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2014). The criteria and rationale for WoE A are illustrated in Appendix C, examples of completed coding protocol and checklists can be found in Appendix D and E, and results for WoE A can be found in Table 4. WoE B is used to evaluate the methodological relevance of each study in relation to the review question. The criteria and rationale for WoE B can be found in Appendix F and the results are illustrated in Table 4. Finally, WoE C analyses the relevance of the evidence presented in each study, for the purpose of the review question. Appendix G outlines the criteria and rationale for WoE C and results can be found in Table 4. WoE D and was calculated by averaging scores across WoE A, B and C and provides an overall summary of the results (see Table 3) (Gough, 2007). WoE E rating of “High” refers to studies with a score of 2.4 or above, “Medium” refers to studies which received scores between 1.7 and 2.3, and “Low” refers to studies which received scores of 1.6 or below (Gough, 2007).

Table 4

Overview of WoE Ratings

Study	WoE A Methodological Quality	WoE B Methodological Relevance	WoE C Topic Relevance	WoE D Overall Relevance
Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki (2014)	High 3	Medium 2	Medium 2	Medium 2.3
Ashton & Roberts (2006)	Medium 2	High 3	High 3	High 2.67
Bell & McKenzie (2013)	Medium 2	Medium 2	Medium 2	Medium 2
Beltman, Mansfield, & Harris (2016)	High 3	High 3	Medium 2	High 2.67
Boyle & MacKay (2007)	Medium 2	Medium 2	Medium 2	Medium 2.3
Farrell, Jimerson, Kalambouka, & Benoit (2005)	Low 1	Medium 2	Medium 2	Low 1.67

Gilman & Gabriel (2004)	High 3	Medium 2	Medium 2	Medium 2.3
Gilman & Medway (2007)	Medium 2	Medium 2	Medium 2	Medium 2
Jimerson, Annan, Skokut, & Renshaw (2009)	Low 1	Medium 2	Medium 2	Low 1.67
Kavenská, Smekalová, & Šmahaj (2013)	Low 1	Medium 2	Medium 2	Low 1.67
Kjær & Dannesboe (2019)	Medium 2	High 3	High 3	High 2.67
Mägi & Kikas (2009)	Medium 2	Medium 2	Medium 2	Medium 2
Marrs & Little (2014)	Medium 2	High 3	Medium 2	Medium 2.3
Nkoma & Hay (2017)	High 3	High 3	Medium 2	High 2.67

O'Farrell & Kinsella (2018)	Medium 2	High 3	High 3	High 2.67
Panteri et al.,(2021)	High 3	Medium 2	High 3	High 2.67
Rothì, Leavey, & Best (2008)	High 3	High 3	Medium 2	High 2.67
Watkins, Crosby, & Pearson (2001)	Medium 2	Medium 2	Medium 2	Medium 2

2.9. Participants

In order to receive a “High” score for WoE C studies are obliged to meet two requirements, one of which is that both psychologists and school staff are included. Eleven of the articles included in the review did not meet this criterion. Four sought only psychologist participants (Jimerson et al., 2009; Kavenská et al., 2013; Marrs & Little, 2014; Nkoma & Hay, 2018), two included solely teacher participants (Farrell et al., 2005; Gilman & Medway, 2007), two collected data from principals alone (Boyle & MacKay, 2007; Mägi & Kikas, 2009) and three analysed findings from teachers and principals (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014; Rothì et al., 2008; Watkins et al., 2001). The remaining seven studies met this criterion as they compared the views and opinions of both stakeholders. Two of these studies collected data from teachers, principals, and psychologists (Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Kjær & Dannesboe, 2019) and four included teacher and psychologist participants (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Bell & McKenzie, 2013; Beltman et al., 2016; Panteri et al., 2021), whereas the final study compared psychologist, teacher and parent views (O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018). Despite achieving this criterion three studies were not awarded a “High” score, as they did not meet the second requirement for WoE C, and this will be discussed further in Section 2.10.2. (Bell & McKenzie, 2013; Beltman et al., 2016; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004).

In order to receive a “Medium” score on WoE C studies were required to seek maximum variation in the participant group, for example, some studies categorised and compared teacher participants by their role as either mainstream or special education teachers (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014; Gilman & Medway, 2007; Rothì et al., 2008; Watkins et al., 2001). Others differentiated between school levels (Boyle & MacKay, 2007; Gilman & Medway, 2007; Kavenská et al., 2013; Mägi & Kikas, 2009; Rothì et al., 2008), the highest degree level of the participant (Jimerson et al., 2009; Nkoma & Hay, 2018), the number of years' experience (Marrs & Little, 2014) or their country of residence (Farrell et al., 2005). A detailed synopsis of the setting, recruitment process and the roles of the participants in each of the eight studies is provided in Appendix A.

2.10. Design

2.10.1. Study Designs. Eighteen studies with a quantitative or qualitative design were reviewed. The studies were all exploratory or descriptive in nature given the review question. Eleven were survey studies, and the remaining seven employed qualitative designs which utilised a variety of techniques including interviews, observations, field work as well as an open-ended questionnaire. In line with Petticrew and Roberts (2003) typologies of evidence

for understanding process delivery, all seven qualitative studies were awarded a “High” score for WoE B, and the remaining eleven survey studies were awarded a “Medium” weighting. See Appendix A for a summary of design, measures, and analysis.

2.10.2. Aims. As part of the WoE C criteria the study must seek to understand the existing work of the school psychologist or their interactions with teachers as its main objective. Four studies which evaluated the relationship between both stakeholders as well as daily practice, were deemed to have satisfied this requirement and thus, received a “High” rating (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Kjær & Dannesboe, 2019; O’Farrell & Kinsella, 2018; Panteri et al., 2021). Despite meeting this criterion three studies were awarded only a “Medium” rating as they did not satisfy the second requirement for Woe C as previously discussed in the Section 2.9. (Jimerson et al., 2009; Kavenská et al., 2013; Marrs & Little, 2014). Eleven other studies were also awarded a “Medium” score as evaluation of the professional duties or the working relationship was seen to be a secondary aim of the study (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014; Bell & McKenzie, 2013; Beltman et al., 2016; Boyle & MacKay, 2007; Farrell et al., 2005; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Gilman & Medway, 2007; Mägi & Kikas, 2009; Nkoma & Hay, 2018; Rothì et al., 2008; Watkins et al., 2001). For instance, Farrell et al (2005) compared teachers satisfaction with psychological services in different countries, and in doing so provided information as to the role of the psychologist as a secondary aim of this study. None of the included articles received a “Low” WoE C rating, as all were deemed to have sought to understand the existing work of the psychologist as a primary or secondary aim.

2.10.3. Sampling and recruitment procedures. All of the included survey studies reported using non-probability sampling methods, therefore results cannot be generalised beyond these participants (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Two of these studies employed secondary analysis of larger data sets (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014; Gilman & Medway, 2007). This technique can often lead to issues wherein, the researcher may not be aware of the nuances of the original data set and thus, may misinterpret the findings (Cheng & Phillips, 2014). However, this limitation does not affect the WoE A rating of these particular studies, as the primary researcher in both studies was also the primary researcher involved in the original data collection process. Additionally, two studies used convenience sampling, wherein, the researcher distributed surveys to teachers, with whom they had previously had contact (Farrell et al., 2005; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004). One survey study also employed a “snowball” sampling method, wherein participants were invited to forward the survey on to colleagues in other schools who may also have been interested in participating (Panteri et al., 2021). The remaining

studies employed a voluntary response sampling method, by sending surveys, or invitations, directly to participants who were at liberty to partake (Bell & McKenzie, 2013; Boyle & MacKay, 2007; Jimerson et al., 2009; Kavenská et al., 2013; Mägi & Kikas, 2009; Watkins et al., 2001).

In accordance with the Letts et al (2007) coding protocol for qualitative studies, Ashton and Roberts (2006) received a “Medium” WoE A rating. Whilst the study does give a coherent justification for their purposive selection of mainstream primary school teachers, it does not provide a “thick description” of the setting or participants, in order to critically assess the transferability of this study (Dawson, 2009). Similarly, Marrs and Little (2014), Kjær & Dannesboe (2019) and O’Farrell and Kinsella (2018) do not offer adequate detail on sampling procedures or participant information and this had implications for WoE A ratings of all three studies. The remaining three qualitative studies (Beltman et al., 2016; Nkoma & Hay, 2018; Rothì et al., 2008) received a “High” WoE A rating. These articles justified their purposive sampling and described the participants in sufficient detail, in line with the Letts et al (2007) protocol. See Appendix A for more details of sampling methods used in each study.

2.11. Data Collection and Analysis

2.11.1. Measures. Eight of the eleven survey studies applied researcher-designed measures with the remaining three studies utilising established surveys from previous research. In order to receive a “High” rating on WoE A studies using established questionnaires are required to report a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.7 or higher for all measures and this criterion was not met by any of the three articles (Bell & McKenzie, 2013; Jimerson et al., 2009; Kavenská et al., 2013). The studies which used researcher-designed measures and received a “High” scores for WoE A, used pilot testing to establish face validity for the surveys (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Gilman & Medway, 2007; Panteri et al., 2021). Furthermore, these papers also outlined the questions used in the survey, enabling the researcher to assess the questions for bias, in line with WoE A criteria (NICE Guidelines, 2014). The remaining survey studies (Boyle & MacKay, 2007; Farrell et al., 2005; Mägi & Kikas, 2009; Watkins et al., 2001) did not report any efforts to establish face validity, and this had implications for the WoE A ratings. In fact, Watkins et al (2001) highlighted that the questionnaire used in this study was devised as part of a separate programme evaluation. Moreover, the authors have not published the questions used in this survey and thus, it is not possible to determine the construct validity of the measure in question (Bolarinwa, 2015). Additionally, Farrell et al (2005) noted that surveys were translated where necessary by a

representative from each country, before being distributed to participants. However, there are no reported details of these translations, which raises concerns over the criterion validity of the measure (McKee, 1992).

The first qualitative study which was examined, utilised an open questionnaire to elicit the views of teacher participants (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). The authors published the specific questions used in the questionnaire, and also justified the choice of data collection, as a time-efficient way to gather the authentic views of their participants. However, this study received a “Medium” WoE A rating, as the authors did not identify their own theoretical perspectives and thus, this method of data collection could not be evaluated in terms of congruence with the philosophical underpinnings of the research (Letts et al., 2007). Similarly, Beltman et al (2016), O’Farrell and Kinsella (2018) and Rothí et. al. (2008) also failed to explicitly state their own paradigmatic stance, and hence, their use of semi-structured interviews cannot be justified. Despite this, both Beltman et al (2016) and Rothí et. al. (2008) received a “High” rating as they satisfied other WoE A criteria. For instance, Rothi et al (2008) established confirmability through the use of an external researcher employed for the sole purpose of data collection, whereas Beltman et al (2016) used analyst and data triangulation to ensure trustworthiness. The remaining two qualitative studies included for review justified their choice of design in relation to the theoretical stance outlined in the paper (Kjær & Dannesboe, 2019; Nkoma & Hay, 2018). However, of these papers only Nkoma and Hay (2018) was awarded a “High” rating for Woe A as the authors directly addressed the influence of their own assumptions and bias upon data collection, by explicitly “bracketing” off their own experiences from those of the study participants.

2.11.2. Analysis. Nine out of eleven survey studies applied descriptive analysis to present means and standard deviations of the data gathered. Additionally, nine studies conducted parametric tests of analysis, with two studies also conducting non-parametric tests (Gilman & Medway, 2007; Watkins et al., 2001). Notably, Jimerson et al (2009) and Kavenská et al (2013) did not provide any information as to how data were analysed and thus, both received a “Low” rating. According to the NICE critical appraisal for survey studies (2014) any potential response bias should be explicitly discussed, however, this was not evident in any of the reviewed studies, and hence, had implications for WoE A ratings across the board.

Both the Nkoma and Hay (2018) and Rothi et al (2008) received a “High” WoE A rating, using the Letts et al (2007) qualitative coding protocol. Data for both studies was analysed using phenomenological analysis and then grouped into themes, with direct quotes

used to support any conclusions that were drawn. Rothi et al (2008) also utilised analyst triangulation and an external audit of findings to ensure credibility and dependability of findings. Similarly, Nkoma and Hay (2018) established credibility and confirmability through the use of document and site triangulation as well as a discussion of preliminary analyses with participants. Beltman et al (2016) also received a “High” WoE A rating. The authors employed a codes-to-theory model of analysis and used member-checking as well as data and analyst triangulation to ensure trustworthiness. The remaining four studies utilised content analysis (Ashton & Roberts, 2006), consensual qualitative research (Marrs & Little, 2014) and thematic coding (Kjær & Dannesboe, 2019; O’Farrell & Kinsella, 2018). Whilst, O’Farrell and Kinsella (2018) and Marrs and Little (2014) report using analyst triangulation to ensure credibility, there is no evidence of any effort to establish confirmability, dependability, or transferability in any of these studies and hence, all four received a “Medium” rating for WoE A.

2.12. Synthesis of Findings

This review sought to define the existing work of school psychologists, as well as their interactions with teaching staff in mainstream schools. Eighteen studies, which included eleven quantitative survey studies and seven qualitative studies, were weighted, based on methodological quality and relevance to the question with seven of these receiving a “High” overall WoE rating. Thematic synthesis of the findings and discussion sections of the reviewed studies enabled the systematic organisation and integration of data (Thomas & Harden, 2008). This process resulted in the identification of two broad themes namely The Work of The School Psychologist and Working Together.

2.12.1. The Work of the School Psychologist.

2.12.1.1. Systemic versus Individual Level Work. According to both Bell and McKenzie (2013) and O’Farrell and Kinsella (2018), the school psychologist is making a slow but steady progression away from traditional child-centred work to more systemic school-level work. However, the majority of the studies included in this review found that, in practice, individual work was perceived to be the primary role undertaken by the psychologist (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014; Gilman & Medway, 2007; Kavenská et al., 2013; Panteri et al., 2021; Rothi et al., 2008; Watkins et al., 2001). For instance, Beltman et al (2016) noted that although the psychologists reported indirectly supporting teachers through the provision of information and school level programmes, the teachers in this study understood their primary responsibility to be direct work with individual students. In fact, individual assessment was described by

some teachers as the only unique contribution of the psychologist, with all other roles fulfilled by other agencies or staff (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Gilman & Medway, 2007). Whilst this assertion was disputed by the psychologist participants in the Ashton and Roberts (2006) study, who viewed their work in an interactionist and organisational capacity, others considered assessment to be the central tenant of their work. For instance, the Zimbabwean psychologists in the Nkoma and Hay (2018) study felt that assessment was vital for the screening, identification and placement of students with additional needs in the least restrictive educational environment. Moreover, some psychologists in the Marris and Little study (2014) felt that their position was defined by assessment and hence, expressed concern about the potential lack of role clarity that may arise within a Response to Intervention model.

Several studies noted that this continued prioritisation of assessment may have led school staff to underestimate the potential contribution of the psychologist at the systems level (Bell & McKenzie, 2013; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Gilman & Medway, 2007; Marris & Little, 2014). For instance, when asked to rate the importance of the activities carried out by the psychologist, the teachers in the Watkins et al. (2001) study rated child-centred activities such as assessment, as more important than school-level work, such as staff development. Interestingly, principals were found to be even less likely than teachers to value the school-level work of the psychologist (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014). This attitude was also reflected in the Mägi and Kikas (2009) paper, which found that older principals or those who had a full-time psychologist assigned to their school were less inclined to endorse systemic activities. Thus, the authors suggested that psychologists should inform schools as to the full range of services that they can offer. In fact, it was found that once fully informed, schools tended to value systemic work and were more inclined to request additional support from the psychologist at the individual, group and systems levels (Bell & McKenzie, 2013; Boyle & MacKay, 2007; Farrell et al., 2005; Mägi & Kikas, 2009; O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018). For instance, the results of the Boyle and MacKay (2007) study suggested that psychologist involvement in the development of school policies positively predicted the perceived value of psychological services for student support amongst principals. However, it must also be noted that higher student to psychologist ratios were found to be associated with increased engagement in assessment related activities and decreased engagement in school level work (Bell & McKenzie, 2013). Hence, even if school staff were more informed and open to psychologist involvement at the systemic level, understaffing appeared to represent a significant barrier to the practical implementation of this work, as was reported by Nkoma and Hay (2018).

2.12.1.2. Expectation and Practice. The reviewed literature referenced a divergence between perceptions of the desired and actual roles of the psychologist (Farrell et al., 2005; Panteri et al., 2021; Watkins et al., 2001). Farrell et al (2005), found that, although teachers were generally satisfied with the school psychology services in their countries, there was a significant difference between their perceptions of what psychologists did, and the tasks that they would prefer them to undertake. For instance, whilst assessment was certainly valued by the majority of teacher participants (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014; Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Watkins et al., 2001), there were also calls for an increased focus on early intervention (Rothì et al., 2008), teacher consultation, and parent training (Farrell et al., 2005; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Panteri et al., 2021; Rothì et al., 2008). Moreover, although teachers reported valuing the consultation in the O'Farrell and Kinsella study (2018), they also outlined their expectations of the psychologist as someone who would provide them with resources, and thus were noted to have a limited understanding of the changes associated with the consultative model of service delivery. This expectation was also challenging for the psychologists, who admitted to assuming that teachers and principals understood the process and outcomes of consultation.

The Rothì et al. (2008) study, which received a “Medium” overall WoE rating, noted that although teachers valued the contribution of the psychologist, they also felt that their work was compromised by underfunding. A lack of resources had reportedly resulted in prolonged waiting lists, a high turnover of psychologists and a “hands-off” approach, which was resented by teachers. Similarly, educators from the Watkins et al (2001) study and psychologists from the Jimerson et al (2009) study both expressed their frustration that underfunding led to a discrepancy between the psychology services that were provided, and the services that were required. Indeed, teachers in the Rothì et al (2008) study likened the psychologist to a firefighter and this sentiment was also shared by the psychologists in the Nkoma and Hay (2018) study, who felt that they could react only to emergency cases, instead of providing much-needed preventative services.

2.12.2. Working Together.

2.12.2.1. Consultative Relationship. The Kjær and Dannesboe (2019) study which received a “High” overall WoE rating, recorded consultations between school staff and psychologists. The authors noted that school staff generally had expectations of the psychologist as the expert who would provide advice and guidance on specific issues. Equally, other studies also noted that the provision of advice was perceived by teachers to be one of the

key activities undertaken by the psychologist (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Beltman et al., 2016; Farrell et al., 2005; O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018; Rothì et al., 2008). However, observations and field notes of the joint work between both stakeholders in the Kjær and Dannesboe (2019) study, revealed that psychologists viewed themselves as reflexive coaches. Similarly, O'Farrell and Kinsella (2018) found that whilst psychologists acknowledged that they often provided advice, they rejected the onus of expertise and instead defined their role as building the capacity of teachers during consultation. This view was also shared by psychologists in Ashton and Roberts (2006) who felt that their duty was to support school staff to develop their own solutions through introspection and discussion.

Kjær and Dannesboe (2019) maintained that in determining this reflexive framework for consultation, the psychologist assumed a greater degree of power than their teacher counterpart. The authors contended that the psychologist exerted what Foucault (2019) refers to as a “pastoral” power over the consultee, wherein the teacher subjected themselves to a critical evaluation of their professional practices, in the hopes of receiving absolution and enlightenment (Kjær & Dannesboe, 2019). Equally, whilst psychologists in the O'Farrell and Kinsella (2018) study noted the importance of ensuring that teachers felt ownership over any proposed strategies, one teacher described feeling empowered to carry out plans only when they had received prior approval from the psychologist. Moreover, whilst power was not explicitly addressed in the Rothi et al (2008) study, teachers did reflect on their experiences of having their ideas and contributions dismissed by psychologists during consultation. Hence, the results of the review appear to suggest that psychologists and teachers hold very different perceptions of their consultative relationship.

2.12.2.2. Varied Staff Perceptions and Experiences. Another theme which was common to several studies in the current review was the variation in perceptions and experiences of the psychologist, by the role of the participant. As previously discussed, Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki (2014) found that principals were more traditional in their opinions and tended to value assessment over school-level work, in direct contrast to their teacher colleagues. This is noteworthy, especially when compared with the results of the Gilman and Gabriel study (2004), which found that principals reported greater knowledge of, and satisfaction with, psychology services, than teachers. Furthermore, principals also reported collaborating with the psychologist, more often than mainstream class teachers (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014). Thus, it could be argued that principals were more satisfied and willing to engage with the school psychologist as they seemed to dedicate most of their time to assessment; an activity

which was highly valued by this cohort (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004).

Notably, disagreement was found even between teachers in different roles, as three of the reviewed studies found that special education and mainstream teachers held conflicting views about the importance, or usefulness, of some psychological services (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014; Gilman & Medway, 2007; Watkins et al., 2001). In order to explain these findings, Gilman and Medway (2007) drew on the “contact hypothesis” in which individuals come to understand and recognise the value of dissimilar others with increased interaction (Allport, 1954). Thus, indicating that a consistent working relationship with the psychologist, such as that experienced by the special education teacher (SET), will lead to a better understanding and appreciation of the work that is carried out by them. In fact, the authors found that special education teachers were significantly more satisfied with the services and were also more likely to request support and comply with recommendations that were provided by the psychologist (Gilman & Medway, 2007). On the contrary, it must be noted that the exact opposite was found in the Ahtola and Kiiski-Mäki (2014) study, wherein, the SET rated all functions of the psychologist as less important than the mainstream class teacher, despite working with the psychologist more often. However, the study also found that, the more other school professionals, such as the principal or special class teacher, collaborated with the psychologist, the more important that professional considered the work of the school psychologist. Hence, these findings suggest that, whilst the “contact hypothesis” (Allport, 1954) seems to apply to these staff members in general, it did not appear to have a positive impact upon the perceptions of the special education teachers in this study.

Additionally, Gilman and Gabriel (2004) noted that more experienced teachers reported greater knowledge of psychology services, but were not any more satisfied with these services, when compared with their less experienced counterparts. This provides a noteworthy contradiction to the results of the Ahtola and Kiiski-Mäki (2014) study, wherein, older staff members were more likely to have worked with the psychologist and also rated assessment, consultation and school-level work as more important. Thus, although older and more experienced teachers appear to have more knowledge of, and experience with, the psychologist, it remains unclear whether Allport’s (1954) “contact hypothesis” carries weight for this cohort. Nevertheless, the results of this review appear to suggest that the experience and role of school staff seem to influence their opinion of the psychologist.

2.13. Discussion

2.13.1. Summary. The reviewed literature suggests that although psychologists aim to work in a systemic and preventative capacity, underfunding and a shortage of staff has generally served to undermine these aspirations, as assessment is still seen to be their main responsibility. Furthermore, the working relationship between psychologists and teaching staff appears to be fraught with contradictions. Whilst teachers value their expert insights and approval, the psychologists maintain that they employ collaborative discussion and reflection to build capacity within schools. Moreover, the perceived value of psychological services was noted to vary widely between teaching staff depending on their role and level of experience.

2.13.2. Findings in relation to the Irish Context.

2.13.2.1. The Work of the School Psychologist. The reviewed studies revealed that school staff were increasingly cognisant and appreciative of the range of services offered by their psychologist, however, it was noted that assessment was still seen as the priority to ensure students received support and resources. This is notable considering that Irish studies have revealed similar beliefs amongst teachers and principals, who viewed the psychologist as a gatekeeper of resources under DES Circular 02/2005 (Shevlin et al., 2013; Travers et al, 2010). Additionally, a more recent study, conducted only one year after the introduction of the DES Circular 0013/2017 and the SETAM (2017) noted that primary school teachers perceived psychoeducational assessment to be the key function of the NEPS psychologist and also considered other tasks such as behavioural consultation to be outside of their remit (Anglim et al., 2018). Indeed, Irish literature echoes the recommendations of this review as it has been suggested that teachers need more information as to the extent of the school psychologists' potential duties in order to understand, appreciate and avail of these services (Anglim et al., 2018; Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016). Consistent with the findings of this review, Irish research which predates the SETAM (2017) suggested that the capacity of the NEPS school psychology service was impaired by underfunding and prioritisation of assessment (Rose et al., 2015). Indeed, in some cases the NEPS was seen as an obstacle to the inclusion of children with SEN, as delayed assessments and limited therapeutic services prevented schools from effecting early identification and intervention (Travers et al, 2010; Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016; Rose et al., 2015). Thus, teachers and principals advocated for the recruitment of additional NEPS psychologists to ensure that the service acted as a facilitator, rather than a barrier, to inclusive

practices through the increased provision of assessment, consultation and intervention (Shevlin, Winter & O'Flynn, 2013; Rose et al., 2015).

2.13.2.2. Working Together. The reviewed articles also suggested that teachers perceive the psychologist to be a specialist advisor to whom they could look for guidance and solutions. In accordance with these findings, Irish research indicates that teachers tended to value the “expert opinion” of the NEPS psychologist during consultation (Nugent et al., 2014). Similar to the results of the review, this perception was refuted by the psychologists, who saw themselves as equal collaborators in the consultative process. The current review also suggests that opinions may vary based on the job description or accumulated experience of the staff member, and this is also reflected in an Irish context. In line with the results of the Gilman and Medway (2007) study, Nugent et al. (2014) found that the SET rated consultation as more beneficial than both mainstream teachers and principals. Traditionally in Ireland, the SET was seen as the specialist in SEN and would typically be more involved with the psychologist than their mainstream colleagues (O’Gorman & Drudy, 2010). Thus, Nugent et al’s (2014) findings also lend weight to the argument that, the more informed a teacher is before working with a psychologist, the more valuable they may find the process.

2.14. Limitations of the review.

The review sought to understand the existing work of the psychologist and in doing so excluded pilot studies, action research and experimental studies. Whilst these studies did not fit the review question, they may have provided additional insights into the work of NEPS psychologists in Ireland and school psychologists abroad and thus, their exclusion represents a limitation.

2.15. Rationale for the Current Research

This review sought to understand the existing work of the school psychologist as well as their interactions with mainstream school teachers. The literature in this area was dominated by attempts to define stakeholders understanding of psychological services and rank these services in terms of their perceived value to the school community. Notably, data on how psychologists work with teaching staff was limited to evaluations of consultation, wherein the psychologist was contentiously labelled as the expert. These findings appear to contradict the consultative approach espoused by the NEPS which maintains that teachers and psychologists are equal collaborators in the problem-solving process (Lambert et al., 2004; NEPS, 2019b). Outside of this, the working relationship between the NEPS psychologist and teaching staff

was largely overlooked.

This dearth of research is startling given the prevailing assumption in Irish schools that greater access to psychological services will facilitate the creation of more inclusive learning environments (Shevlin et al., 2009; Banks et al., 2015; Swan, 2014). In fact, increased contact in the form of training and consultation has been strongly recommended, in order to equip teachers with an understanding of the psychological underpinnings of SEN, and hence, enable them to meet the academic, social and emotional needs in their classrooms where possible (Hyland et al., 2014; Patrick et al., 2011). However, despite these calls for an expansion of NEPS services, Irish teachers were more likely to cite the involvement of the NEPS psychologist, prior to the introduction of DES Circular 0013/2017 (DES, 2017) as a barrier rather than a facilitator for inclusion (Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016). As previously discussed, this finding may be due to a lack of teacher awareness of the range of services available to schools or an overemphasis on assessment under previous legislation (Anderson et al., 2007; Farrell, 2004; Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016; Rose et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the contrast between what the literature recognises as the potential of the psychologist to be a key facilitator for inclusive education and teachers' perceptions of their actual contribution is stark. Therefore, the current study seeks to understand if the introduction of DES Circular 0013/2017 and the SETAM (DES, 2017) has changed the way in which NEPS psychologists and teachers work together to support inclusion in mainstream schools.

2.16. Overarching Research Question

What are the lived experiences of NEPS psychologists and teaching staff of their joint work to facilitate inclusion in mainstream Irish primary schools between 2015-2020?

3.0. The Empirical Paper

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed outline of the current study. First, the four research questions, which were influenced by the third generation of Cultural Historical Activity Theory, are outlined (CHAT; Engeström, 1999; 2001). A comprehensive description of this framework and how it relates to the current research is then presented. This chapter also provides an overview of the sequential explanatory design and constructivist paradigm that were utilised as well as information about the included participants and data collection methods employed. The procedures for data analysis, which entailed the generation of descriptive statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) as well as the application of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021b) using the NVivo 12 Software programme, is then described. Findings for the current study are presented in relation to each of the research questions. The discussion also appraises the key findings for each research question in relation to existing literature and a brief outline of implications for practice, policy and research conclude the chapter.

3.2. Research Questions

This study is guided by the third generation of the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 1999; 2001) and thus, the research questions have been derived from this framework (see Table 5).

Table 5

Research Questions (RQ)

Number	Research Question
1	How does joint work between NEPS psychologists and teaching staff support inclusion?
2	What are the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder for joint work?
3	How are structures, resources, and supports used to facilitate successful joint work?
4	What expectations or rules influence the joint work of NEPS psychologists and school staff?

More information and visuals, which depict the influence of CHAT on the development of the research questions, can be found in Appendix H. A more detailed description of the CHAT framework can be found in the Section 3.3.1.

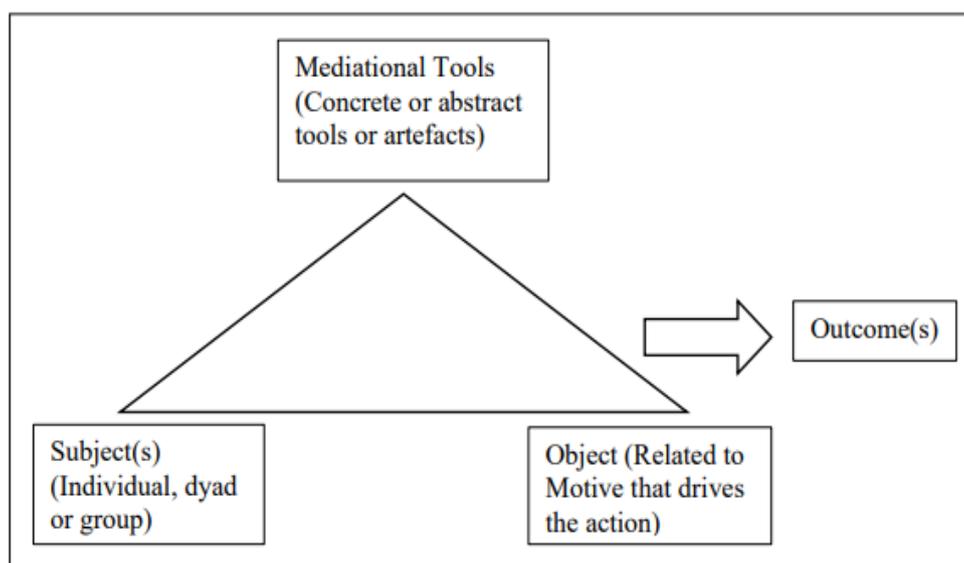
3.3. Methodology

3.3.1. Theoretical Framework: Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT).

3.3.1.1. First Generation. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) has become an increasingly popular lens through which to explore the shared experiences and learning of social systems, particularly those within an educational context (Davies et al., 2008; Roth, 2004). CHAT has provided a framework to analyse the practice of NEPS psychologists (Leadbetter, 2004; Leadbetter et al., 2005) and also, to explore their partnership with teachers when undertaking action research (Davies et al., 2008). Originally, CHAT was cultivated by Vygotsky (1987), who used the framework to emphasise the significance of social mediation and cultural tools in the acquisition of learning (see Figure 4). This first generation theory suggested that the learning process consisted of three main components or nodes, namely: The *Subject* or participants who are consciously working towards achieving a goal, the *Tools* including tangible and intangible processes or resources, and the *Object* or goals that are being pursued (Leadbetter, 2008).

Figure 4

First Generation Activity Theory Model (Daniels, 2016, p. 86)



3.3.1.2. Second Generation. The framework was then expanded by Leont'v (1978) and subsequently by Engeström (1987) to include three additional nodes; *Community* or other key actors within the system, *Rules* or the explicit and inexplicit practices within the system, and *Division of Labour* or the distribution of roles and responsibilities amongst the subjects (Leadbetter, 2008). These activities may also result in other desirable *Outcomes*. This second generation of CHAT provides a template to consider how the goal-oriented interactions of participants influence and are influenced by the other components of the system (Davies et al., 2008). Each of these components are visually depicted in relation to the current research in Figure 5.

3.3.1.3. Third Generation. Engeström (2001) further developed the CHAT framework to explore how two distinct activity systems might interact, by drawing attention to the dialogue and the multiple perspectives that may characterise these activities. Additionally, the third generation notes how contradictions or tensions can arise between interacting activity systems and also between the different nodes of a single activity system (Kuutti, 1996). For the current research, the experiences of the psychologist and school staff will be compared to explore any potential contradictions at the inter- and intra-systems levels (see Figure 5). Engeström (1999) proposes the consideration of five key principles when studying activity systems as outlined in Table 6.

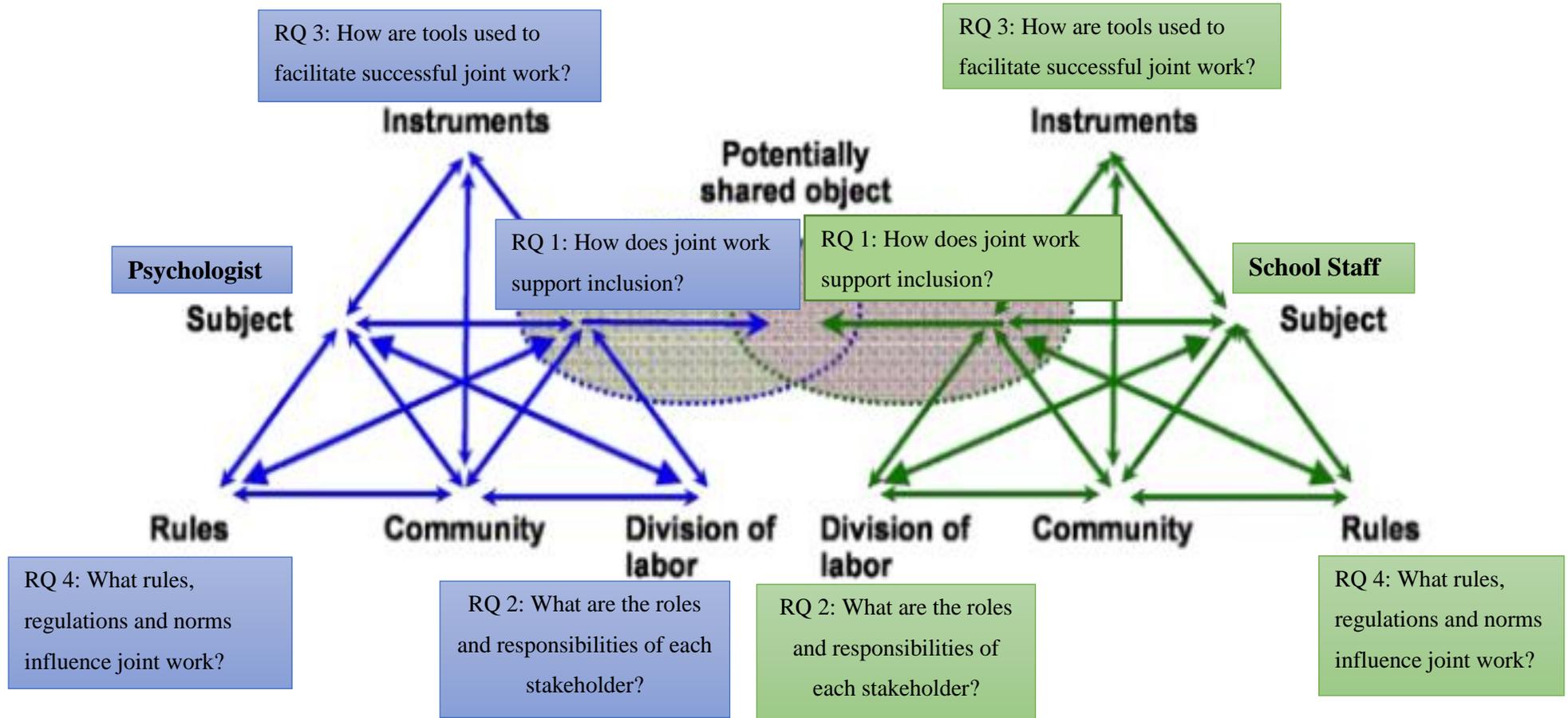
Table 6

Engelström's (1999) Five Key Principles for Studying Activity Systems

Number	Principle
1.	The main unit of analysis is the object-orientated activity system which is mediated by tools, and which can be viewed in the wider context of interaction with other activity systems. This study will explore the joint work between teachers and NEPS psychologists, using tools such as the Four-stage Problem Solving Framework and the Continuum of Support to achieve the object of inclusion. These endeavors are conducted within the context of two interacting activity systems of both the school itself and also the NEPS service (NEPS).
2.	Activity systems are generally composed of many perspectives and Engeström referred to this as multi-voicedness. In this study, only the experiences of the subjects are being directly explored (class and special education teachers, principals, and NEPS psychologists). However, there are many other voices which may influence the system, such as parents, pupils, and SNAs
3.	The historical evolution of the activity system under investigation, as well as those with which it interacts, must be considered. Therefore, joint work between staff and NEPS psychologists should be viewed within its historical context, for example, by considering the development of the NEPS psychologist's role over time.
4.	Engeström also contended that contradictions between and within systems are sources of change and development. For instance, when a new element enters the system, it may undermine existing practices and consequently, changes must be made to the everyday operations of the activity system. An example, in the present study, may be the introduction of DES Circular 0013/2017 and the SETAM (DES, 2017).
5.	These contradictions may provoke a transformation in practice which facilitates new learning and possibilities. Engeström refers to this as "expansive" learning, wherein the object or motive of the activity system may be completely reconceptualised as a result of this contradiction.

Figure 5

Comparing Psychologist and Staff Views Using Engeström's (2001) Third Generation Model



3.3.2. Research design and paradigm. The research was conducted within a constructivist paradigm which contends, ontologically, that reality is socially constructed, with the possibility of multiple conflicting interpretations of the same phenomenon (Mertens, 2014, p 18). Therefore, the study sought to gain the views of the primary stakeholders, in order to present a comprehensive and multi-perspectival overview of their relationship. It also sought to outline the existing strengths within the working relationship and to identify any possible facilitators or barriers that may impact upon the process.

In terms of design, the research adopted a mixed methods sequential explanatory design, wherein the focus was predominantly qualitative. Two cross-sectional surveys were used to gather data from mainstream primary school teaching staff and NEPS psychologists. These data were analysed, and the information gathered was used to inform the qualitative data collection phase. Qualitative data were collected from a smaller subsample of participants using semi-structured interviews.

3.3.3. Ethical considerations. Ethical approval was obtained from Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee (MIREC) in December 2020 (see Appendix I) and the NEPS Research Advisory Committee (NRAC) in February 2021, prior to data collection. The research also adhered to the Code of Professional Ethics (Psychological Society of Ireland, 2010) and the Data Protection Act (2018).

3.3.4. Participants. The population for the study included mainstream primary school principals, class teachers, special education teachers (SET) and NEPS psychologists. A total of two hundred and seventy-seven teaching staff and fifty-five psychologists responded to the online surveys. More information about survey respondents is presented in Appendix J. A subsample of eleven participants also took part in semi-structured interviews. The interview participants included four psychologists, one class teacher, two teaching principals, two administrative principals, and two SETs. Demographic information for each of the interview participants is presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Demographic Information for Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Current Role	Gender	Highest Level of Qualification	Years' of Experience as a teacher/psychologist	School Type (School Staff only)
SET1	SET & Deputy Principal	Male	Master's Degree	13 years	Rural non-DEIS
SET2	Shared SET	Female	Master's Degree	5 years	Two Rural non-DEIS schools
CT1	Mainstream class teacher	Female	Postgraduate Degree	21 years	Urban DEIS
TP1	Teaching Principal	Male	Bachelor of Education	25 years	Rural non-DEIS
TP2	Teaching Principal	Female	Bachelor of Education	39 years	Rural Non-DEIS
AP1	Administrative Principal	Male	Bachelor of Education	20 years	Urban non-DEIS Gaelscoil
AP2	Administrative Principal	Female	Bachelor of Education	40 years	Urban DEIS junior school
NP1	Senior NEPS psychologist	Male	Professional Doctorate	14 years	N/A
NP2	NEPS psychologist	Female	Master's Degree	10 years	N/A
NP3	NEPS psychologist	Female	Master's Degree	5 years	N/A
NP4	NEPS psychologist	Female	Professional Doctorate	6 years	N/A

3.4. Data Collection Methods.

3.4.1. Survey Design. The initial phase of data collection involved the distribution of two surveys. These anonymous online surveys were designed on the Qualtrics website and a link to the survey was then included in an email to participants. In order to maintain a constructivist stance for this initial phase of data collection, the online surveys employed a mixture of categorical and open-ended questions. These questions were developed by the researcher and were influenced by the CHAT theoretical framework (Engeström, 2001). An adapted version of the Eight-Step Model of Activity-Oriented Design Methods (Mwanza, 2002) was used to direct the creation of the questions and to ensure that they were in keeping with the framework. The comparison of the survey questions with the Eight Step Model are visible in Appendix H.

3.4.2. Survey Pilot. A pilot of both surveys was conducted in February 2021, with a total of eleven volunteers to ensure that additional insights could be sought and any issues could be addressed before more widespread distribution (Ruel, Wagner, & Gillespie, 2015). Pilot participants included three psychologists, three class teachers, two SETs, two deputy principals and one principal. Some adaptations were made to the survey based on feedback, for example, definitions of both joint work and inclusion were provided to participants before they began the survey, as participants reported forgetting the definitions that they had previously read on the information sheets. Equally, some suggestions raised by pilot participants were not adopted for the research. For example, it was proposed that the study could explore the general barriers to inclusion that exist for students with special educational needs. This suggestion was not incorporated into the research as the study is focusing primarily on the impact of joint work on inclusion. After all appropriate adaptations had been made, a stepped approach to survey distribution, was used and this is outlined in more detail in the Section 3.4.3.

3.4.3. Survey Recruitment and Data Collection. For the quantitative data collection, a non-probability self-selection sampling method was used, whereby, participants chose to complete an online survey, which was distributed via the NEPS for psychologists, or emailed directly to principals with a request to forward the email to all teaching staff in their own schools. A stepped approach to survey distribution was used to increase response rates, wherein, principals and psychologists received (1) an introductory email informing potential respondents of the upcoming survey; (2) an email with a survey link and information sheets specific to the participant; (3) and two reminder emails with survey links and information

sheets after two and four week periods (Dillman, 2011). The emails were sent to all psychologists employed with the NEPS (n=240) and all mainstream primary school principals whose email addresses were registered on the Primary School Database (n=3108). Data collection using these surveys ran from March to May 2021.

3.4.4. Semi-structured Interview Protocol Development. Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection tool employed in this research. Similar to the development of the survey questions, a sample interview protocol was developed based on the nodes of the CHAT theoretical framework (Engeström, 2005) using an adapted version of the Eight-Step Model (see Appendix H, Mwanza, 2002). Consequently, in line with the sequential explanatory approach, this initial protocol was adapted based on the findings of the surveys (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). For example, an additional question, which sought to understand the unique contribution of joint work between the NEPS psychologist and teaching staff, was added in response to survey findings which suggested that other agencies were perceived to offer similar services to the NEPS. The protocol was adapted again after pilot testing and the changes made are detailed in the Section 3.4.5. The final protocol included an introductory statement, demographic questions and four sections of interview questions including Roles and Responsibilities, Resources and Supports, Expectations, Rules, or Policies, and Inclusion. A copy of the final survey protocol can be found in Appendix K.

3.4.5. Semi-structured Interview Pilot. Three pilot interviews were conducted in September 2021, with a class teacher, a special education teacher and a psychologist employed with the NEPS. Adaptions made to the interview protocol included the rephrasing of some interview questions (Bryman, 2016). For instance, during the initial interview, it was noted that the class teacher described the general roles and responsibilities of the psychologist, such as assessment, giving advice and talking to parents, rather than relating her own experiences. Thus, the wording of this question was changed to ensure that the participant understood that she was being asked to describe the contribution of the psychologist in relation to the case being discussed. Furthermore, as participants were being asked to reflect on specific experiences, the researcher adapted the protocol to ensure that participants were reminded at regular intervals of their right to skip any of the questions posed and of the sensitive reporting of data that would be used to ensure that no person, school, or situation would be identifiable. Finally, additional prompts were also included in the interview protocol to ensure that participants were given the space to recount their experiences, whilst still remaining on-topic (Flick, 2017). For example, participants were prompted to consider the impact of specific

policies, circulars and rules on their joint work, including for example DES Circular 0013/17 and the SETAM (2017).

3.4.6. Semi-structured Interview Recruitment & Data Collection. For the qualitative data collection, survey participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in semi-structured interviews. Those who indicated that they were interested were provided with a link to a separate survey where they could leave their names, current role, level of experience, school type, and contact details. The inclusion of this additional link ensured that no identifiable information was linked to participants' survey responses. These volunteers were stratified into different groups based on their role (i.e., psychologist, class teacher, etc.) and purposive sampling for maximum variation was then used to select members from each group. Initially, three potential participants from each group were contacted via email and invited to interview. If no response was received within seven days of sending the email, the researcher proceeded to invite the next candidate on the list to interview. It must be noted that the entire sample of volunteers who identified themselves as special class teachers for children with a diagnosis of autism (n=3) were invited to interview, however, no response was received from this cohort. Participants were asked to fill out and return a consent form before the interview was scheduled. Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time of data collection, interviews took place over the phone or via the online communication platform, Zoom, depending on the wishes of the participant.

3.5. Data Analysis

In line with the sequential explanatory approach, data gathered from the initial survey were analysed and this information informed the adaption of the interview protocol (Creswell, 2003). Additionally, combined analysis was used to facilitate the comparison of both the quantitative and qualitative, as well as the psychologist and school staff datasets (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). A more detailed description of data analysis is outlined below.

3.5.1. Quantitative Analysis. As this study was predominantly qualitative-based and adhered to a constructivist paradigm, SPSS was used to generate demographic information and overall results for each of the closed questions using descriptive statistics from the quantitative survey data.

3.5.2. Qualitative Analysis. Qualitative analysis involved the application of a two-stage "hybrid approach" of first inductive and then deductive coding, to ensure that any themes generated were truly representative of the experiences of participants, whilst also ensuring that

the data could be interpreted through the theoretical lens of the CHAT framework (Braun & Clarke, 2021b; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Krause & Lynch, 2018). Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA; Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2021b) was employed to conduct the initial inductive analysis on the open-ended survey responses, as well as the data subsequently gathered from the semi-structured interviews, using NVivo 12 software. Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2021b) iterative Six Phase Approach to Thematic Analysis was employed to conduct the initial inductive analyses and this process is explained in more detail in Table 8.

Table 8

Six Phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2021b)

Phase	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarisation with the data 	Transcription, reading and re-reading and noting of early ideas and thoughts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating initial codes 	The systematic generation of initial codes for each individual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating initial themes 	Co-ordination of all the relevant data into initial themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing of the themes 	Comparing and reviewing themes in relation to coded extracts and overall datasets as well as the development of thematic maps for each research question
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining and naming themes 	Refining and naming each theme to ensure that it is representative of the incorporated data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producing the report 	Selection of rich data extracts which are representative of themes and relate back to research questions.

A sample of the initial coding process is outlined in Appendix L and the process of grouping these codes into subthemes and themes is also illustrated in Appendix M. Additionally, thematic maps in relation to each of the four key research questions can be found in Appendix N. Once this initial inductive phase of qualitative analysis was completed, the themes and codes which had been generated, were then mapped onto the third generation of the CHAT framework using a deductive approach.

3.6. Findings

3.6.1. Research Question 1: How does joint work between NEPS psychologists and staff support the inclusion of all students?

3.6.1.1. Resources & Information. School staff were noted to find joint work most beneficial for inclusion when it resulted in tangible resources, information and supports for themselves and their students. For example, SET1 discussed how joint work had previously resulted in the acquisition of assistive technology for one student and increased access to an SNA, along with the subsequent provision of movement breaks for another. Additionally, CT1 highlighted her frustration when joint work did not deliver the much sought-after resources.

“...we were hoping she would get a dyslexic diagnosis, but they wrote down that she only had tendencies. So, nothing changed for her, like no extra help for me or her, instead the teacher just has to adapt every year in school...”

Hence, it appeared as though this teacher continued to view joint work as the gateway to additional supports, with little else to offer. Whilst all staff felt that the psychologist did indeed facilitate access to these additional accommodations and structures, they did not necessarily share the belief that this was all that joint work could contribute to the inclusion of their students. For instance, AP2 and TP1 both noted that the “nuggets” of information provided by the psychologist often “clarified and reinforced” the actions of the staff working directly with students. Similarly, SET2 described one incident in which the reassurance garnered through joint work was vital to empowering her to continue with her planned approach.

“...straight away this psychologist was able to tell me that what I was doing was right because she said that building the relationship is the intervention.... So sometimes you are already doing the work, but you don’t have the language to put on it”.

Thus, it appeared as though the psychologists, in these scenarios, were effectively validating the work of the teachers by explaining the technical terminology and theoretical background for their existing practices. Therefore, it was apparent that although school staff undoubtedly valued the resources which came from joint work, they also acknowledged how essential the information garnered from this process was in facilitating and consolidating more inclusive practices.

3.6.1.2. Daily Practice. Joint work was seen to have implications for daily practice particularly in relation to interventions, teaching approaches and programmes. For example,

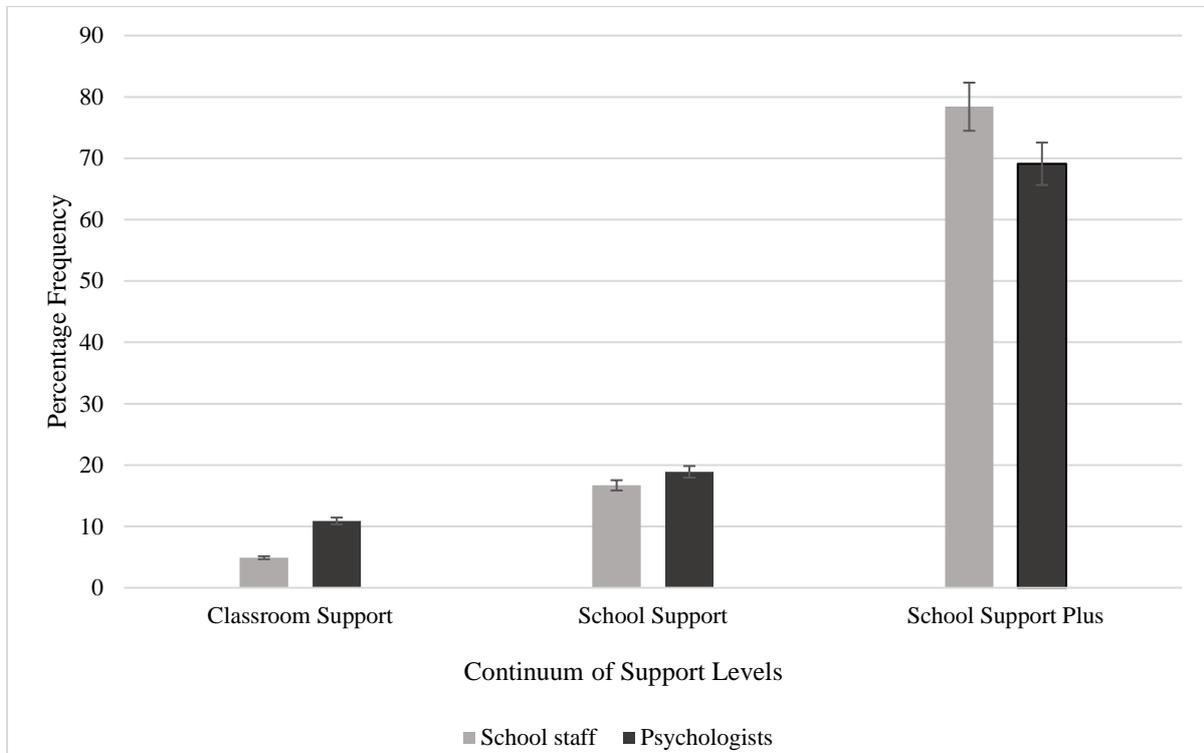
NP1 and NP3 both discussed cases in which school staff were empowered to redirect their energies away from the constant pursuit of academic achievement and were instead encouraged to prioritise the social and emotional needs of their students. NP3 noted that she had reassured staff that social development was equally as important as academic progression, when considering if a student was being meaningfully included within the mainstream setting.

“When we first started working together, he definitely wasn’t able to go on a job, he wasn’t greeting people in the mornings, and he didn’t know the names of his peers. Now these are all things that he does know...”

Similarly, NP1 discussed how joint work in one school had resulted in a reconceptualisation of withdrawal support, from a purely academic exercise to a more dynamic and responsive endeavour, where sensory and emotional needs could be targeted. Hence, these experiences represent the impact of individual casework at the school support plus level, wherein teachers were supported to adapt their practices and implement action plans in relation to the specific needs of the student at the heart of the inquiry. Indeed, survey results also indicate that both psychologists and school staff agree that they are most likely to conduct joint work at the school support plus level (see Figure 6). However, it was noted that despite the considerable benefits of joint work at this level for the practices of individual teachers, participants reported that changes rarely extended to broader policy revisions or other more systemic modifications.

Figure 6

Bar Chart Displaying Survey Responses to The Question: At What Level of The Continuum of Support Do You Most Frequently Engage in Joint Work?



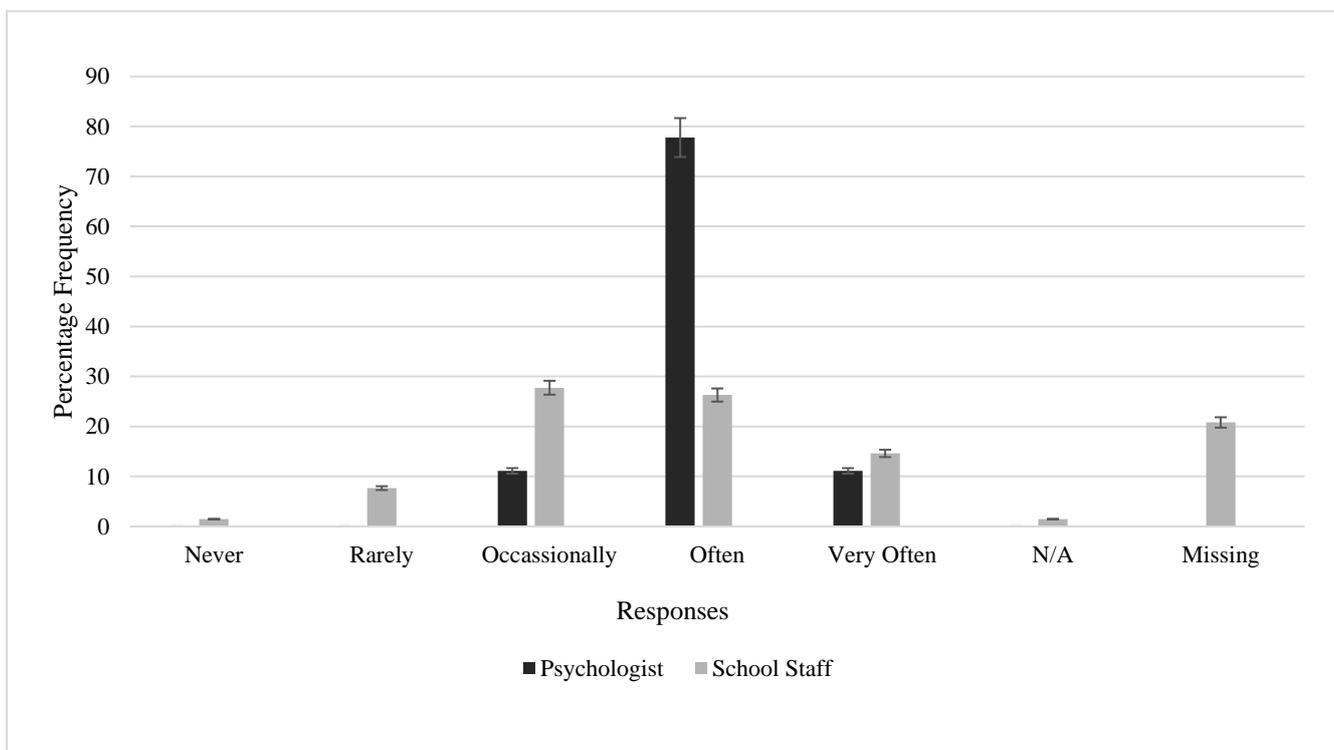
The exception to this rule was the experience described by AP2 who reflected on how joint work had been used in her newly amalgamated school to introduce the Incredible Years programme (Webster-Stratton et al., 2011) over the course of a two-year period. She described how the NEPS psychologist had visited the school on a weekly basis to first provide training for all staff including SNAs, before then facilitating peer group supervision sessions, wherein each staff member was asked to conduct and discuss a case study. In comparison with the more individualised joint work, AP2 noted that this two-year project had not only resulted in the adjustment of certain practices in relation to specific students, but instead had transformed the definition of teaching in this school, from “the old style where everybody sits in the chair and looks up ...[to] a lot more movement, more use of SNAs...and differentiation is the standard in all classes now...”. Additionally, AP2 also reported that the programme “has given us a language to talk to each other...”, wherein her school staff are now empowered to not only understand and respond to the needs of their students, but also, to communicate these needs with each other and with external professionals. Furthermore, this “language” was reported to have been embedded within the school behaviour and anti-bullying policies. When asked how

she felt these changes may have impacted on her students, she noted, “Well I do the gate in the morning, and if a child is coming in and the head is down, you’ll notice right away because every single child coming in here is smiling...”. Thus, AP2 believed that this more systemic work had resulted in a more inclusive environment for the entire student population.

3.6.1.3. Inclusive Attitudes at the Individual Level. Interestingly psychologists were more likely to report that joint work had often resulted in inclusion, in comparison with their teaching colleagues (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Bar Chart Displaying Survey Responses to the Question: Do You Feel that the Inclusion Needs of the Child(ren) were Generally Met as a Result of Engaging in Joint Work?



In particular, psychologists reported that joint work served to influence staff attitudes towards inclusion. For instance, NP3 described her experience of working with one school, wherein the staff had initially hoped that her involvement would facilitate a transition to a different setting for one student. NP3 felt that this reluctance towards inclusion stemmed from a lack of confidence and experience on behalf of the staff, who believed that the student’s needs could only be met within a special school. Yet, she noted that their “implicit expectations” changed throughout the course of joint work, as these teachers began to appreciate that “...there are pros and cons to every situation... and that actually they were in a position to meaningfully

include him”. This experience was also shared by several other psychologist survey participants, one of whom noted that whilst staff shared their “anxieties that the student was in the ‘wrong’ school... their authenticity and openness to other solutions” resulted not only in a change in practice, but also the genuine inclusion of this student. However, it was noted that whilst staff attitudes in relation to their own capacity for including a particular student may be influenced, time limited and individual-focused joint work was rarely seen to affect change in relation to the overall inclusivity of the school itself. Indeed, one psychologist survey respondent pointed out that cultivating a more inclusive ethos in partnership with staff requires engagement from school leaders as well as a greater time allocation. Thus, joint work was seen by psychologists to make a considerable impact to the teachers that were directly involved, in terms of their attitudes and capacity for the inclusion of individual students. However, it was also acknowledged that more systemic and time-intensive work was necessary in order to weave this inclusive philosophy into the fabric of the school itself.

3.6.2. Research Question 2: What are the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder for joint work?

3.6.2.1. NEPS psychologist’s Role.

3.6.2.1.1. Building Capacity. All participants agreed that a key responsibility of the psychologist was to build capacity amongst teaching staff, and this was seen to be accomplished through training, systemic work, and consultation. Training was often delivered to specific staff members in relation to the needs of individual students, for example, TP1 described how she had received information from the NEPS psychologist on Reactive Attachment Disorder, which had enabled her, as the class teacher, to interact and engage with a new student in her school. She remarked that prior to this training she felt “completely ignorant of how to approach [the student]” but had developed the necessary confidence and skills to adapt the environmental demands for this child, as a direct result of the training. Occasionally, training was also noted to be delivered in response to broader school level issues. For example, NP1 reported that he had previously delivered a single training session on interventions which may help to alleviate reading difficulties, in response to an increase in referrals for dyslexia assessments in one school. Thus, he hoped that this additional input would serve to reduce school staff reliance on a diagnosis in order to address the needs of their students.

Although experiences of systemic joint work were noticeably less common than

descriptions of individual work, they were present, nonetheless. For example, NP4 discussed how group consultation had provided school staff with an opportunity to discuss and plan for the changes that arose as a result of the SETAM. She reported that “there was a lot of problem-solving around even the provision mapping you know, or how are we organizing SET time in the school”. Additionally, some survey respondents also noted how joint work had led to the adoption of school-wide interventions to support academic development as well as social-emotional competence, including programmes such as Friends for Life (Barrett, 2005), and in the case of AP2, the Incredible Years programme (Webster-Stratton et al., 2011).

Finally, whilst consultation was viewed by school staff and psychologists as vital for building the capacity of teachers, both sets of stakeholders appeared to have different definitions of the actual role of the psychologist within consultation. The NEPS psychologist participants in both the surveys and interviews generally defined consultation as a collaborative problem-solving exercise in which their main role was to share a psychological insight into the presenting concern. NP4 further explained this role by commenting “...we facilitate teachers to reflect and develop their understanding of the situation, rather than being purely concerned about the fix or the solution.” Thus, the NEPS psychologists saw themselves as supporting staff to develop a more holistic overview of the issue, which would then inform any subsequent planning and intervention.

This differed from the views of school staff who saw the psychologist primarily as the purveyor of recommendations. For example, TP2 noted that “They give us practical things that were tried in other schools. I would be all for practical solutions.” In addition, TP1 also valued suggestions which she felt were tailored to the specific needs of her students, the majority of whom were learning English as an additional language, as well as the context of the school. Thus, both principals felt that the recommendations provided by the psychologist during consultation, were vital in building the capacity of staff to ensure the inclusion of these students. Notably, whilst most participants valued the advice provided by the psychologist, some school staff, including CT1 and SET2 bemoaned the lack of novel programmes and strategies proposed by the psychologist. This frustration was recognized by NP2 who reported that staff were generally familiar with the evidence-based approaches she was suggesting and thus, were disappointed when she could not offer anything else. She reflected on one experience of consultation in which the school staff were “...literally sitting in front of me with blank sheets of paper, asking what do we do now?”. Hence, whilst the interviewed psychologists saw their role as providing teachers with a psychological perspective on the presenting concern and engaging in reflexive collaboration to generate a plan for intervention,

school staff participants tended to view them as the expert from whom they sought advice when all other avenues had been exhausted.

3.6.2.1.2. The Consultation-Assessment Dilemma. The role of the psychologist was marked by what NP2 referred to as the Consultation-Assessment Dilemma, wherein assessment was still seen as a necessity despite the overarching consultative model of service which has been adopted. NP1 attributed this to the ongoing "...perception that kids need assessments to get resources" that could be found in some schools. Indeed, this appeared to be the case in one school as CT1, noted that despite the introduction of the SETAM, children who had received a diagnosis, were "...more entitled to withdrawal support or an SET coming into the class to work with them..." regardless of their level of need. Although this method of prioritisation in primary school was not mentioned by other participants, almost all staff members felt that a psychoeducational report was a prerequisite for access to resources, supports and accommodations in secondary school. Indeed SET1, noted that the coveted report "...carries an awful lot of weight when you are talking to the first-year coordinator or principal in secondary school". Similarly, both SET2 and TP1 referenced the apparent futility of applying for a Special Needs Assistant without a report from the NEPS psychologist. This point was clarified further by SET2, who reported that the "formal terminology [in the report] for things that you are doing everyday... reinforces the application". The use of the terms "weight" and "reinforce" in both of these extracts suggests that without an assessment and subsequent psychological report, any attempt by school staff to secure additional resources from external sources such as SENOs or secondary schools, would be perceived as insubstantial. Notably, whilst TP2 was the only interviewee who strongly disagreed with the assessment and diagnosis of students, he also acknowledged that this process was often unavoidable in the pursuit of resources. He stated, "I try to avoid labelling a child if I can at all... but sometimes it's the only way to get what they need".

In addition to the acquisition of tangible resources, school staff also noted that assessment could sometimes result in a diagnosis for a student. Some participants, including TP1, CT1 and AP2, felt that a diagnosis could serve to assist teachers in terms of planning. For example, AP2 likened the diagnosis of a student to the current pandemic by commenting "...if I am treating you for a cold when in reality you have COVID, yeah, you're going to get some benefit out of what I'm doing, but you're not going to get well." Thus, it appears as if the diagnosis provided some staff members with the confidence to choose and implement programmes which would be appropriate for the needs of their students. In contrast, other staff

members, including several survey respondents, as well as SET1 noted that by providing a child with a diagnosis, the psychologist was simply “confirming preexisting suspicions” and hence, had little impact on the teaching approaches or interventions that were being implemented. Instead, these teachers felt the value of a diagnosis lay in the comfort that it may offer to the student and their parents, by providing an explanation for academic difficulties. In conclusion, school staff generally saw assessment as an essential part of the psychologist’s work, which provided access to resources, as well as the reassurance of a diagnosis.

3.6.2.1.3. Advocating for the Consultative Model. NEPS psychologists were keenly aware of the ongoing demand for assessment, and hence reported being tasked with the constant promotion of consultation. This was summarised by SET2 who commented “I do kind of feel sorry for [the psychologist] ... Because I’m always pushing for it, and he is constantly standing firm in the face of the pressure to assess”. Indeed, NP3 described this responsibility as “an ongoing conversation” in which she would routinely remind staff of the consultative model of service, and advise them to use school-based assessments, in conjunction with consultation to meet the needs of their students. Similarly, AP2 and SET1 cited the benefit of an annual training offered by the NEPS services in their regions which provided information on the continuum of support, the consultative model and any new school-based assessments which may be helpful for schools in their region. Whilst SET2 reported attending this meeting on a yearly basis, AP2 noted that he had just attended this training for the first time and seemed struck by the model of service in particular, as he noted “...when you let it settle with you, it’s actually- it’s actually a good system.” Equally, whilst NP3 relied on the indirect and direct referral forms to support her use of the consultative model, NP4 noted how the group consultation model also promoted this way of working.

“It gave you a chance to be constantly dropping it in and you also had other teachers reinforcing the message... they might say things like, oh, I wouldn’t bother with an assessment for that, we had a similar issue and we worked with the support plan.”

Hence, it appeared as if the psychologists relied on tools such as the referral forms, group consultation and annual training to further endorse their use of the model.

Despite these efforts, it seemed as though some teaching staff continued to value assessment above these consultative discussions. For instance, NP2 reflected on her experience, wherein, she noted that despite availing of consultation over a period of several months, she felt that the school staff saw the psychoeducational assessment as her “first piece

of concrete work”. Rather than being a reflection on the quality of the consultation that was being offered, NP1 felt that this ongoing appetite for assessment was more representative of a broader misperception around the role of the NEPS service.

“It’s quite a common parlance in society that there is a ‘NEPS assessment’. Parents go into schools and ask for a NEPS assessment and OTs are advising that children receive a NEPS assessment, whereas they should be saying you need to consult with your NEPS psychologist.”

Thus, NP1 remarked that whilst individual psychologists could aim to inform schools, and parents as to the benefits of the consultative model, this issue warranted a larger organisational response in order to truly address and dismantle the stereotype of the “NEPS assessment”.

3.6.2.1.4. Relationships. Relationships was a key theme in relation to the role of the psychologist. The psychologists saw themselves as being primarily responsible for establishing relationships with staff members in schools. Both NP2 and NP3 described experiences in which they were working with staff members for the first time and noted the subsequent pressure of initiating joint work with a new school. NP3 lamented what she described as a lack of trust, on behalf of the teaching staff at the start of the process, “[If] I had worked with them over a period of time maybe they would have seen the positive success stories of other students and they would have been more trusting”. This sentiment was echoed by NP2, who observed that once she had provided a recommendation that had been implemented successfully in a new school, there was, what she referred to as, a “bit of a turnaround then because they began to trust me”. Thus, it was evident from these accounts that both psychologists felt an added pressure to provide evidence of their competence before a secure and trusting relationship could be developed with a new school. In contrast, NP4 who described her experience of the group consultation model, did not appear to share this burden. Instead, she explained that by providing the space and opportunity for teachers to share their concerns with one another and with a psychologist, she had not only established a relationship, but forged a “sense of identity” amongst the participants in the group. Hence, it appears that whilst all psychologist interviewees felt tasked with establishing the relationship with staff members, the context in which these initial interactions occurred appeared to influence the perceived obligations of the psychologist.

Both stakeholders felt that the accessibility of the psychologist was key to maintaining a strong working relationship. In fact, several principals and SETs observed that the NEPS

psychologist was always “at the end of the phone”, to provide guidance or support when necessary. Equally, NP4 noted that she endeavoured to provide regular check-ins for the staff in her schools, whereby teachers were encouraged to “...come and chat to you and tell you how it’s going... rather than feeling as if they are being left alone to deal with it”. This availability of the NEPS psychologist appeared to contrast starkly with descriptions of other professionals, such as that provided by TP1, who stated “Sure, we don’t see anybody else... a speech and language therapist hasn’t stood inside this door for maybe three or four years and the OT is nearly letting us diagnose.” Similarly, SET1 and AP2 both highlighted their difficulties in contacting other service providers. Thus, the ability to consistently communicate with the NEPS psychologist was highly valued by school staff.

In addition to their accessibility NEPS psychologists were also noted to maintain relationships by acknowledging school staff expertise. For instance, NP2 highlighted the importance of ensuring that teachers felt understood and that their contribution was recognised at the start of the process. She commented, “You know, it’s really important to say, oh, gosh, yeah, that sounds really difficult on both the teacher and the child, and I know you’ve done a lot and I know you know all of these things.” This contribution was also recognised by SET2 who noted that, as the sole SET in her school, she would often ring the psychologist to tease out a particular issue or to receive feedback for an ongoing intervention. She described how the psychologist provided her with reassurance around her own decisions and gave her the necessary confidence to persevere. AP2 summarised this role by explaining that “A lot of the time their job is to affirm what we’re doing... So, they are really driving that home, that the experts are the teachers in the school.” Hence, this recognition and respect for staff competence appeared to be a vital factor in preserving successful working relationships with schools.

3.6.2.2. Role of School Staff. In terms of joint work, the duties and responsibilities of school staff were largely considered to take place before and after direct psychological involvement, with response to intervention and the subsequent prioritisation of students occurring before, and the implementation of agreed-upon programmes or strategies, as well as the allocation of resources occurring afterward.

3.6.2.2.1. Preparing for Joint Work: Response to Intervention. Class teachers and SETs were seen as being tasked with implementing a response to intervention approach to supporting their students. CT1, SET2 and TP1 reported that working with their students at the classroom support and student support levels was a prerequisite to the direct involvement of the psychologist. Notably, CT1 described this as a “tick the box exercise”, however this

sentiment was not shared by the other staff members, such as AP1, who felt this stepped approach made “absolute sense”. Indeed, TP1 described how class teachers in her school were “customising and differentiating” the curriculum on a daily basis, to ensure that every possible effort was made to include all students before requesting psychological involvement. Similarly, SET2 reflected on her experience at the school support level, “We did a lot of work before we contacted the psychologist and we had a fair idea where the child was, and it was totally child driven.” Thus, the majority of interviewed teaching staff felt that the continuum of support facilitated a better understanding of the child and their needs through implementation, monitoring, and the collation of data. Psychologists also cited the wealth of information that was collected throughout the stages of the continuum as key to facilitating joint work and hence, viewed this in-depth knowledge of the child as the main responsibility of the teaching staff for joint work.

3.6.2.2.2. Preparing for Joint Work: Prioritisation. The SETs and principals also highlighted the selection of children for psychological involvement as a major duty within the working relationship. Whilst school staff described attempting to ensure that those with the greatest levels of need benefitted from joint work, external factors such as the circumstances of the individual students and the school itself, as well as the potential outcomes of joint work were also considered within this complex ranking system. CT1 described how the SEN team in her own school often focused on students or families who “couldn’t do this without our help”, wherein their financial circumstances precluded them from accessing private psychological services. Similarly, both AP2 and SET2 discussed how students who were transitioning on to the next stage of education were often chosen for joint work, in an attempt to secure supports and accommodations for their next placement. SET2 reflected on a recent experience, wherein she had harboured worries about the capacity of one student to cope in secondary school and thus, she felt it was her responsibility to provide him with a “safety net” by ensuring that he had a report from the NEPS psychologist “in his back pocket”. Thus, both narratives illustrate how teachers felt a profound responsibility to guarantee equity of supports and resources by prioritising vulnerable students who may otherwise fall through the cracks of the educational system.

These stories differed from TP1’s experience, in which she described sometimes having to make decisions based on contextual factors, rather than the individual needs of the students.

“We do think long and hard about it, because the nature of children who go to school here is that they could be here this week and gone the next...and so we often need to consider our local children who are here for eight years first ...”

Hence, although the benefits of the system were extolled, the limited scope of joint work and subsequent need for prioritisation could be seen to weigh heavily on school staff through their use of emotionally laden language. For example, AP2 portrayed it as “...a horse trade... [where] the same child gets left at the bottom of the list every year.” Whilst the NEPS psychologists also saw prioritisation as an important duty of principals and SETs in particular, they did not appear to ascribe the same significance to this activity. For example, NP1 used a neutral tone and the passive voice when describing the tasks undertaken by his teaching colleagues, he stated “Methods of prioritisation. Yeah, so once the child was prioritised as a client of mine, then things progressed quite quickly.” Hence, it could be argued that this NEPS psychologist’s lack of involvement in this process appeared to have left him unaware of the emotional toll it had on those tasked with the categorisation and ranking of their students.

3.6.2.2.3. Following on from Joint Work: Agents of Change. School staff were generally noted to be responsible for fulfilling action plans which had been developed during joint work, and this included both the implementation of programmes, strategies, and interventions, as well as acquiring and allocating additional resources where necessary. One psychologist survey respondent described the roles of the class teacher and SETs as “bringing inclusion from a concept to real life”. Thus, SETs and class teachers were tasked with spearheading suggested initiatives within the school setting. Notably, CT1 saw this task more as an obligation wherein she felt compelled to follow the recommendations provided in psychoeducational reports, “...because if an inspector was to come in and say, you got a recommendation, and you didn’t apply it, then we would be in trouble”. In addition, one class teacher survey respondent who also received suggestions in a summative report, described them as “unattainable and unrealistic for a classroom of 28 pupils”, with another noting that they had received “very little advice on how to implement or monitor these recommendations”. These experiences differed significantly from teachers who had assumed a more meaningful role in the generation of the action plans and were supported throughout implementation. For instance, one SET survey respondent noted that the psychologist had “really considered what we could feasibly do and worked with us to find a solution”. Equally, TP2 reflected on how he felt empowered to implement the agreed-upon strategies with ongoing assistance from the NEPS psychologist, which he described as “...the flexibility to report back and say look, we

tried that for three weeks, we had limited success, or no success, or great success...”. Thus, although SETs and class teachers were considered to be facilitators of programmes and strategies, the success of these approaches appeared to depend on the extent of the teacher’s own involvement in the planning process, as well as the level of psychologist support provided throughout implementation.

Principals and SETs were also noted to be responsible for the acquisition and deployment of resources, such as SET and SNA support within their schools. The application for new resources was seen to be a gruelling process, in which AP1 described himself as “constantly fighting” to secure supports for those in need. In fact, he described feeling “...so tired that you are tempted to stop and only the absolutely really desperate or the really tenacious, stay going”. This sentiment was echoed by SET2 who commented, “it doesn’t matter how resource heavy it is we’re not getting any more resources.” Additionally, TP1 reported that she felt that she could not apply for additional SNA support, as she wanted to “avoid drawing attention to ourselves and having someone tell us that we are over resourced, because we definitely are not”. Thus, the procurement of additional resources was viewed as an almost impossible task, which if handled incorrectly could potentially result in the loss of existing supports. In addition, SETs and principals were also tasked with the equitable distribution of SET and SNA support. Most interviewees reported implementing a flexible and dynamic approach to ensure that both the immediate and long-term needs of students were met. For instance, SET1 reflected on a recent experience in which one student who was struggling academically was provided with additional socioemotional support from the SET in the run up to standardised assessments, in an effort to address his concerns and promote a better academic self-concept. However, despite the general consensus that school staff were adept at allocating these resources appropriately, this task was still seen to be fraught with complications. In fact, AP1 described his concerns about the prospect of redistributing existing resources, “If a child comes into this school tomorrow needing seven hours support, I will have to rip that from somewhere else”. This was echoed by other principals in particular, who feared that their decisions may ultimately deprive students of much needed supports.

3.6.2.2.4. The Mediator. In terms of joint work, school principals and SETs cited one of their main roles was to act as the liaison between the psychologist and parents, as well as other services and even, class teachers. For instance, AP1 reflected on his experience of joint working with a number of different professionals to support the inclusion of a student with complex needs, wherein he made daily efforts to ensure that all professionals remained “in the

loop... using a consistent communication model”. This experience was also shared by TP2 who believed that it was his role to ensure that no stakeholder felt “excluded” from the planning process.

Additionally, both SETs and principals felt that supporting and communicating with parents around the involvement of the NEPS psychologist was another key responsibility. Whilst it was acknowledged that the majority of parents relied on school staff to provide information about the process and possible outcomes of joint work with a psychologist, SET1 and AP1 further outlined how they had also supported more vulnerable parents. SET1 recalled how one set of parents, experiencing significant literacy difficulties, had relied on him to fill out the referral form for the NEPS service.

“It was almost the parents seeing it as me doing them a favour...they asked if I could help and if I hadn’t, they would probably have hired somebody... I thought that was very sad and an indictment of the system”.

Similarly, AP1 noted that after meeting with the psychologist, parents would often require further discussion to ensure that they fully understood the outcomes of the joint work.

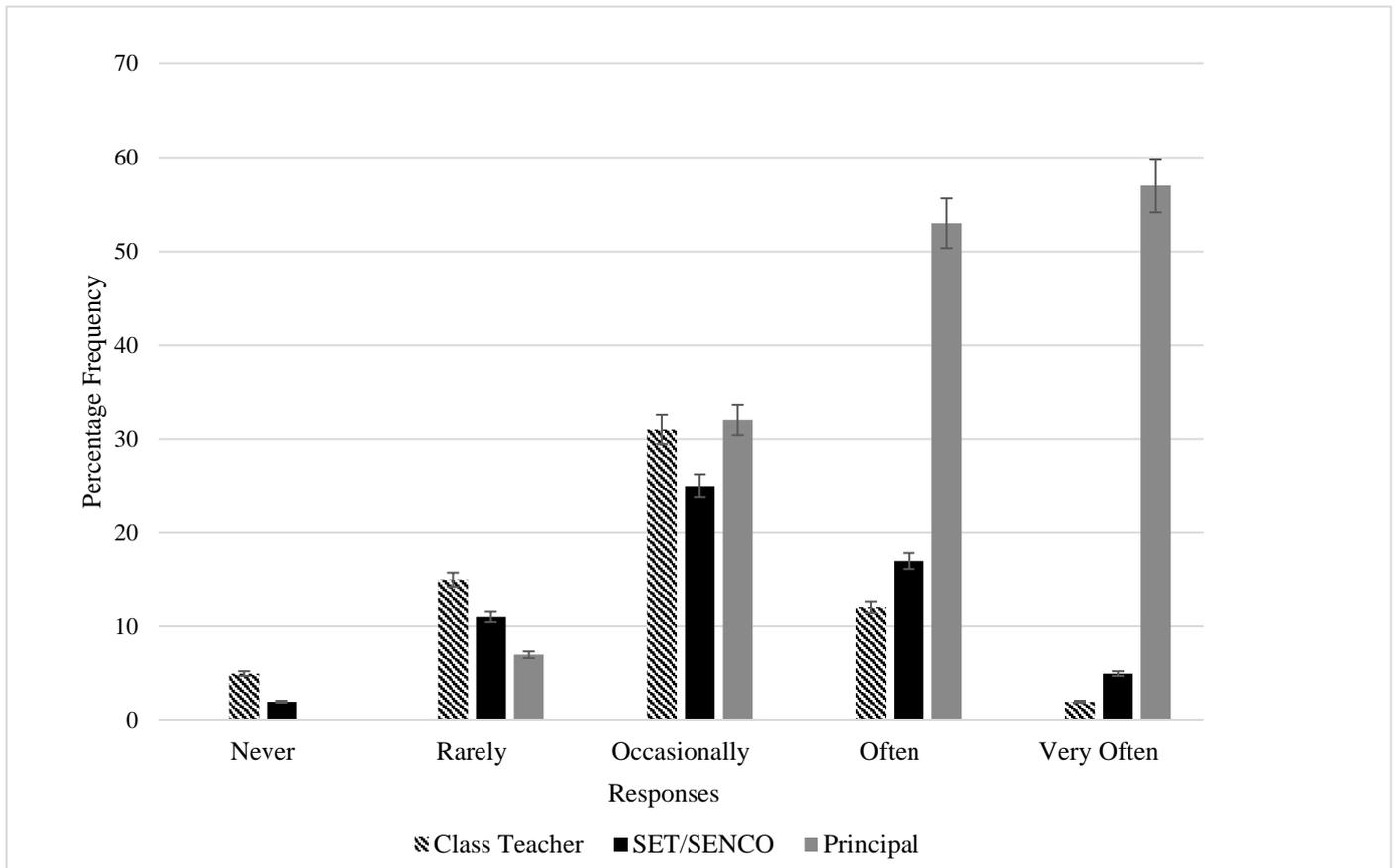
“All the psychologists that I have worked with are very good at getting down to your level... But if parents haven’t gone beyond sixth class it can be very hard... it’s only as time goes on, that you realise that they’ve got the wrong end of the stick”.

Therefore, both interviewees had assumed the role of interpreter, by navigating the imperceptible sociocultural and linguistic barriers which sometimes served to disconnect the NEPS psychologist from parents.

Finally, some participants noted that regular contact with the psychologist was often restricted to the SET and principal, who would then pose queries and seek advice on behalf of the class teacher. This experience was also shared by survey respondents wherein class teachers were more likely to report that they had never or rarely engaged in joint work with the psychologist (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Bar Graph Which Depicts Answers to the Survey Question: How Often Have You Worked with the NEPS psychologist?



CT1 felt that this role demarcation was simply a consequence of the lack of time afforded to class teachers to engage with external services, whereas AP2 felt it was more reflective of the relationship she had developed with her NEPS psychologist, as well as his own limited availability. Notably, SET2 described how she would often communicate advice and reassurance from the NEPS psychologist back to the class teacher but would also use this mediation as an opportunity to further her own ideas in relation to supporting students. She stated “And I do kind of use the psychologist, a little bit, you know, I’ll say he won’t show up unless we do X Y, and Zed... So, you can kind of get around people like that too.”. Thus, despite carrying primary responsibility for the education of all children in their classes, it could be argued that the lack of direct communication between NEPS psychologists and class teachers as described by some participants, may have served to disempower this cohort.

3.6.3. Research Question 3: How are structures, resources, and supports used to facilitate successful joint work?

3.6.3.1. Experience. Prior experience of joint work was seen to facilitate greater cooperation between school staff and psychologists, through the development of stronger working relationships as well as stakeholders' own confidence in their contributions. Some school staff reported learning from each encounter with their psychologist and consequently, applying this information to their future interactions. For example, SET1 commented, "So, if somebody has dyslexia, it's not going to be vastly different to another child with dyslexia, so we know what to look out for, and what to have done in advance....". Similarly, AP2 described how her NEPS psychologist "...nearly has me trained at this stage to recognise when we need to refer to OT or for an ASD assessment". Therefore, amongst the interviewed principals and teachers, those with more work experience were naturally more familiar with joint work, and thus, tended to feel more comfortable in their own roles. This was encapsulated by AP1, who noted that "I'm getting a few more grey hairs and I realise the way the system works now...". Equally, one psychologist survey respondent also described feeling more confident in promoting joint work and consultation within schools, as they progressed throughout their career. Hence, upon further contemplation of these findings it could be suggested that the experiential gaps of novice psychologists and teachers may, in theory, result in less effective joint work, as stakeholders gradually get to grips with the nuances of the working relationship. This potential pitfall appeared to have been foreseen by one principal, who NP4 recalled had made a conscious effort to prioritise indirect consultation for several younger members of staff, "...because she thought it was so important that the NEPS psychologist was someone that they not only knew but who they had worked with." Therefore, it seems as though greater exposure to joint work was viewed in this case as a key tool that was utilised to enable successful interactions between teaching staff and psychologists in the future.

Teachers' experiences of SEN were also seen to be another factor which often determined the course and outcomes of joint work. In particular, SET teachers reflected on the value of undertaking supplementary post graduate qualifications as a means of enhancing their knowledge and skills when identifying and supporting students with additional needs. SET2 reflected on how the postgraduate diploma in SEN had transformed her sense of professional identity from feeling like a "glorified sub" to "someone with something to offer, who knows what they are talking about...". This newfound confidence was also evident in her descriptions

of joint work, wherein she reported using the psychologist as a “sounding board” rather than an authority when making decisions around screening and intervention. Similarly, it was noted that experience of working in special schools and classes also enabled teaching staff to feel more empowered and knowledgeable in relation to the inclusion of children with SEN. For instance, AP2 noted that the professional competence of her staff had been increased exponentially by the recent addition of a special class, wherein strategies and resources from this setting were being integrated throughout the school to facilitate greater inclusion. In addition, psychologists were also seen to acknowledge the benefits of teacher experience in specialist settings. For example, NP3 reflected on one occasion in which a teacher who had previously worked in a special class appeared to be more open and enthusiastic towards the inclusion of a student with autism, in comparison to her colleagues who were described as being “...a little bit paralysed by their lack of experience.” Thus, teacher understanding and familiarity with SEN and inclusion was seen to be a vital aspect of successful joint working with the psychologist.

Finally, the experience of the psychologist was also noted to be a tool which could sometimes aid joint work. Teachers and principals noted how some psychologists appeared to have an interest or speciality in areas such as Autism, English as an Additional Language, or emotional difficulties. Thus, school staff noted that engaging in work which was of particular interest to a psychologist was mutually beneficial for both stakeholders. In fact, TP1 noted that “[Our psychologist] takes an interest in asylum seekers and refugees... I think her knowledge has actually been enhanced because of working well with us as well.” Similarly, SET2 who was shared between two schools and thus, had access to two NEPS psychologists, described an experience in which the assigned psychologist was unable to offer support in relation to a socioemotional query, as he was, what SET2 described as “more black and white... [but] absolutely brilliant at the assessment side of things.” Therefore, SET2 described engaging the services of the psychologist attached to the other school in which she worked, as she was reported to have a greater interest in this area. SET2 commented that “disingenuous or not”, she felt that this had been a worthwhile manoeuvre, from which she had garnered the necessary reassurance and information to continue supporting her student.

3.6.3.2. Consultation. The psychologist participants viewed school staff “buy-in” to the consultative process as an extremely valuable asset. Despite the overarching consultative model of psychological provision, it was noted that the levels of acceptance and enthusiasm for consultation was perceived to vary widely between different schools. For example, NP2

reflected on how her own role within joint work tended to be determined by school staff understanding of consultation, wherein she would often be forced to revert back to the more traditional role of assessment when working with schools who remained “entrenched in the old model”. These experiences had also been shared by NP3, who commented “I think we have the most success with inclusion when principals appreciate the optimism that consultation can bring”. The juxtaposition of the language used to describe those who were still considered to be confined to the outdated system with the explanation of the more promising potential of consultation, provided a clear insight into the values of these interviewees. Thus, it was evident that both psychologists understood consultation to be the foundation of joint work, with staff engagement seen as the one of the most influential factors for facilitating inclusion.

In contrast to their psychologist colleagues, the school staff interviewees did not explicitly mention consultation as being a central component of successful joint work, instead they referred to the importance of collective inquiry when making decisions and discussing concerns. Indeed, both AP1 and TP2 considered how conversations with the psychologist over the phone, in-person, or online provided an “outside or objective perspective” which often helped to clarify their thinking around a particular case. Additionally, TP2, AP2 and TP1 noted the benefit of engaging in planning meetings with their NEPS psychologist at the start of every school year, as TP1 reflected that this dialogue gave her “...the space and time to actually figure each [case] out”. Thus, although these principals appeared to share the psychologists’ enthusiasm for consultation, they did not explicitly name the consultative process as an entity within and of itself, but rather praised what they described as informal and formal discussions. In fact, it was noted that the terms “consultation or consult” were not used by any of the interviewed teachers or principals. However, these interviewees all appeared to be familiar with and understand the connotations of the term when used by the researcher.

In order to embed consultation into their practice, psychologists reported relying on abstract resources such as their own skills in conducting solution-focused consultation, as well as more tangible tools including the NEPS problem solving framework, and group consultation. For example, NP4 who had previously worked in another region using the group consultation model, felt that this structured approach not only supported the development of relationships and a sense of community, but also enabled staff to appreciate the existing expertise within themselves and their teaching colleagues. She noted that “[the teachers] saw the solutions coming from themselves rather than from us”. However, despite these significant benefits, NP4 also acknowledged the shortcomings associated with the group consultation model, such as the infrequency of the meetings and the rigid time allocation which prevented more in-depth

discussion of complex cases. Nevertheless, NP4 felt that the group consultation model was an essential consultative tool, which she endeavoured to weave into her everyday interactions with school staff in her new region. She stated, “Whereas I can’t create the groups, I still try to bring that kind of empowerment by building up the teachers and allowing them to generate ideas and come up with the strategies.”

3.6.3.3. Information. Both NEPS psychologists and staff agreed that information was a catalyst within joint work, wherein both groups reflected on the benefits of having access to the NEPS publications. Notably, both stakeholders referred to the Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD)- A Continuum of Support (2007a), also commonly known as the “green book”. For instance, AP2 described how the NEPS psychologist had weaved information and resources from this document into the systemic school training that was provided, and had thus, empowered staff to draw on this resource in their own practice. Additionally, SET1 commended the accessibility and practicality of the Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers Resource Pack (2019a). In addition to these resources, training was also seen to not only facilitate joint work, but also support inclusion. As previously discussed, the NEPS service was considered to be a primary source of professional development for school staff, however both stakeholders also acknowledged the vital contribution of other organisations which provided training. For example, NP1 and NP3 both discussed how they would have directed teachers towards additional training from outside agencies, in relation to concerns around motor skills and sensory regulation. Equally, SET1 and AP2 noted that the National Council for Special Education had provided practical and informative courses in relation to setting up special classes for autism or working with a student that was experiencing behavioural difficulties.

3.6.4. Research Question 4: What expectations or rules influence the joint work of NEPS psychologists and school staff?

3.6.4.1. Government Policies. The joint work between NEPS psychologists and teaching staff in mainstream primary schools, was undoubtedly impacted by government policies and schemes, including the Special Education Teacher Allocation Model, the Irish Exemption circular, the Data Protection Act, and the Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments.

3.6.4.1.1. Special Education Teacher Allocation Model (SETAM). In particular the introduction of the SETAM appeared to have the greatest impact on interviewees experiences

of joint work. Indeed, AP1 described the pressure he felt as a principal under the old system, whereby the livelihoods of his teaching staff were constantly under threat.

“A teacher every year was going to lose her job unless, you know, we find out that Mary has dyslexia, or you know that Sean is autistic. If he is, it’s great, because then we get five more hours to save your job...”

This depiction of a volatile system differed hugely from his description of the stability that the pre-determined allocations of the SETAM provided. Thus, although AP1 acknowledged the potential issues associated with the SETAM such as the challenge of redistributing resources, he also appreciated the autonomy and certainty that it offered.

Moreover, psychologists also saw the benefits of the SETAM in relation to their joint work, as NP2 and NP4 described how some teachers were more willing to discuss the actual needs of students, rather than constantly demanding diagnostic assessments. Despite this, both stakeholders commented on what they saw as a hesitancy amongst some schools and staff to fully embrace the SETAM. NP4 attributed this reluctance to “the protection of the old model... in terms of being answerable to the parents.” Indeed, this concern was echoed by TP1 who feared that her decisions may potentially result in conflict with families. Alternatively, SET2 felt that the role of teaching staff appeared to influence their level of engagement with the new system. She commented that within her role as SET she was fully immersed in the SETAM but believed that the class teachers in her schools may not have been afforded the same opportunities to embrace these changes. This experience appeared to be reflected in CT1’s comments in which she noted

“...we do have a kind of flexible model where if a SET comes in, they don’t just sit with the one child who has been officially diagnosed... But I also think a diagnosis would have gotten them time to go out and work one on one.”

Hence, although CT1 seemed to understand the implications of the SETAM and thus, paid lip service to the model, she did not appear to have fully adopted this new way of working. Hence, these accounts suggest that staff acceptance of the SETAM was seen to be as variable as their “buy-in” for the consultation, and thus had a major impact on the quality of joint work that was conducted.

3.6.4.1.2. Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA).

Psychologists, teachers, and principals were all united in solidarity against the SCPA scheme (2021b), a strategy which provides schools with one-off psychological assessments when a

fulltime NEPS psychologist was unavailable. The interviewed psychologists felt that this scheme did not compensate for the consultative service that they endeavoured to deliver to schools. In fact, NP1 commented, “So, it’s like, saying, you know you can either run with us or here is a pair of crutches and you can just hobble along”. This palpable frustration was echoed also by NP3, who was due to take maternity leave and felt that the scheme undermined the time and effort she had invested into promoting consultation within her schools. Thus, the interviewed psychologists felt that SCPA represented a lack of appreciation, respect and understanding for their consultative roles. Additionally, whilst school staff did not explicitly mention the lack of consultation associated with the SCPA scheme, it was nonetheless perceived to be an extremely poor substitute for a full psychological service. Indeed, AP1 branded the scheme as “an insult to the person in the job, as well as the schools and children who are left without a service.”

3.6.4.1.3. Other policies. Additional policies, which were seen to impact upon joint work, included the Irish Exemption Circular (2019a), the Data Protection Act (2018) and COVID-19 restrictions. The vast majority of participants welcomed the Irish exemption circular, which gave staff the independence to award Irish exemptions to students based on results from school-based assessments. The interviewed NEPS psychologists agreed that this circular had significantly reduced the amount of time needed for mandated assessments and thus, improved the quantity and quality of consultation that could be offered to schools. School staff also credited the circular with the prioritisation of more complex cases for joint work. However, the sense of liberation and autonomy associated with the Irish exemption circular contrasted with the perceived constraints that had been imposed on joint work by both the Data Protection Act and the COVID-19 restrictions. For instance, NP4 discussed how the introduction of the data protection guidelines, which she acknowledged were vital to ensuring the privacy of individual students and schools, also limited the amount of detail staff could provide when discussing cases during group supervision. Additionally, some participants including TP1 and NP2, felt that the COVID-19 restrictions had also impacted negatively upon their work. For example, NP2 described how she was unable to undertake an observation of a student in class, a process which she felt was vital for getting to know the student and understanding his behaviours.

3.6.4.2. Time. Each primary school was designated a certain amount of time with their psychologist and, despite reports of individual psychologist flexibility and generosity with their time, these limitations were seen to have significant connotations for joint work. The most

notable implication appeared to be the prioritisation of individual work, particularly assessment, over other services, such as consultation, systemic work, and therapeutic intervention. One survey respondent clarified this point by stating that, “Schools do not want to use precious assessment time on training or discussion even though this is often very needed”. Indeed, NP2 reflected on a case in which a student was experiencing behavioural difficulties and the school’s behaviour policy, which was based on rewards and punishments, contradicted the more child-centred and relationship-focused interventions which had been put in place. However, whilst she felt a review of school policies would have been extremely beneficial, she reported that she simply did not have any time left to facilitate this systemic endeavour. Additionally, she also predicted that the school staff may not have welcomed such a proposition, as they typically preferred to designate their allocated time to the next student on the list. This suspicion was confirmed by SET1 who reported that rather than “wasting time” reviewing previous cases, the staff in his school would generally “put a new child or a new issue or a new crisis forward as often as possible”. Similarly, TP1 also shared this experience, wherein he commented that the lack of time afforded to schools often resulted in a “rush to get a child assessed ...before our time is up”. Despite their eagerness to ensure that the needs of individual students were given precedence, some school staff appeared to recognise the potential scope of joint work beyond assessment. For example, AP2, who was a strong advocate for more systemic training and support, commented, “It’s as if they set up the system to not be 100% successful... We are really only getting a taste of what NEPS could be.” Hence, despite the introduction of the SETAM, both stakeholders recognised that the limited schedule for joint work often resulted in a diluted psychological service, wherein the brevity of individual cases was favoured over more expansive, yet more time-intensive work.

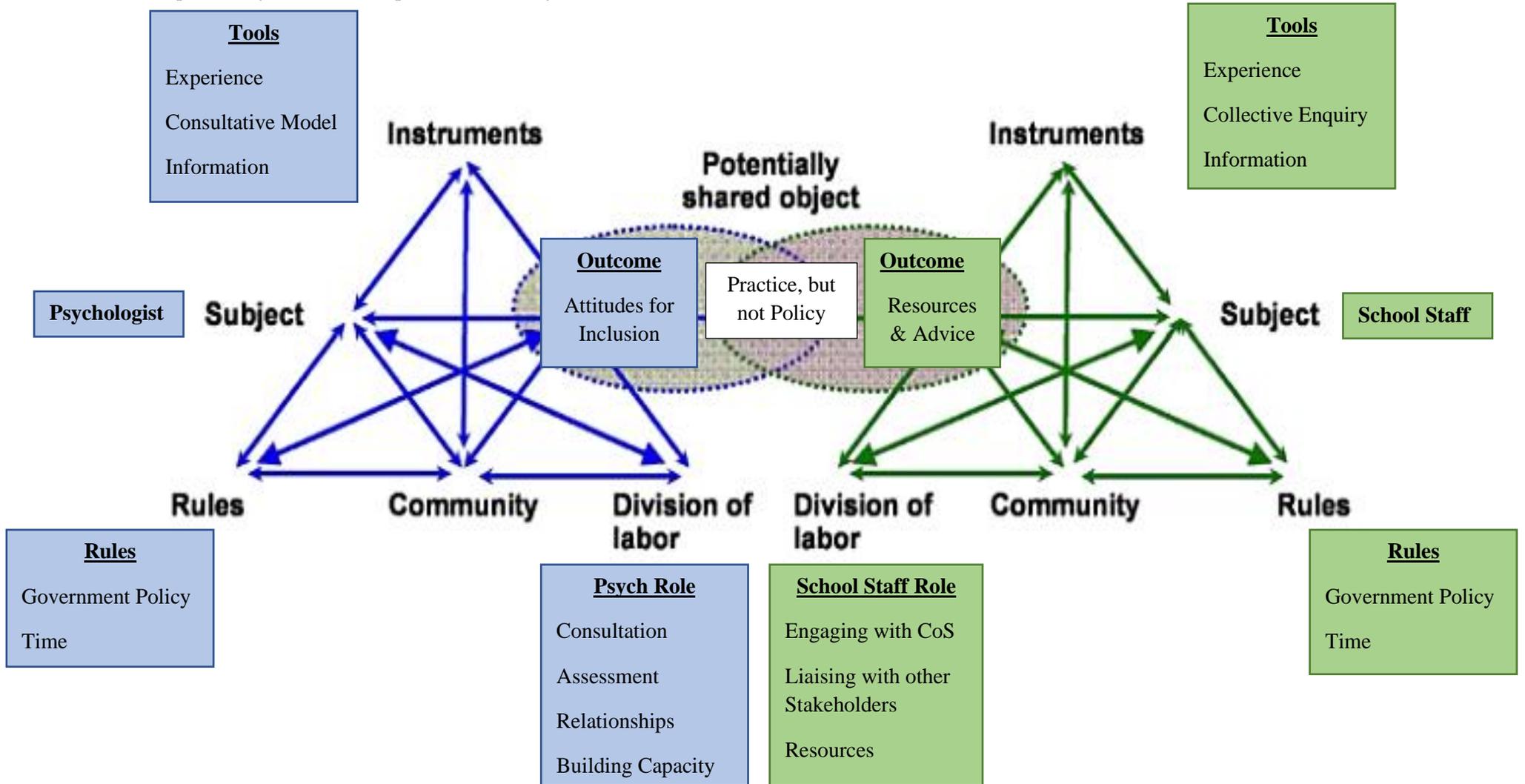
3.7. Summary of Findings

This research sought to explore experiences of joint work between NEPS psychologists and primary school staff to facilitate inclusion between 2015 and 2020. The first research question attempted to understand how joint work contributed to the inclusion of all students. Participant experiences suggest that inclusion was being facilitated at the school support plus level, wherein individual teacher attitudes and practices for inclusion were further developed through joint work. Descriptions of more systemic work, whilst significantly less frequent, nonetheless served to represent the potential capacity of joint work for developing a more inclusive school ethos. The second research question aimed to explore the roles and responsibilities of both stakeholders for joint work. Psychologists were seen to build capacity

of school staff through training, consultation and less often through systems work. However, findings suggest that there was a lack of role clarity for both teachers and psychologists within consultation, as well as a divergence in the expected outcomes. Additionally, SETs and principals also reflected on experiences of acting as mediators between the psychologist and parents or class teachers, as well as the challenges associated with prioritising students for joint work and the equitable distribution of resources. The third research question sought to understand how tools, resources or structures may support joint work. The generated themes included experiences of stakeholders, information, and consultation. Interestingly, staff “buy-in” for consultation was perceived to be an added bonus, which served to facilitate more successful joint working when present. Moreover, prior experience of joint work, teacher familiarity with SEN and the psychologist’s own professional interests were all described as valuable tools. The fourth and final research question explored how rules and policies influenced joint work. Government policies were seen to have a significant impact upon joint work, in particular the SETAM was noted to have lessened the preoccupation with formal diagnosis amongst school staff and increased their interest in discussing the presenting needs of their students. Moreover, the SCPA scheme and time limitations were described as barriers which considerably impeded the success of joint work. Findings for the current research have been mapped onto the CHAT framework and a visual depiction of this is visible in Figure 9.

Figure 9

Visual Depiction of Themes Compared to CHAT framework



3.8. Discussion

The current research was informed and shaped by the CHAT theoretical framework. As previously discussed, Engeström (1999) has outlined five key principles for the study of activity systems, including the significance of contradictions within and between systems, which may lead to transformations in practice. Therefore, the findings of the current research will be considered, with particular attention paid to contradictions within the different nodes of a single activity system, as well as differences that emerged between the experiences of psychologists and school staff. The main contradictions which arose in relation to each research question, as well as the subsequent recommendations made by the researcher are outlined in Sections 3.8.1., 3.8.2., 3.8.3., and 3.8.4. and are also summarised in Table 9. Additional findings and implications have been explored further in the fourth chapter in Sections 4.5., 4.6., and 4.7.

Table 9

Primary Contradictions and Recommendations for The Current Research

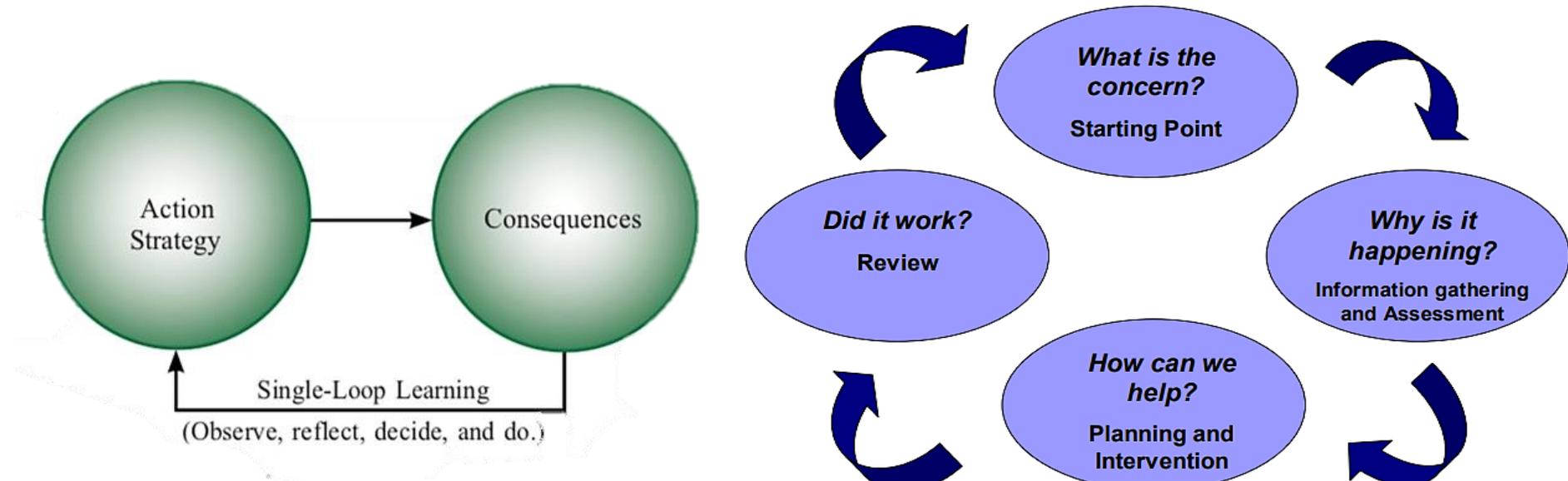
Research Question (RQ)	Primary Contradiction	Within or Between Systems?	Recommendation
RQ 1 Joint Work	Limited time allocations are reinforcing assessment and preventing engagement in more systemic work.	Within	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand four stage problem-solving process • Recruit additional psychologists
RQ 2 Roles	Role ambiguity exists for teachers and psychologists, particularly during consultation.	Between	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracting to form the foundation for five stage problem-solving process.
RQ 3 Tools	Prior experience of joint work was seen as a facilitator, but class teachers were less likely to work with the psychologist than SETs or principals.	Within	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group consultation for class teachers facilitated by NEPS psychologists
RQ 4 Rules	Understaffing and time limitations have undermined the potential benefits of the SETAM.	Within	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit additional psychologists • Replace SCPA with full time psychologist cover

3.8.1. Research Question 1: How does joint work between psychologists and staff support the inclusion of all students?

The findings of this study suggest that joint work has the capacity to support both the inclusion of individual students, as well as the development of a more inclusive school ethos. However, participant experiences suggest that whilst both are possible, joint work which focused on inclusion at the school support plus level was much more common due to time limitations. Thus, this finding is representative of a contradiction at the intrasystems level wherein, the rules or time allocations were seen to heavily influence the nature of joint work, which was conducted, as well as the subsequent outcomes or object (Engeström, 1999). Whilst individual casework at this upper level of the continuum was seen to empower specific staff members in relation to including individual students, it was noted to have little impact in terms of the broader school ethos. According to the theories of practice and organisational learning developed by Argyris and Schon (1978; as cited in Houchens & Keedy, 2009), this is referred to as single loop learning. Notably, it is described as the most typical reaction to a perceived issue, wherein an individual recognises that something is not working and thus, attempts to change their actions in order to elicit a more successful outcome (Houchens & Keedy, 2009). Similarly, within the four stage problem-solving framework (Department of Education and Sciences, 2007b, p5) commonly utilised for joint work, stakeholders are tasked with first defining the concern, gathering information, and implementing changes, before finally reviewing the progress that has been made. Thus, this action-oriented framework is seen to fit within the model of single loop learning, as it forgoes a more in-depth consideration of the principles and beliefs which underpin the agreed upon strategies and interventions (Houchens & Keedy, 2009). Figure 10 provides a visual depiction of single loop learning alongside the problem-solving framework for comparison.

Figure 10

Comparison of the Current Four-Step Problem Solving Framework with Single Loop Learning



It has been argued that double loop learning, which focuses on systemic reflection as well as the subsequent revision of action plans, constitutes a more effective learning model (Cartwright, 2002; Houchens & Keedy, 2009). Research which has explored the use of double loop learning amongst school principals has found that it served to equip these educators with the information, skills, and flexibility to consider how their values and practices may affect and indeed, be affected by the presenting concerns (Houchens et al., 2012; Houchens & Keedy, 2009; Ikin & McClenaghan, 2015). Thus, it may be suggested that the double loop learning model could also be used within joint work with the aim of making explicit connections between concerns around individual students with wider policies and structures, as well as the governing principles and values within the whole school system. This proposal aligns with the recommendations made by Desforges and Lindsay (2010) who have argued that the NEPS psychologist is well-placed to support schools to review “non-child ecosystemic factors”, such as policy development, the quality of teaching and the use of resources, which may be impacting upon inclusion in schools (p. 185).

In order to facilitate this, it is recommended that the four-stage problem solving model be extended to incorporate opportunities for additional reflection and reframing at a more systemic level. This fifth stage would provide a platform for psychologists and staff to work together to understand how the new knowledge and information that was generated through engagement with the existing four stages may benefit the whole school community. This extended five stage problem solving framework is visually depicted alongside the double loop learning model in Figure 11. This fifth stage could provide an opportunity to reflect and revise existing behaviour policies, the distribution of SET hours or indeed the systems in place for prioritising students for joint work. Thus, the extension of this model would provide greater scope for the NEPS psychologist to contribute to the School Self-Evaluation process as previously discussed in Section 2.3.9. and hence, would also promote the integration of joint work with the existing systemic endeavours in the school setting (Fitzgerald et al., 2021). Moreover, it may also enable the dissemination of new information from an individual case at the school support plus level to the wider school system at the classroom and school support levels (see Figure 12). Indeed, some interviewees already seem to be implementing a similar process, such as SET1 who reported that any new recommendations from psychological reports are generally shared with all staff in his school. Thus, although it is acknowledged that there are some examples of good practice wherein this fifth stage has been organically adopted by stakeholders, an official extension of the problem-solving framework would ensure more widespread engagement with this reflective process as a central tenet of joint work.

Figure 11

Comparison of Proposed Five-Step NEPS Problem Solving Framework with Double Loop Learning

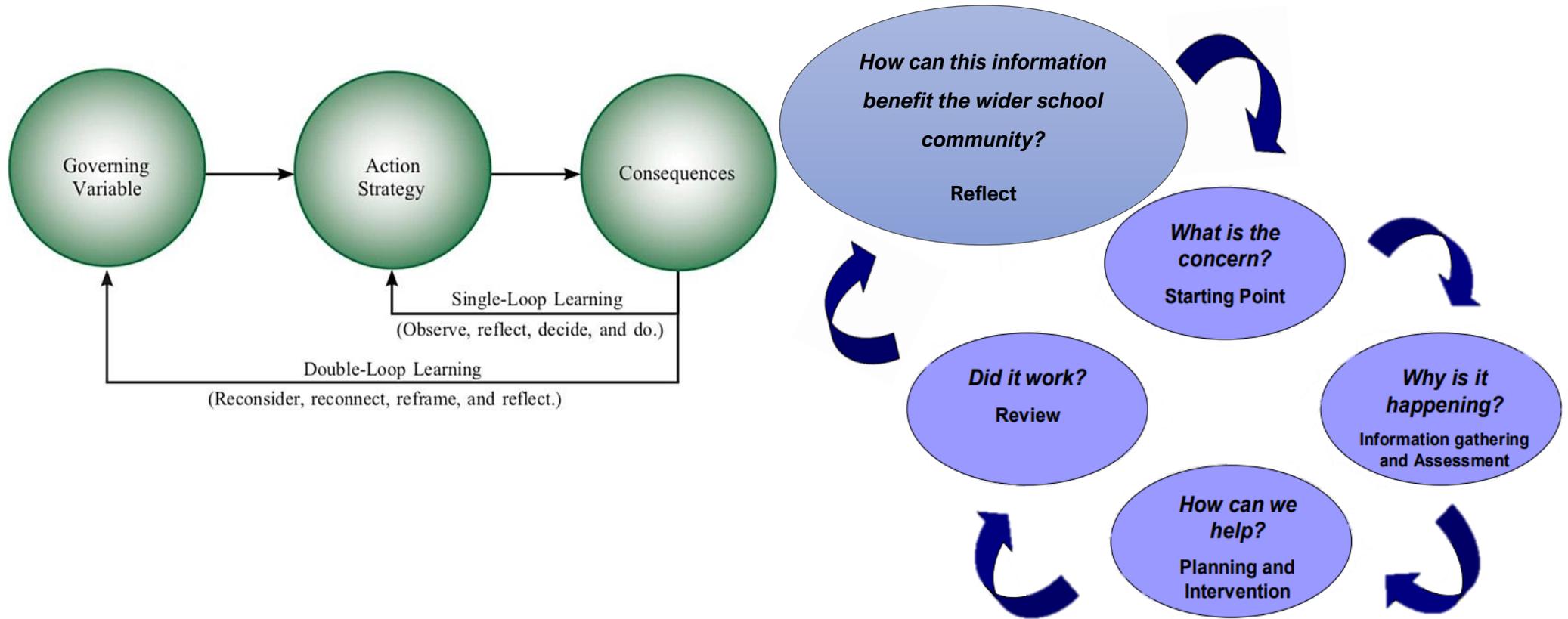
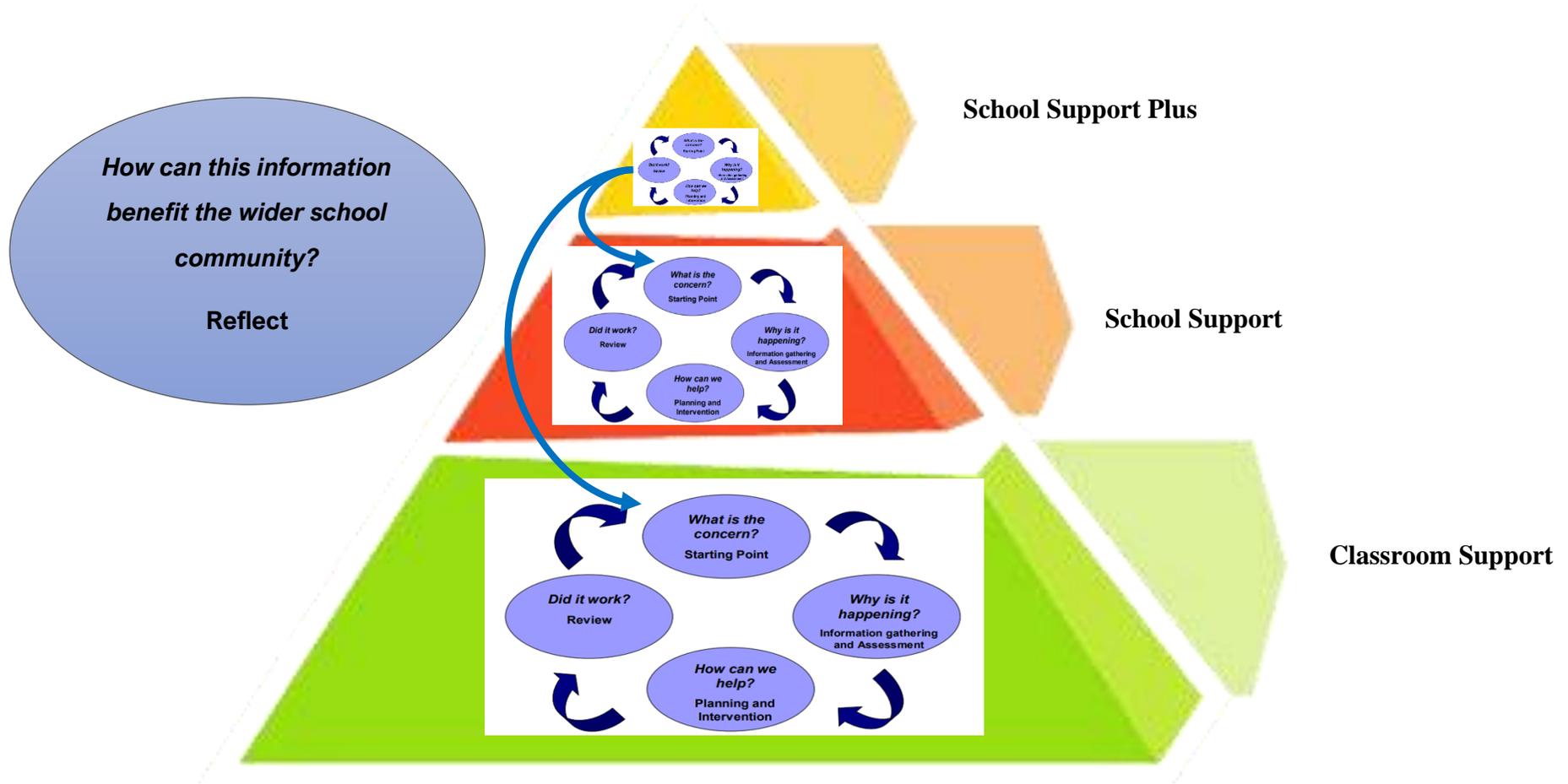


Figure 12

Bridging the Gap Between Individual Casework and More Systemic Work at the Group and Organisational Levels.



3.8.2. Research question 2: What are the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder for joint work?

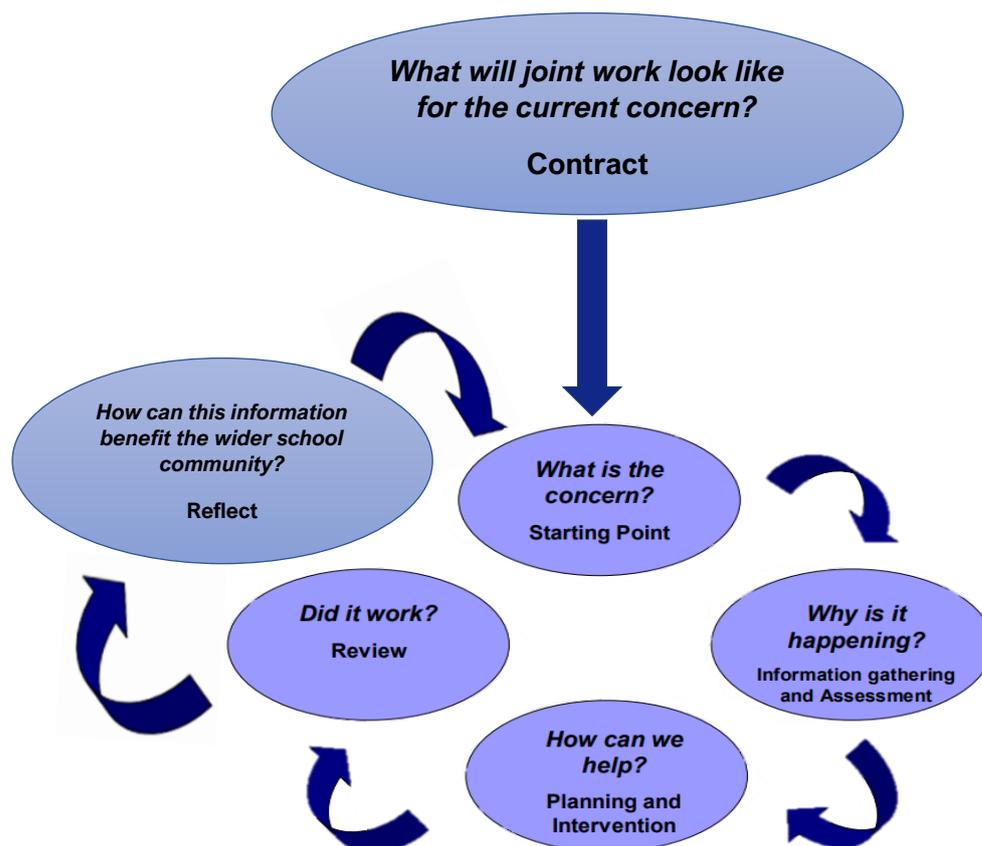
A comparison of psychologist and teaching staff data revealed a contradiction at this intersystem level in relation to consultation, wherein both groups were noted to have opposing definitions of the duties of the psychologist and were also unable to identify a distinct role for school staff. Interestingly, this is the only contradiction which was seen to have arisen between systems. Whilst teaching staff and principals viewed the psychologist as delivering advice and recommendations, which would solve the presenting problem, the psychologists saw themselves more as reflexive practitioners offering a psychological insight which may subsequently inform planning. Furthermore, neither group identified a specific role for school staff during consultation, but rather cited the duties that were undertaken before and after these discussions, such as response to intervention, prioritisation of students, or implementing action plans. Hence, when compared with Lacey's (2013) continuum of joint work, these descriptions suggest that the consultative relationship was more representative of co-ordination rather than collaboration. It is acknowledged that some psychologists commended staff "buy-in" for consultation as extremely beneficial for the overall efficacy of joint work, however when present this engagement was viewed as a bonus, rather than an expectation or a defined role. Thus, the results of this study suggest that the consultative relationship and more specifically, the roles of both parties require further clarification. This finding echoes earlier Irish literature such as that conducted by O'Farrell and Kinsella (2018) who found that psychologists reported assuming that their teacher colleagues were familiar with consultation, however the teachers in this study noted that they needed more information and training. In fact, one staff member stated "...I think it could make the consultation process a bit more effective, if we knew what was happening." (O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018, p 321).

According to Farrell et. al. (2005), if maintained, this lack of clarity has the potential to result in a loss of faith in the psychological service amongst teachers, which will ultimately impact upon the students who benefit from joint work. Thus, it has been advised that clear definitions for consultative joint work must be established and shared with all stakeholders before any further discussions are conducted (Farrell et al., 2005; Farrell et al., 2006; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004). It has been noted that when a shared definition of the roles and outcomes of joint work are established, all parties are more willing to contribute and there are more positive outcomes for the children involved (Farrell et al., 2006). Therefore, it is suggested that NEPS psychologists should incorporate purposeful contracting into the start of every consultation,

wherein the expectations and assumptions of all stakeholders in relation to roles, responsibilities and outcomes are explicitly discussed (Newman & Rosenfield, 2019). Literature pertaining to consultation within school psychology has highlighted the considerable benefits associated with contracting, which include the acquisition of fully informed consent from the consultee, a stronger consultative relationship between the psychologist and the school professional, and higher ratings of the perceived efficacy of consultation as well as overall participant satisfaction with the process (Newman et al., 2017; Pas, 2012; Thomas, 2010). Thus, it is postulated that a more consistent approach to contracting, wherein the development of a shared understanding is seen as the prerequisite to engagement in the collaborative five-step problem solving process (see Figure 13), may facilitate the much sought-after school staff “buy-in” for consultation, as described in the current study.

Figure 13

Visual Depiction of Contracting Before Engaging in Five-Step Problem Solving Process



3.8.3. Research Question 3: How are structures, resources, and supports used to facilitate successful joint work?

Experience was a key theme which was seen to facilitate successful joint work between the interviewed psychologists and teachers. Above all, previous experiences of joint work which was common amongst more senior stakeholders, as well as principals, and SETs, was seen to be particularly beneficial as both psychologists and school staff reported being more comfortable with their roles within joint work as well as the structures and systems which sustained it. Thus, it could be suggested that the findings of this research appear to confirm Allport's (1954) "contact hypothesis" as outlined in the literature review. In order to capitalise on this potential asset, it is suggested that less experienced staff members as well as class teachers are provided with additional opportunities to work jointly with the psychologist, and this could be delivered through the use of the group consultation model. The current research suggests that in line with the experiences of NP4, this method may be beneficial in further developing working relationships and embedding the consultative model amongst this cohort. Indeed, Irish research has found that the model could be used as an effective tool for building strong partnerships between teachers and psychologists, whilst also enabling some staff to move "away from the traditional view of the [psychologist] as an assessor." (Hayes & Stringer, 2016, p 155).

3.8.4. Research Question 4: What rules, regulations, expectations, or norms influence the joint work of NEPS psychologists and school staff?

As previously discussed, it was expected that the introduction of more inclusive and rights-based legislation would have significant implications for the NEPS psychologist, with a predicted reduction in assessment and increase in consultative and systemic work (Farrell, 2010; Howe & Griffin, 2020). However, according to participant experiences the potential benefits of the SETAM (2017) for joint work were overshadowed by psychologist understaffing and time limitations, wherein assessment continued to be prioritised above other duties. These findings are comparable with the results of the literature review which also found that high student-to-psychologist ratios led psychologists to engage in more assessment related duties (Bell & McKenzie, 2013; Nkoma & Hay, 2018). Similarly, a recent survey of NEPS psychologists in America found that this is an ongoing concern, whereby the number of students designated to a psychologist was positively associated with increased engagement in assessment and less time spent on mental health services, instructional and behavioural support,

early intervention and preventative work, as well as systems level consultation (Farmer et al., 2021). Hence, it could be argued that the ongoing stereotype of the “NEPS assessment”, as described by NP1, may, in part, stem from the continued prominence of assessment related duties, as a result of inadequate staffing levels within the service.

Farmer et al. (2021) suggest that training and recruitment of additional NEPS psychologists is essential in order to reduce student ratios and ensure that the full range of psychological skills and services are available to schools. This recommendation was also echoed in an Irish context by Desforges and Lindsay (2010), who further cautioned against a prolonged reliance on what they described as the “stop-gap” of single assessments under SCPA (p. 129). Findings of the current research suggest that this warning, issued over a decade ago, has not been heeded, as SCPA continued to represent a significant barrier to joint work, whilst also perpetuating the assessment expectation. Thus, it is recommended that the number of psychologists employed with the NEPS be increased to not only reduce reliance on the SCPA scheme, but also to enable psychologists to consistently engage with the wide range of services that they are qualified to provide.

3.9. Potential Barrier to the Implementation of Recommendations.

The implementation of the proposed recommendations is seen to be crucial for the growth of joint work in an Irish context, however it is acknowledged that potential barriers which may potentially impede the successful adoption of these suggestions must also be considered. The main recommendation arising from this research is discussed in Section 3.8.1. and advocates for the progression of joint work beyond the assessment of individual students at the school support plus level, to a broader conceptualisation which prioritises the holistic growth of a more inclusive school system. As previously discussed in Section 2.4.2. the competing agendas of educational equity versus educational excellence have undoubtedly resulted in significant dilemmas for school staff, whose professional efficacy is often judged based on the standardised assessment results of their students (Winter & O’Raw, 2010). Thus, a move away from the current individualised model of joint work, which isolates and medicalises students who are not achieving the expected results on these measures may provoke understandable apprehension for teachers and principals, as standardised assessment results will continue to be seen as the primary indicator of success. Whilst any proposed reconfiguration of this economically orientated educational policy is beyond the scope of this paper, it is nonetheless important to reflect on how this may impact upon stakeholder

engagement with the proposed development of joint work through the expansion of the current four stage problem solving framework.

3.10. Limitations

This study aimed to explore joint work between teaching staff and psychologists for the inclusion of students, and thus sought to gather information from class teachers, principals and SETs as well as NEPS psychologists. Notably, the exclusion of students and their parents from this sample represents a significant limitation of the current study, as the true impact of joint work in terms of the student's everyday experiences as well as their overall inclusion within the school community cannot be adequately addressed or understood without their direct participation (de Leeuw et al., 2020; Forde et al., 2018). Similarly, whilst teachers of special classes for students with autism took part in the initial survey, none of this cohort were available for interview. The increasing prevalence of special classes in Ireland (DES, 2021a) suggests that developing an understanding of the joint work between NEPS psychologists and teachers working in these settings would be extremely important moving forward.

3.11. Conclusion

The current research contributes to the empirical literature on joint work between NEPS psychologists and primary school teachers and principals, to support the inclusion of children with SEN, in the Irish context. Research findings, as informed by contradictions within activity theory, pose a number of implications for policy, practice, and future research and these are outlined in Table 10.

Table 10

Implications for Policy, Practice and Directions for Future Research

Implications for Policy, Practice and Future Research	
<i>Implications for Policy</i>	
•	Additional recruitment of psychologists by the NEPS is recommended in order to increase time allocations for joint work and hence, ensure that all schools have access to the full range of psychological services.
•	It is also recommended that the SCPA scheme be replaced as a matter of urgency. The findings of this research suggest that the scheme is not fit for purpose as schools require consistent access to the full range of services that are provided by their NEPS psychologist.
<i>Implications for Practice within NEPS</i>	

-
- It is suggested that the four-step problem solving framework currently utilised by the NEPS service be expanded to incorporate a fifth stage which will prompt stakeholders to reflect on individual casework in order to ascertain how new learning or information could benefit the wider school community, in line with the double loop learning model outlined by Argyris and Schon (1978; as cited in Houchens & Keedy, 2009). It is hoped that the inclusion of this fifth step would facilitate more systemic joint work.
 - It is recommended that schools psychologists engage in contracting at the start of each consultation in order to create a shared understanding of the process with their teaching colleagues.
 - It is proposed that all parents be provided with an alternative to writing in the Request for Involvement form, when applying for psychological involvement. It is further recommended that a Plain English report/document which summarises the outcomes of joint work be provided to all parents (National Adult Literacy Agency, 2008).
 - It is suggested that the group consultation model be used to further support the development of working relationships between NEPS psychologists and class teachers as well as less experienced teaching staff.
 - It is proposed that the NEPS service may offer consistent support to schools, and principals in particular, in order to develop and maintain structures and systems which would ensure the fair and equitable allocation of SET and SNA support, as well as the prioritisation of students for joint work.

Directions for Future Research

- Future research may wish to consider the experiences of students and their parents who may have been directly or indirectly involved in joint work, in order to explore how it may have impacted upon their experiences of school.
 - It is recommended that future research is conducted to explore joint work between NEPS psychologists and teachers or Special Needs Assistants in special classes attached to mainstream schools.
-

This research is considered timely, given the recent revisions to policy and legislation for inclusion, both in Ireland and further afield. The aim was to explore participant experiences in order to ascertain the impact of DES Circular 0013/2017 and the SETAM (2017) on joint work. Changes to the working relationship were evident in descriptions of the needs-led work being conducted by both stakeholders, as well as the new roles being assumed by school staff.

However, it must also be noted that barriers, including a lack of clarity within consultation, understaffing within the NEPS service and limited time allocations, appear to have prevented the complete transformation in practice that was expected to accompany the SETAM (2017). It is hoped that this analysis of joint work and more specifically the exploration of contradictions, informs the future working relationship between NEPS psychologists and primary school teaching staff, in order to further promote and enhance the provision of inclusive education in Irish mainstream primary schools.

4.0. The Critical Review

4.1. Overview

This chapter offers a critical reflection on the research process. First a personal reflection on the research process and findings is presented. Next, strengths and limitations of the current study are outlined, followed by a discussion of the implications for policy and practice relating to joint work, as well directions for future research. The distinct contribution of this research to the field of school psychology is then outlined. Finally, a five-hundred-word statement which outlines the impact of the current research for the practice of school psychology, policies which relate to joint work as well as the body of empirical literature will be presented.

4.2. Personal Reflection on Research Process and Findings

In order to consider the research process and findings I have chosen to use Rolfe's (2001) reflective cycle, which comprises of three stages namely, What, So What and What Now.

What?

The title of the current research "all singing from the same hymn sheet" is a quotation which was taken from a survey response and posed as a question to the reader at the start of the paper. The question is intended to provoke the same curiosity that I felt at the outset of my research process, wherein I considered whether my differing interpretations of joint work as a teacher and subsequently as a trainee psychologist were reflective of a broader divide between stakeholders. In fact, prior to data collection I had assumed that contradictions would arise primarily between the experiences of both stakeholders, as a result of miscommunication between NEPS psychologists and teaching staff. Hence, I felt sure that the contribution of this project would be in developing a platform for these groups to share and compare their narratives. Consequently, the concept of multi-voicedness as described in the CHAT theoretical framework formed an integral part of the data collection and analysis, wherein contradictions in experiences, as well as any divergences in language were explored in the conceptualisation of joint work (Engeström, 1999). However, the findings of this study suggest that overall school staff and psychologists were "singing off the same hymn sheet" with respect to three out of the four research questions posed. Notably, the only question where a contradiction arose between

the activity systems, was in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders for joint work.

So What?

I feel that my engagement in data collection and analysis has had a significant impact upon my own understanding of joint work. It could be argued that my prior beliefs did prove to be somewhat accurate for the the second research question, where a notable tension was seen to exist between the consultative aspirations of the psychologists under the SETAM, and the longstanding stereotype of the “NEPS assessment” that was upheld by some of their teacher counterparts. However, this assumption did not adequately address the findings that arose in relation to the other research questions, wherein both cohorts were seen to largely agree on the facilitators and barriers, as well as the outcomes of joint work. Most notably, both psychologists and teachers were united in their assertions that limited time allocations, and a lack of fulltime psychological support under the SCPA were stifling the development of joint work. Therefore, I feel that this research process has enabled me to reconcile my prior experiences and understandings of joint work as a primary school teacher and subsequently, as a trainee psychologist. In fact, my own conceptualisation has shifted from a dynamic in which both parties were at loggerheads in terms of the function and contributions of joint work, to a more cohesive relationship wherein stakeholders are actively working together to navigate the complex array of exosystemic and macrosystemic hurdles encountered on their quest for inclusion (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

What Now?

Moving forward, I believe that the new insights that I have gained from this process will impact not only upon my own personal attitude, but also upon my professional approach towards joint work. More specifically, I hope to learn from the narratives of successful joint work, such as those described by AP2, SET2, and NP4 wherein stakeholders viewed themselves as equal partners in the problem-solving process and to apply these lessons to my own future practice. In addition to my own personal and professional growth, I strongly believe that this research may also have the potential to contribute to the wider field of school psychology. In line with Engeström’s (1999) principle of expansive learning, the identification of contradictions within and between systems has led to the generation of meaningful implications for practice and policy. Despite being borne out of tensions at the inter and intrasystems levels, these recommendations also strive to build on the existing strengths that

have been observed within participant experiences. For example, the addition of the initial contracting stage aims to embed the sense of shared understanding that was observed in other areas of the working relationship into the consultative process. Moreover, the concept of the five-stage problem-solving framework is rooted in participant experiences, wherein some stakeholders have reported unofficially adopted this additional stage. Therefore, it is anticipated that if accepted, these suggestions could serve to ensure that all NEPS psychologists and teaching staff are firmly on the same page with respect to all aspects of their working relationship.

4.3. Strengths and Critique

4.3.1. Paradigm. Mertens (2014) suggests that researchers should choose a paradigm which most closely aligns with their own worldview. Hence, the constructivism paradigm was used for the current research as it contends that reality is socially mediated and is subject to each individual's own interpretation (Merriam, 1998). This paradigm was particularly applicable for the phenomenon under study, as the researcher had identified a contrast between her experiences of joint work when employed as a mainstream primary school teacher and subsequently, during her placement as a trainee psychologist in the NEPS service. Thus, constructivism provided the necessary scope to explore and interpret the different realities of each participant through the researcher's own lens, and hence, facilitated a more in-depth conceptualisation of their experiences of joint work (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, it must be noted that whilst the subjectivity associated with this paradigm was seen to be beneficial it also posed an ethical challenge, in ensuring that the reported findings accurately represented participant's experiences (Mertens, 2014). Thus, the researcher utilised a reflexive journal throughout data collection and analysis, in order to address any potential misinterpretations, an example of which can be seen in Appendix P.

4.3.2. Theoretical Framework. According to Anderson and Boyle (2014) inclusive education is a social construct which is heavily dependent on the interactions between the different individuals and systems which implement these practices. Thus, these authors argue that in order to comprehend inclusion, researchers must first examine the relationships between those that have been tasked with facilitating the equitable distribution of education to all. Therefore, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 1999; 2001) was chosen as the theoretical framework as its underlying philosophy states that learning occurs as a result of collective action, which takes place within the broader cultural, socioeconomic and political

context. It must be noted that the selective study of specific nodes within the CHAT framework has been criticised, as literature suggests that in order to fully comprehend a human practice, the researcher cannot disregard any element, but must instead consider the system as a whole (Langemeyer & Roth, 2006). In relation to the current study, the “community” node was not explored and thus, the absence of the experiences of the students, parents, Special Needs Assistants, and other service providers is acknowledged as a significant limitation. However, despite not explicitly outlining this as a research question, information pertaining to the impact of other services upon joint work arose during surveys and interviews and this information was summarised and presented in Appendix O. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the third generation of CHAT facilitated the analysis of tensions within the individual systems of the NEPS psychologist and teaching staff respectively, whilst also comparing the interaction of these systems in order to identify any additional contradictions (Leadbetter, 2008). Hence, a key strength of this robust practice-based approach is the concept of multivoicedness, wherein the experiences of the primary agents namely the psychologist, class teacher, principal and SET were given equal weight when conceptualising joint work (Foot, 2014). Moreover, the framework also highlighted the contradictions which arose within and between systems as opportunities to examine and transform inefficient aspects of the activity (Murphy & Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2008). Thus, the third generation of the CHAT framework provided a platform to not only understand participant experiences of joint work, but also to target areas in need of development for future practice and policy

4.3.3. Design. A mixed methods approach was selected for the current research as the triangulation of data provided a more comprehensive overview of the relationship, than would be possible using qualitative or quantitative methods alone (Bryman, 2006). The sequential explanatory design was chosen, as it enabled the researcher to gain a general insight into the phenomenon using quantitative methods, before enhancing understanding through subsequent qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2003; Ivankova et al., 2006). It must be noted Creswell (2003) highlights that this choice of design, would generally lead the researcher to assume a post-positivist stance for phase one of data collection and a constructivist stance for phase two. However, McChesney and Aldridge (2019) argue that mixed methods research is not reliant on any one choice of paradigm, in fact, they state that successful research is dependent on thoughtful and deliberate selection, and integration of methods and paradigms. Thus, in order to maintain a constructivist stance throughout the research process, the survey

was adapted using information about school staff and psychologist experiences found in existing literature and from pilot testing (Mertens, 2014).

4.3.4. Sample. The current sample included NEPS psychologists employed with the NEPS, as well as mainstream primary school principals, class teacher and SETs. As previously mentioned, although three class teachers who taught in special classes for students with a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder completed the survey, none of these participants agreed to take part in the subsequent interviews. This represents a weakness of the current study given the increasing prevalence of special classes within the Irish context (DES, 2021a). Similarly, despite inviting several class teachers to interview, only one agreed to take part. Participant experiences within this study suggest that class teachers were not interacting with the NEPS psychologist as frequently as their SET and principal counterparts and thus, it is queried whether their lack of engagement with these interviews is reflective of their limited roles in relation to joint work (O'Gorman & Drudy, 2010). Furthermore, the omission of students and parents undoubtedly represents a limitation of the current study, and this will be discussed in greater detail in Section 4.4.

Despite these shortcomings, there was also considerable strengths associated with the population for the current study. These strengths will be discussed in relation to the concept of information power, which prioritises the collection of rich and varied data pertaining to the phenomenon under study over the number of participants (LaDonna et al., 2021; Malterud et al., 2016). Whilst sample sizes for survey studies are typically determined a priori in order to ensure that the data gathered has enough power to prove or disprove the stated hypothesis, it is argued that this method was incompatible with the exploratory and qualitative nature of the current study (Lenth, 2001). Additionally, the traditional measure of data saturation to determine sample size for interviews has been heavily criticised as an ambiguous concept which is often misunderstood and misused by researchers (LaDonna et al., 2021; Leese et al., 2021). Thus, it was decided that information power provided the best method to critically evaluate the sample for both the survey and interviews, as it aligned with the paradigmatic stance and design of the current research. According to LaDonna et al (2021) information power requires consideration of the purposes of the research, the specificity of the participants, the application of theory, and the approach to analysis as well as the quality of data collection. Figure 14 provides a visual depiction of the items and dimensions which are used to assess the quality of the sample using information power. In conclusion, it was determined that the study demonstrated sufficient information power, as the sampling method, approach to analysis,

application of theory, and quality of data collection largely aligned with the stated purposes and paradigmatic stance of the research (LaDonna et al., 2021; Malterud et al., 2016). Each of these concepts is explored in greater detail in relation to the current study in Table 11.

Figure 14

Information Power—Items and Dimensions from Malterud et al (2016, p 1756).

Higher Information Power

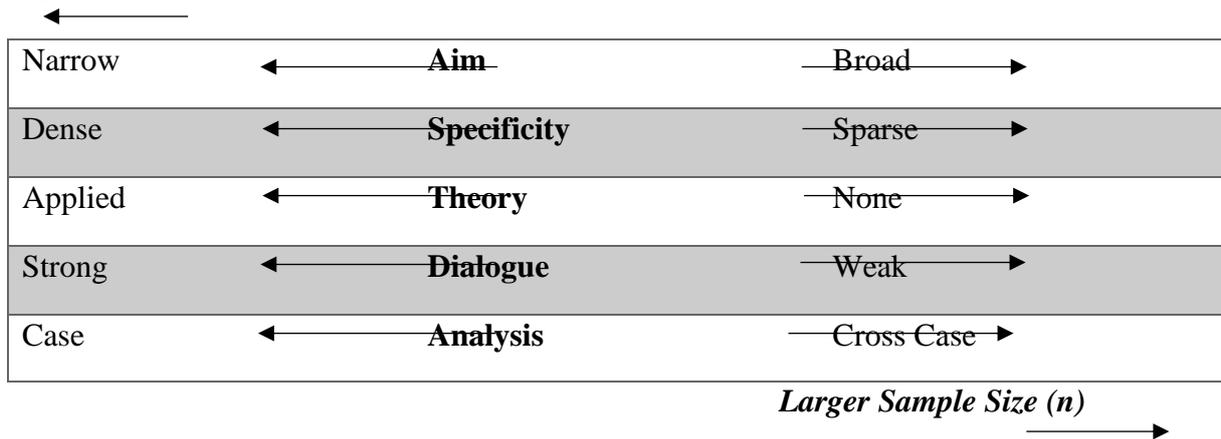


Table 11

Comparison of the Current Study with Malterud et al's (2016, p 1756) Items and Dimensions for Information Power.

Item	Dimension	Current Study
Aim	Study Aim (Narrow/ Broad)	Broad- Joint work is a common phenomenon which many teachers and psychologists will have experienced and thus requires a larger sample size than would be necessary to investigate a less common or rare experience. Thus, the inclusion of the survey represents a significant strength as it enabled the collation of data from a larger population than would be possible through interviews alone (Bryman, 2006).
Specificity	Sample Specificity (Dense/ Sparse)	Dense- Although the aim of the study is broad in nature, the research question sought to explore experiences around this common phenomenon and thus used a purposive sampling method for maximum variation. Hence, interviewees were noted to differ considerably in terms of their years of experience, their roles, their school types, and their qualifications (Bryman, 2016)
Theory	Established Theory (Applied/ None)	Applied- The a priori determination of the CHAT-3 framework meant that the study reached sufficiency at an earlier stage than would have been possible if the aim of the study had been to generate theory from the findings (LaDonna et al., 2021).
Dialogue	Quality of Dialogue	Strong-

(Strong/ Weak)	<p>According to Malterud et al (2016), the researcher’s prior experience in the area of study provides them with the knowledge to effectively challenge the positions of interviewees and hence generate a richer, more in depth dialogue. The researcher has previous experience working as a primary school teacher and was on placement as a trainee psychologist in the NEPS service at the time of the interviews. Additionally, the researcher also reflected on incidents of challenging participants in relation to their perspectives throughout the interviews (see Appendix P), however this was admittedly not possible during the initial survey phase of data collection.</p>
<p>Analysis Strategy (Case/ Cross- Case)</p>	<p>Case- Malterud et al (2016) note that within exploratory research “the ambition is not to cover the whole range of phenomena, but to present selected patterns relevant for the study aim” (p. 1756). Correspondingly, the aim of the current study is not to generalise the findings to the overall population of those involved in joint work but to “particularise” by drawing attention to these individualised experiences (Nielsen, 2009; Polit & Beck, 2010).</p>

4.3.5. Methodological Rigour. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018) there are five key criteria for ensuring quality in qualitative research, namely, reflexivity, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The strategies employed within the current research in respect of each of these criteria are outlined in the following sections.

4.3.5.1. Reflexivity. Reflexivity is the critical examination of the researcher's own beliefs and experiences on the research process (Dowling, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2021b) advise that reflexivity is an essential element of thematic analysis. Moreover, the authors stress that within TA, the researcher is actively involved in the creation of meaning. Thus, the researcher is not expected to maintain an objective stance but rather, is encouraged to "embrace and interrogate" their subjectivity (p 13). Therefore, a reflexive journal was used to document, reflect and take responsibility for how the researcher's own experiences and perspectives impacted upon data collection and interpretation (Berger, 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2021b). Extracts from the reflexive journal, used throughout data collection, analysis, and interpretation, can be found in Appendix P. Furthermore, the researcher has explicitly detailed her own experience and how it informed the current study in Section 1.3. and has also undertaken a personal reflection on the research process in Section 4.2.

4.3.5.2. Credibility. Credibility refers to the "truth-value" of the research, and thus aims to ensure that the findings that have been generated are truly representative of the experiences of participants. Methods and data triangulation were used within the current study to "...reveal different aspects of empirical reality" (Patton, 1999, p 1192). Thus, the collection and comparison of both large-scale quantitative and more in-depth qualitative data provided a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences of joint work (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Furthermore, the implementation of a two-stage hybrid approach to analysis, wherein participant data was first coded inductively, before being mapped onto the CHAT framework using a more deductive approach, also ensured that the integrity of participant data was maintained (Braun & Clarke, 2021b; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Krause & Lynch, 2018).

4.3.5.3. Transferability. Transferability is the applicability of one study to another (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In order to enable future researchers to determine the transferability of the current study to their own projects, it is recommended that the researcher provides "thick descriptions" (Dawson, 2009). In the case of the current research, detailed descriptions of survey and interview participants have been provided in Appendix J and Table 7 respectively.

Moreover, survey and interview questions used in the current research are visible in Appendix H and and Appendix K.

4.3.5.4. Dependability. Dependability refers to the consistency of the research in relation to the accepted standards for the stated design (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Therefore, the researcher is encouraged to create an audit trail which documents the rationale for significant decisions that have been made, in order to enable readers to understand and critique the research process (Polit & Beck, 2010; Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012). In the case of the current study the impact of the CHAT framework on the development of the research questions as well as the survey and interview questions is clearly outlined in Appendix H. Furthermore, the analytical process has been detailed in Appendix L and also compared with Braun and Clarke's (201b) checklist for good reflexive thematic analysis in Table 12. Thus, these descriptions provide the reader with a transparent audit trail.

4.3.5.5. Confirmability. Confirmability is concerned with the degree to which findings could be corroborated by others (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It must be noted that Braun and Clarke (201b) disagree with the concept of intercoder reliability and instead advise that good TA practice, generally, involves a single coder, who applies their own subjective experiences to make sense of the data. However, the authors also acknowledge that multiple coders can provide more complex insights into the dataset. Thus, data from one interview was coded separately by the researcher and one "critical friend", and then, codes were compared and discussed, to ensure that the researcher developed a rich understanding of the data.

4.3.6. Data Collection. Online surveys were deemed to be the most appropriate choice for the initial phase of data collection as they provided a time-efficient way to gather a large amount of information from individuals in a variety of geographical locations (Jones et al., 2013; Mertler, 2018). Despite these significant advantages, the limitations of survey research were also considered before data collection. For example, it has been suggested that the validity of the data collected using self-report surveys is dependent on the honesty of participants, and therefore, can be threatened by social desirability bias (DeMaio, 1984; Mertens, 2014, p. 182). However, it is reasoned that these effects can be counteracted by using an anonymous online survey, such as that adopted by the current study (Joinson, 1999). Furthermore, literature contends that self-selection bias, may affect the external validity of the data collected using surveys (Heckman, 1990). According to Edwards et al (2009), this is an inherent flaw of survey studies and researchers can only hope to promote the response rates to their surveys, by

choosing suitable forums to attract their desired population. Therefore, an advertisement was posted on a social media group directing teachers to ask their principal for more information on the survey.

During data collection, it was noted that the attrition rate for the surveys was quite high, as a large number of participants were noted to ‘drop-out’ before fully completing their surveys. Research suggests that this drop-out attrition rate may be due to respondent fatigue if questions are inappropriate or inapplicable (Eysenbach, 2005). However, measures such as piloting and the use of two separate surveys for psychologists and teaching staff, were taken to reduce the potential for inappropriate or inapplicable questions. Thus, according to the literature the next logical step is to analyse attrition patterns within the survey itself (Eysenbach, 2005). Analysis of the attrition trends in the current survey revealed that in most cases participants began to drop out when presented with open-ended questions and asked to type a reply. Despite this, the inclusion of these open-ended questions is seen as a significant strength of the current study, as it enabled participants to provide more comprehensive and diverse responses which added to the researcher’s own understanding of the phenomenon (Treiman, 2014). Thus, it is proposed that future studies may avoid such high attrition rates by reducing the number of open-ended questions or by dispersing them throughout the survey, rather than positioning them all at the end.

Semi-structured interviews were used for the second phase of data collection. Interviews have been described as “purposeful conversations”, which facilitate the collection of rich and varied data from those who have first-hand experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 6). Semi-structured interviews (SSIs) were specifically chosen to enable the researcher to direct the line of questioning and to probe further into certain responses (Mertens, 2014). This technique also provided the necessary flexibility to ensure that each participant was given the opportunity and space to fully recount their own individual experiences (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Nonetheless it must be noted that a limitation of this method is that participants may be subject to social desirability bias, which may in turn threaten the accuracy of the data collected (Holbrook et al., 2003). However, Bergen and Labonté (2019) argue that the effects of this bias can be minimised by introducing the research clearly and establishing rapport with the participant. Therefore, the researcher included an introductory statement to the interview protocol, which reiterated the aims of the research and also, restated that there were no right or wrong answers, but that it was expected that each individual would provide their own subjective responses. Additionally, sample questions which could be used to build rapport with participants were also included in this

statement (see Appendix K).

As previously described, the interviews took place over the phone or an online communication platform. Research contends that interviews which are conducted over the phone or online can be just as effective as in-person discussions, if certain strategies are employed (Drabble et al., 2015; Farooq, 2015; Vogl, 2013). Thus, throughout the course of the interviews, the researcher endeavoured to reassure the participant, build rapport, and maintain their interest in the topic, using a variety of techniques such as reflexive listening, prompting and “communicating presence” (Farooq, 2015, p 26). A total of 11 interviews were conducted and these varied in length from 28 minutes to 1 hour and 7 minutes; the mean time was 38 minutes 44 seconds. Each interview was recorded using an audio recording device and then transcribed verbatim by the researcher (Bryman, 2016).

4.3.7. Analysis & Interpretation. The quantitative results from the initial survey were summarised using descriptive statistics in order to describe the basic features of the dataset including demographic information and answers to each of the closed questions. It could be argued that the use of inferential statistics would have enabled the researcher to draw inferences and thus, generalise the results of the survey to the larger population (Mishra et al., 2019). However, in line with the overall constructivist paradigm and the qualitative basis of the current study, the aim of quantitative analysis was not to generalise but to “particularise” by contextualising the specific experiences of the participants through the collection of rich descriptions (Neilsen, 2009; Polit & Beck, 2010). Hence, the use of inferential statistics would have been incompatible with the stated aims and paradigm of the current research. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that future research may wish to employ a postpositivist lens and thus, may employ inferential statistics in order to draw generalisable conclusions as to overall nature of joint work between NEPS psychologists and teaching staff (Mertens, 2014; Mishra et al., 2019).

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021b) was used to analyse the qualitative data collected from both the initial survey and the semi-structured interviews. This method of analysis was deemed to be the most appropriate for the current research as it facilitates the development of theoretically informed “thematic statements”, which have clear implications for policy and practice (Braun & Clarke, 2021a; Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012). Additionally, Reflexive Thematic Analysis contends that analysis should be grounded in theoretical assumptions and thus, this approach provided scope to interpret the research findings through the CHAT lens. Braun and Clarke’s (2021b) fifteen point checklist (p. 269)

was used to evaluate the quality of TA carried out in the current research and a summary can be found in Table 12. The first process on this checklist suggests that manual transcriptions should be evaluated for accuracy, and this was completed by the researcher. Coding, the second process outlined by the authors, advises that the researcher must ensure that the themes that were generated are representative of the entire dataset and that each theme is unique and internally coherent. In order to illustrate adherence to these principles, the researcher has included a sample of the initial coding process in Appendix L and a sample of collated quotes, codes, and final themes in Appendix M. Braun and Clarke (2021b) suggest that the third process of analysis must involve the interpretation of codes to create an insightful and well-reasoned narrative that can be supported by illustrative extracts. As previously described the current study employed both inductive and deductive coding to maintain the authenticity of participant experiences, whilst also enabling the researcher to map the findings onto the CHAT framework (Braun & Clarke, 2021b; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Krause & Lynch, 2018). Thus, this analytic approach represents a significant strength of the current study as it enabled the researcher to interpret the collated data in a systematic and transparent fashion (Bryman, 2016). The fourth process, which is simply named, overall, ensures that sufficient time has been used to engage with the process of TA, and in the case of the current research a period of three months was dedicated entirely to analysis and interpretation. The fifth and final process, namely the written report, suggests that the researcher must convey their understanding of the TA approach within their reported results by ensuring that the stated methods align with the final analysis and evidence of this can be found in Appendix L wherein Braun and Clarke's (2021b) Six Phase Approach to Thematic Analysis is used to outline the overall analytical approach.

Table 12

Braun and Clarke's (2011b) Fifteen Point Checklist for Good Reflexive TA (p. 269) Compared with the Current Research.

Process	No.	Criteria	Current Study
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for "accuracy"	Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher and were rechecked after transcription for accuracy.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process	Each interview and survey response were read a minimum of three times before coding began. Each item was then coded on at least two separate occasions.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive, and comprehensive	Themes represent the overall narrative of the extracts which have been collated under each code.
	4	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated	See Sample in Appendix M
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set	Yes
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive	Yes
Analysis	7	Data have been analysed- interpreted, made sense of- rather than just paraphrased or described	Two-stage approach inductive and deductive coding and analysis

	8	Analysis and data match each other- the extracts illustrate the analytic claims	Yes
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well organised story about the data and topic	Findings presented in relation to the research questions and in line with CHAT framework
	10	A good balance between analytical narrative and illustrative extracts is provided	Yes- direct quotes are included throughout the findings.
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly	Analysis was conducted over a period of three months between October 2021 and January 2022.
Written Report	12	The approach to TA, including theoretical positioning is clearly outlined.	Findings are reported in relation to each individual research question after two stage analysis.
	13	There is consistency between the outlined method and reported analysis	See Appendix L for Six Phase Approach to Thematic Analysis as compared to the current research
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis	Researcher's own interpretation of data is presented within findings section
	15	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just "emerge"	Yes, themes were generated through the researcher's active interpretation of participant experiences.

4.4. Ethical Considerations

In designing the current research, students and their parents were purposefully excluded from the sample. The main argument for this omission was the indirect and consultative services provided by the NEPS, which can give rise to situations wherein parents may never have spoken directly with the psychologist, and students may not even be aware that joint work has occurred (NEPS, 2010). Thus, it was assumed that any attempt to include students or families who may have benefitted from joint work would pose considerable ethical challenges. For example, in order to recruit young people and parents who have been the subject of joint work, schools or the school psychology service may have been asked to disclose personal details to the researcher or to contact these families directly to ascertain their interest in participation. It could be argued that this approach would contravene the purpose limitation for the processing of personal data under the Data Protection Act (2018).

Notwithstanding the rationale for their exclusion, it became clear throughout the course of the research that although the included participants were well-placed to discuss the outcomes of joint work for their own practices and attitudes towards inclusion, they were not in a position to comment on how joint work impacted upon the everyday experiences of the student. Indeed, it has been argued that in order to fully conceptualise inclusion, research cannot simply seek to define the inclusive practices that are being carried out by teachers and other professionals, but must also explore the accounts of the students who are directly affected (Gordon, 2010; Norwich & Kelly, 2004). Despite this assertion, previous research conducted within the Irish context has acknowledged that the experiences of teachers and principals are often prioritised over those of students and parents (Devine, 2002; Fleming, 2015; Lynch & Lodge, 2002).

Therefore, the scope of the current study and indeed the broader research area is significantly limited by the absence of the student and parent voices, whereby inclusion can only be considered in relation to the actions, values, and beliefs of those professionals who have been given a platform to discuss their experiences. Hence, it is suggested that future research must explore how joint work has impacted upon student experiences of school. Furthermore, it is advised that this study should adopt a rights-based and person-centred lens, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019- 2023 (TUSLA, 2019). Such a stance would ensure that the individual experiences of students and their parents form the foundation upon which definitions and measures of inclusion can be based.

4.5. Implications for Policy Relating to Joint Work

4.5.1. Expansion of NEPS Service. Understaffing within the National Educational Psychological Service has been continuously highlighted as a key barrier to inclusion in schools (Desforges & Lindsay, 2010; Hoyne & Cunningham, 2019; Ryan & Downes, 2007). Participant experiences in the current study suggest that this shortage of NEPS psychologists was seen to have significant implications for both the quality and quantity of joint work that could be conducted with mainstream primary school staff, as assessment and individual level work was often favoured for its brevity. Thus, it is suggested that increasing the number of psychologists employed with the NEPS is of vital importance to ensure that the full range of psychological services can be delivered during joint work.

4.5.2. Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments. The SCPA has been described as an interim measure to facilitate urgent assessments for students and schools who do not have access to a psychologist through the NEPS (Department of Education and Skills, 2021b). However, the experiences of participants in the current study, and criticisms within Irish literature (Desforges & Lindsay, 2010) suggest that the scheme is an enduring and unwelcome feature which continues to blight joint work. Thus, it is recommended that SCPA be disbanded in favour of a system wherein psychologists who take leave, are replaced with a temporary substitute who could work within the overarching consultative model to provide the full range of psychological services.

4.6. Implications for Practice within the NEPS Service

4.6.1. Systemic Work. The findings of this study suggest that participants who have experienced systemic joint work acknowledge the benefits and value of this school-level support. However, opportunities to engage in organisational level work were noted to be extremely limited due to the time constraints and school staff's subsequent preference for working on individual cases. Similarly, Ryan and Downes (2007) also cited the lack of time as impacting negatively on staff attitudes towards more systemic work in their review of the NEPS school psychology service. Thus, in conjunction with an increase in the number of psychologists employed by the NEPS, it is also recommended that the service expands the current four-step problem solving framework to incorporate a fifth step which will bridge the gap between individual casework and organisational change, in line with the concept of double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon 1978; as cited in Houchens & Keedy, 2009). Moreover, it is suggested that this five-step problem solving framework could be employed when supporting

principals to adapt and create new structures and systems in response to government policies and circulars, such as the allocation of resources within the school and the prioritisation of students for joint work.

4.6.2. Prioritisation and Distribution. Both the prioritisation of students for joint work and the equitable distribution of resources were seen to be complex duties which weighed heavily on the interviewed SETs and principals. Indeed, participant experiences suggest that prioritisation of students for joint work was subject to a range of factors, including, but not limited to, the needs of the individual students. Kenny et al. (2020) describe this as a “domestication”, wherein schools are reported to have developed their own interpretation of policies and thus, are potentially liable to inadvertently misuse resources. Consequently, the authors suggest that school principals in particular may benefit from tailored professional development, as well as responsive support and guidance in order to ensure SEN provision is objectively equitable. Indeed, NP4’s experiences of exploring provision mapping within the group consultation model, may indicate that psychologists are well-placed to support staff in reviewing the SEN structures and systems within schools. Therefore, it is proposed that NEPS psychologists could formally adopt this role in conjunction with the five-step problem solving framework that has been outlined in Section 3.8.1.

4.6.3. Consultation. Contradictions arose between the descriptions and experiences of consultation outlined by psychologists and teaching staff in the current study. Whilst psychologists described it as the cornerstone of joint work, interviewed school staff did not explicitly refer to consultation, despite voicing their appreciation for what they viewed as a series of supportive conversations as well as more formal discussions. Moreover, roles within consultation were also noted to be ambiguous, as teachers and NEPS psychologists failed to define any duties for school staff during the process and also disagreed on the consultative contributions of the psychologist. These discrepancies have been recognised in the literature, wherein, Irish teachers are generally quite positive about accessing the consultative model of service delivery but have also repeatedly requested additional information and training to support their engagement with consultation (Devine et al., 2013; Nugent et al., 2014; O’Farrell & Kinsella, 2018). Therefore, it is recommended that in conjunction with the annual training provided to schools as described by participants, NEPS psychologist should also prioritise contracting with teaching staff, in order to generate definitions for the roles of both stakeholders, as well as a shared understanding of the expected outcomes for consultation (Newman & Rosenfield, 2019).

4.6.4. Working with Parents. Although parents were not included as participants within this study, they are nonetheless recognised as key stakeholders within the joint working process. However, participant experiences suggest that parents, particularly those who have literacy difficulties or do not speak fluent English, may need to rely on school staff for support in filling out the generic Request for Involvement form and understanding the outcomes of joint work. These findings align with research which suggests that parental input and advocacy in relation to SEN is often constrained by sociocultural and education disadvantage (Jones & Gansle, 2010; Trainor, 2008). Hence, participant experiences provide a stark contrast with recommendations from Desforges and Lindsay (2010), who cite the importance of ensuring that parents are afforded the opportunity to share their expertise in relation to their child and are presented with accessible information as to the results of any assessment that has been conducted (p. 14). Therefore, it is recommended that an alternative to filling out the Request for Involvement form be offered for parents and a Plain English report or document which summarises the outcomes of joint work be provided to all caregivers (National Adult Literacy Agency, 2008). These suggestions align with Ryan and Downes' (2007) assertion that the service must "accommodate the centrality of parental involvement with NEPS psychologists" (p. 364).

4.6.5. Group Consultation. The findings of the current study suggested that prior experience of joint work facilitated a more successful working relationship between the NEPS psychologist and teaching staff. However, the results of the survey suggest that class teachers were less likely to interact less with the NEPS psychologist in comparison to their SET and principal colleagues. It is posited that this lack of direct access to the psychologist may serve to disempower class teachers, by increasing their perceived lack of involvement in supporting their students, despite having primary responsibility for the education of these same children (The Education Act, 1998). Indeed, O'Gorman and Drudy (2010) suggest that in order to develop the system capacity integral to inclusion, schools must move beyond their overreliance on the individual expertise of the SET, and instead ensure that all staff are competent in SEN provision. Therefore, it is suggested that NEPS psychologists could facilitate group consultation with class teachers in order to further develop their working relationships with this specific cohort (Hayes & Stringer, 2016).

4.7. Directions for Future Research

4.7.1. Joint Work in Special Class Settings. It is recommended that future research explores the interactions between NEPS psychologists and teachers in special classes, attached to mainstream primary schools. It is proposed that the increasing prevalence of special classes within the Irish educational system warrants an exploration of joint work within these settings, with the aim of ascertaining how best to promote inclusion at the whole class and school levels (Department of Education and Skills, 2019b). Furthermore, recent Irish research suggests that teachers within special class settings require support and training to manage stress and feelings of isolation (Finlay et al., 2019). Thus, it seems particularly important that the working relationship is explored, in order to understand how the NEPS psychologist can best support these teachers.

4.7.2. Student and Parent Experiences. As previously discussed, this study did not explicitly address how students and parents' experiences of school may have been impacted upon by joint work. As the intended beneficiaries of joint work, it is essential that students and parents are provided with a platform to discuss their views and values in relation to joint work for inclusion. In fact, Woolfson et al (2006) state that "consulting with children is not simply the preferred model, but is instead a requirement placed upon professionals" (p. 338). Therefore, it is suggested that future research could effectively explore this gap in order to provide a more comprehensive definition of an inclusive learning environment through the lens of the student.

4.8. Distinct Contribution & Originality

The current research collected empirical data to explore participant experiences of the joint work between NEPS psychologists and mainstream primary school teaching staff. This is the first study which has explored this phenomenon since the introduction of the Circular 0013/2017 and the SETAM (2017) in the Irish context. The strong theoretical underpinning of the current study is considered to be a significant strength, as it is grounded in the third generation of the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 1999; 2001). Hence, this conceptual framework shaped not only the research questions, but also the development of the survey and interview protocol for data collection. Additionally, the CHAT concept of 'multi-voicedness' also informed the specified sample for the study, wherein the experiences of principals, class teachers, SETs and NEPS psychologists from a range of different socioeconomic contexts and geographical locations, were considered. Furthermore, the two-

stage hybrid approach to data analysis also enabled the researcher to deductively explore the findings through the lens of the CHAT framework and thus, provided a coherent narrative for the illustration of joint work. In particular, the analysis of contradictions at the inter and intrasystems levels facilitated the identification of clear implications for policy and practice with the aim of further enhancing joint work and ultimately, promoting inclusion for all students in Irish primary schools.

4.9. Impact Statement

The introduction of DES Circular 0013/2017 and the Special Education Teacher Allocation Model (SETAM; 2017) marked a turning point in the provision of inclusive education in Irish schools, by reducing reliance on psychoeducational assessment and allocating greater autonomy to schools for the management of resources (Kenny et al., 2020). Whilst school staff received additional responsibilities, the role of the NEPS psychologist within this new system, and indeed the interaction between both cohorts was decidedly more ambiguous. The current research is the first study which directly explores the working relationship between NEPS psychologists and teaching staff during this transient period, and hence, is seen to represent a significant contribution to the limited body of empirical literature on joint work in the Irish context. Moreover, the deeply rooted nature of this research in the third generation of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 1999; 2001) is a substantial strength, as the concept of ‘multi-voicedness’ ensured that contributions from both stakeholders were given equal weight. In addition, this theoretical framework also enabled the exploration of contradictions, both between the accounts of psychologists and teachers, and also within the experiences of each individual participant.

The analysis of these inter- and intra-system level contradictions has given rise to clear implications for the practice of NEPS psychologists. For example, participant experiences suggest that joint work remained largely confined to the school support plus level. However, by eliciting examples of good practice, the potential systemic capacity of joint work was revealed. Hence, it was suggested that the current four stage problem solving framework be expanded to incorporate a fifth more reflective stage, in line with double-loop learning, which would serve to connect individual casework with the other stages of the continuum (Argyris & Schon 1978; as cited in Houchens & Keedy, 2009). Thus, recommendations seek to build on narratives of existing strengths with the aim of further promoting the systemic capacity of joint work between NEPS psychologists and teaching staff.

The current research has also resulted in the identification of implications for policy in

relation to joint work. Most notably, the findings revealed that the limited time allocated to each school, in combination with the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA; 2021b) served to undermine the reduction in assessment-related joint work, that was expected to accompany the SETAM (2017). Therefore, an increase in the number of psychologists employed with the NEPS is recommended, in order to reduce reliance on the SCPA and also, to ensure that the full range of psychological services are available to schools.

Implications for the field of school psychology research have also been outlined. For example, future research may wish to consider joint work through the lens of students or special class teachers, in order to build a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in the current context of mainstream primary schools (Department of Education and Skills, 2019b; TUSLA, 2019). Finally, whilst preliminary findings were discussed at the Annual Psychological Society of Ireland Conference in 2021, it is hoped that further dissemination of the research will be made possible through additional presentations, for example at the NEPS Annual Business Conference, as well as publication in a peer reviewed journal.

References

- Ahtola, A., & Kiiski-Mäki, H. (2014). What do schools need? School professionals' perceptions of school psychology. *International Journal of School & Educational Psychology*, 2(2), 95-105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683603.2013.876952>
- Ainscow, M., Booth, T., & Dyson, A. (2006). *Improving schools, developing inclusion*. Taylor & Francis.
- Albritton, K., Mathews, R. E., & Boyle, S. G. (2019). Is the role of the school psychologist in early childhood truly expanding? A national survey examining school psychologists' practices and training experiences. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 35(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377903.2018.1462280>
- Allison, R., & Upham, K. (2006). The danger of response-to-intervention to school psychology: Why we shouldn't be afraid. *NASP Communiqué*, 34(5), 34-35.
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Addison-Wesley.
- Alsoqaih, M. I., Elbedour, S., & Bastien, D. T. (2017). The internationalization of school psychology. *International Journal of Education and Human Development*, 3(1), 1-20.
- Anderson, C. J. K., Klassen, R. M., & Georgiou, G. K. (2007). Inclusion in Australia: What teachers say they need and what school psychologists can offer. *School Psychology International*, 28(2), 131-147.
- Anderson, J., & Boyle, C. (2014). The ecology of inclusive education: Reconceptualising Bronfenbrenner as a framework for research into inclusion.
- Anglim, J., Prendeville, P., & Kinsella, W. (2018). The self-efficacy of primary teachers in supporting the inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorder. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 34(1), 73-88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2017.1391750>
- Ashton, R., & Roberts, E. (2006). What is valuable and unique about the educational psychologist? [Article]. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 22(2), 111-123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667360600668204>
- Banks, J., Frawley, D., & McCoy, S. (2015). Achieving inclusion? Effective resourcing of students with special educational needs. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 19(9), 926-943.
- Banks, J., & McCoy, S. (2017). An Irish solution...? Questioning the expansion of special classes in an era of inclusive education. *The Economic and Social Review*, 48(4, Winter), 441-461.
- Barrett, P. (2005). *FRIENDS for Life: Group leaders' manual for children*. Barrett Research Resources Pty Ltd.
- Bell, H. D., & McKenzie, V. (2013). Perceptions and realities: The role of school psychologists in Melbourne, Australia. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 30(1), 54-73.
- Beltman, S., Mansfield, C. F., & Harris, A. (2016). Quietly sharing the load? The role of school psychologists in enabling teacher resilience. *School Psychology International*, 37(2), 172-188.

- Benson, N. F., Floyd, R. G., Kranzler, J. H., Eckert, T. L., Fefer, S. A., & Morgan, G. B. (2019). Test use and assessment practices of school psychologists in the United States: Findings from the 2017 National Survey. *Journal of School Psychology, 72*, 29-48.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2018.12.004>
- Bergen, N., & Labonte, R. (2019). Everything is perfect, and we have no problems: Detecting and limiting social desirability bias in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research, 30*(5), 783-792. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732319889354>
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative research, 15*(2), 219-234.
- Bolarinwa, O. A. (2015). Principles and methods of validity and reliability testing of questionnaires used in social and health science researches. *Nigerian Postgraduate Medical Journal, 22*(4), 195.
- Booth, T., Ainscow, M., Black-Hawkins, K., Vaughan, M., & Shaw, L. (2002). Index for inclusion. *Developing learning and participation in schools, 2*. Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education
- Boyle, J., MacKay, T., & Lauchlan, F. (2016). *Legislative context and shared practice models*. In B. Kelly, L. M. Woolfson, and J. Boyle's Frameworks for Practice in Educational Psychology, 44–60. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Boyle, J. M. E., & MacKay, T. (2007). Evidence for the efficacy of systemic models of practice from a cross-sectional survey of schools' satisfaction with their educational psychologists. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 23*(1), 19-31.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology, 3*, 77-101.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021a). Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I not use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 21*(1), 37-47.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021b). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Sage.
- Breacháin, A. Ó., & O'Toole, L. (2013). Pedagogy or politics?: cyclical trends in literacy and numeracy in Ireland and beyond. *Irish Educational Studies, 32*(4), 401-419.
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). Conducting an interview. *Interviews. Learning the craft of qualitative research Interviewing, 149-166*.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*. SAGE Publications.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of Child Psychology* (5th ed., Vol. 1, pp. 993–1028). Wiley
- Bryman, A. (2006). Integrating quantitative and qualitative research: how is it done? *Qualitative research, 6*(1), 97-113.

- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Burns, M. K. (2013). Contextualizing school psychology practice: Introducing featured research commentaries. *School Psychology Review*, 42(3), 334-342.
- Cameron, R. J. (2006). Educational psychology: The distinctive contribution. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 22(4), 289-304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667360600999393>
- Cartwright, S. (2002). Double-loop learning: A concept and process for leadership educators. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 1(1), 68-71.
- Castillo, J. M., Curtis, M. J., & Gelley, C. (2012). School psychology 2010--Part 2: School psychologists' professional practices and implications for the field. *Communique*, 40(8), 4-6.
- Çeven, G., Korumaz, M., & Ömür, Y. E. (2021). Disciplinary power in the school: Panoptic surveillance. *Educational Policy Analysis and Strategic Research*, 16(1), 153-171.
- Cheng, H. G., & Phillips, M. R. (2014). Secondary analysis of existing data: opportunities and implementation. *Shanghai archives of psychiatry*, 26(6), 371-375. <https://doi.org/10.11919/j.issn.1002-0829.214171>
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. SAGE Publications.
- Crowley, P. (2007). School psychology in Ireland. In S. R. Jimerson, Oakland, T.D., and Farrell, P.T. (Ed.), *The Handbook of International School Psychology*. Sage.
- Curtin, L., & Egan, M. (2021). Unveiling the context of practice: Teacher Allocation Models to support inclusion in primary schools in Ireland. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1-17.
- Curtis, M. J., Castillo, J. M., & Cohen, R. M. (2008). Best practices in system-level change (pp. 887-901). *Best Practices in School Psychology V. Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychologists*.
- Daher, M., Carré, D., Jaramillo, A., Olivares, H., & Tomicic, A. (2017). Experience and meaning in qualitative research: A conceptual review and a methodological device proposal. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 18.
- Daniels, H. (2016). *Vygotsky and pedagogy*. Routledge.
- Davies, S. M. B., Howes, A. J., & Farrell, P. (2008). Tensions and dilemmas as drivers for change in an analysis of joint working between teachers and educational psychologists. *School Psychology International*, 29(4), 400-417.
- Dawson, J. (2009). Thick description. In A. J. Mills, G. Durepos, & E. Wiebe (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of case-study research*. SAGE Publications.

- de Leeuw, R. R., Little, C., & Rix, J. (2020). Something needs to be said – Some thoughts on the possibilities and limitations of ‘voice’. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 104, 101694. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101694>
- Deacon, R. (2006). Michel Foucault on education: A preliminary theoretical overview. *South African Journal of Education*, 26(2), 177-187.
- DeMaio, T. J. (1984). Social desirability and survey. *Surveying subjective phenomena*, 2, 257.
- Department for Education (2011). *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability*. United Kingdom: The Stationery Office Limited
- Department of Education and Science. (2000). *Learning support guidelines*. Dublin: The Stationery Office
- Department of Education and Science. (1993). *Report of the Special Education Review Committee : Tuairisc an Choiste Athbreithnithe ar an Oideachas Speisialta (0707603331 9780707603339)*.
- Department of Education and Skills. (2011). Literacy and numeracy for learning and life: The national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy among children and young people 2011–2020. In: Department of Education and Skills Dublin.
- Department of Education and Skills. (2016). Looking at our schools 2016: A quality framework for primary schools. In: Department of Education and Skills Dublin.
- Department of Education and Skills. (2012). Circular 0039/12: Implementation of School Self-Evaluation. In.
- Department of Education and Skills. (2015). *Code of Practice for the Inspectorate*. Retrieved from <https://assets.gov.ie/25265/d819973f5ed1418e8ae76f9f8fcffe10.pdf>
- Department of Education and Skills. (2016a). *Circular 0039/2016 Continuing Implementation of School Self-Evaluation*. Dublin.
- Department of Education and Skills. (2016b). *Review of the Pilot of a New Model for Allocating Teaching Resources to Mainstream Schools to Support Pupils with Special Educational Needs*. Government Publications Office: Government of Ireland
- Department of Education and Skills. (2016c). *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020*. In. Dublin.
- Department of Education and Skills. (2017). Circular 0013/2017. Special Education Teaching Allocation. In. Dublin: Department of Education and Skills.
- Department of Education and Skills. (2019a). *Circular 0052/2019 Exemptions from the Study of Irish: Revising Circular 12/96*. In. Dublin
- Department of Education and Skills. (2019b). *Minister McHugh welcomes progress report from National Council for Special Education (NCSE) on Policy Advice on Special Schools and Special Classes*. Government Publications Office: Government of Ireland

- Department of Education and Skills. (2020). *Special Needs Assistant Allocations for the 2020/21 School Year for Mainstream Classes in Primary and Post Primary Schools*. Government Publications Office: Government of Ireland
- Department of Education and Skills. (2021a). *28 May, 2021 – Minister Madigan welcomes publication of special class list for 2021/2022 school year*. Government Publications Office: Government of Ireland
- Department of Education and Skills. (2021b). *Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA): Guidelines for Schools – 2021-2022*.
<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/5ef45c-neps/>
- Desforges, M., & Lindsay, G. (2010). *Procedures used to diagnose a disability and to assess special educational needs: An international review*. National Council for Special Education Trim.
- Devine, D. (2002). Children's citizenship and the structuring of adult-child relations in the primary school. *Childhood*, 9(3), 303-320.
- Devine, D., Fahie, D., & McGillicuddy, D. (2013). What is 'good' teaching? Teacher beliefs and practices about their teaching. *Irish Educational Studies*, 32(1), 83-108.
- Dillenbourg, P. (1999). *Collaborative learning: Cognitive and computational approaches*. *advances in learning and instruction series*. ERIC.
- Dillman, D. A. (2011). *Mail and Internet surveys: The tailored design method--2007 Update with new Internet, visual, and mixed-mode guide*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Done, E. J., & Andrews, M. J. (2020). How inclusion became exclusion: Policy, teachers and inclusive education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 35(4), 447-464.
- Dougherty, A. M. (2013). *Psychological Consultation and Collaboration in School and Community Settings*. Cengage Learning.
- Dowling, M. (2006). Approaches to reflexivity in qualitative research. *Nurse researcher*, 13(3).
- Drabble, L., Trocki, K., Salcedo, B., Walker, P., & Korcha, R. (2015). Conducting qualitative interviews by telephone: Lessons learned from a study of alcohol use among sexual minority and heterosexual women. *Qualitative Social Work*, 15(1), 118-133.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325015585613>
- Eames, F. H., & Meehan, A. (2020). Working together: A case study. *Special Educational Needs: A Guide for Inclusive Practice*, 335.
- Edwards, P. J., Roberts, I., Clarke, M. J., DiGuseppi, C., Wentz, R., Kwan, I., & Pratap, S. (2009). Methods to increase response to postal and electronic questionnaires. *Cochrane database of systematic reviews*(3).
- Engeström, Y. (1987). *Learning by Expanding: An Activity-Theoretical Approach to Developmental Research*. Orienta-Konsultit.

- Engeström, Y. (1999). Innovative learning in work teams: analysing cycles of knowledge creation in practice. In Y. Engeström et al (Ed.), *Perspectives on Activity Theory* (pp. 377-406). Cambridge University Press.
- Engeström, Y. (2001). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of education and work*, 14(1), 133-156.
- Engeström, Y. (2005). *Developmental work research: Expanding activity theory in practice* (Vol. 12). Lehmanns Media.
- Etikan, I., & Bala, K. (2017). Sampling and sampling methods. *Biometrics & Biostatistics International Journal*, 5(6), 00149.
- Eysenbach, G. (2005). The law of attrition. *Journal of medical Internet research*, 7(1), e402.
- Fallon, K., Woods, K., & Rooney, S. (2010). A discussion of the developing role of educational psychologists within children's services. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 26(1), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667360903522744>
- Farmer, R. L., Goforth, A. N., Kim, S. Y., Affrunti, N., Naser, S. C., & Lockwood, A. B. (2021). Status of school psychology in 2020: Part 2, professional practices in the NASP membership survey. *NASP Research Reports*, 5(3), 1-17.
- Farooq, M. (2015). *Qualitative telephone interviews: Strategies for success* [Conference Contribution]. <https://hdl.handle.net/10289/9376>
- Farrell, P. (2004). School psychologists: Making inclusion a reality for all. *School Psychology International*, 25(1), 5-19.
- Farrell, P. (2010). School psychology: Learning lessons from history and moving forward. *School Psychology International*, 31(6), 581-598. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034310386533>
- Farrell, P., Jimerson, S., Kalambouka, A., & Benoit, J. (2005). Teachers' perceptions of school psychologists in different countries. *School Psychology International*, 26(5), 525-544. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034305060787>
- Farrell, P., Woods, K., Lewis, S., Rooney, S., Squires, G., & O'Connor, M. (2006). *A review of the functions and contribution of educational psychologists in England and Wales in light of "Every Child Matters: Change for Children"*.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 5(1), 80-92.
- Finlay, C., Kinsella, W., & Prendeville, P. (2019). The professional development needs of primary teachers in special classes for children with autism in the republic of Ireland. *Professional Development in Education*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2019.1696872>
- Fitzgerald, J., Lynch, J., Martin, A., & Cullen, B. (2021). Leading inclusive learning, teaching and assessment in post-primary schools in Ireland: Does provision mapping support an integrated,

- school-wide and systematic approach to inclusive special education? *Education Sciences*, 11(4), 168.
- Fleming, D. (2015). Student voice: An emerging discourse in Irish education policy. *International electronic journal of elementary education*, 8(2), 223-242.
- Fleming, M. (2014). Preparation for statutory registration of psychologists in the Republic of Ireland. *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, 35(4), 166-177.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03033910.2015.1041546>
- Flick, U. (2017). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*. SAGE Publications.
- Flood, E. (2013). *Assisting children with special needs: An Irish perspective*. Gill & Macmillan.
- Foot, K. A. (2014). Cultural-Historical Activity Theory: Exploring a Theory to Inform Practice and Research. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 24(3), 329-347.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2013.831011>
- Forde, C., Horgan, D., Martin, S., & Parkes, A. (2018). Learning from children's voice in schools: Experiences from Ireland. *Journal of Educational Change*, 19(4), 489-509.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-018-9331-6>
- Foucault, M. (2019). *Power: the essential works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*. Penguin UK.
- Foucault, M., Stastny, P., & Şengel, D. (1995). Madness, the absence of work. *Critical inquiry*, 21(2), 290-298.
- Gilman, R., & Gabriel, S. (2004). Perceptions of school psychological services by education professionals: Results from a multi-state survey pilot study. *School Psychology Review*, 33(2), 271-286.
- Gilman, R., & Medway, F. J. (2007). Teachers' perceptions of school psychology: A comparison of regular and special education teacher ratings. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 22(2), 145-161.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/1045-3830.22.2.145>
- Gordon, M. (2010). Student voice key to unlocking inclusive educational practices. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education/Revue canadienne des jeunes chercheuses et chercheurs en éducation*, 3(2).
- Gough, D. (2007). Weight of Evidence: a framework for the appraisal of the quality and relevance of evidence. *Research Papers in Education*, 22(2), 213-228.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02671520701296189>
- Government of Ireland. (1998). *The Education Act*. Dublin.
- Government of Ireland. (2004). *Education For Persons With Special Educational Needs Act*. Dublin.
- Government of Ireland (2018). *The Data Protection Act*. Dublin.
- Government of the United Kingdom of England. (2018). "Special Educational Needs in England-January 2018.". Retrieved from
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment>
- Government of the United Kingdom of England (2014). *Children and Families Act*. London.

- Government of the United States of America. (2004). *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004*. Washington, DC
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2(163-194), 105.
- Gutkin, T. B. (2012). Ecological psychology: Replacing the medical model paradigm for school-based psychological and psychoeducational services. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 22(1-2), 1-20.
- Gutkin, T. B., & Curtis, M. J. (2009). School-based consultation: The science and practice of indirect service delivery. *The handbook of school psychology*, 4, 591-635.
- Hargreaves, A. (1994). Restructuring restructuring: Postmodernity and the prospects for educational change. *Journal of Education Policy*, 9(1), 47-65.
- Hayes, M., & Stringer, P. (2016). Introducing Farouk's process consultation group approach in Irish primary schools. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 32(2), 145-162.
- Heckman, J. J. (1990). Selection bias and self-selection. In *Econometrics* (pp. 201-224). Springer.
- Holbrook, A. L., Green, M. C., & Krosnick, J. A. (2003). Telephone versus face-to-face interviewing of national probability samples with long questionnaires: Comparisons of respondent satisficing and social desirability response bias. *Public opinion quarterly*, 67(1), 79-125.
- Hosford, S., & O'Sullivan, S. (2016). A climate for self-efficacy: the relationship between school climate and teacher efficacy for inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(6), 604-621.
- Houchens, G. W., Hurt, J., Stobaugh, R., & Keedy, J. L. (2012). Double-loop learning: a coaching protocol for enhancing principal instructional leadership. *Qualitative Research in Education*, 1(2), 135-178.
- Houchens, G. W., & Keedy, J. L. (2009). Theories of practice: Understanding the practice of educational leadership. *Journal of Thought*, 44(3-4), 49-61.
- Howe, C., & Griffin, C. (2020). Is Ireland at a Crossroads of Inclusive Education? *REACH: Journal of Inclusive Education in Ireland*, 33(1), 44-56.
- Hoyne, N., & Cunningham, Y. (2019). Enablers and barriers to Educational Psychologists' use of therapeutic interventions in an Irish context [Article]. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 35(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2018.1500353>
- Hyland, L., Ní Mháille, G., Lodge, A., & McGilloway, S. (2014). Conduct problems in young, school-going children in Ireland: Prevalence and teacher response. *School Psychology International*, 35(5), 516-529. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034313515984>
- Ikin, K., & McClenaghan, P. (2015). Modelling the Influences of Evaluation on School Principals: Towards Evaluation Capacity Building. *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, 15(1), 19-27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1035719X1501500104>

- Ivankova, N. V., Creswell, J. W., & Stick, S. L. (2006). Using mixed-methods sequential explanatory design: From theory to practice. *Field methods*, *18*(1), 3-20.
- Jankowski, N., & Provezis, S. (2014). Neoliberal ideologies, governmentality and the academy: An examination of accountability through assessment and transparency. *Educational philosophy and theory*, *46*(5), 475-487.
- Jimerson, S. R., Annan, J., Skokut, M., & Renshaw, T. L. (2009). Educational psychology in New Zealand: Results of the 2006 international school psychology survey. *School Psychology International*, *30*(5), 443-455.
- Joinson, A. (1999). Social desirability, anonymity, and Internet-based questionnaires. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers*, *31*(3), 433-438.
- Jones, B. A., & Gansle, K. A. (2010). The effects of a mini-conference, socioeconomic status, and parent education on perceived and actual parent participation in individual education program meetings. *Research in the Schools*, *17*(2), 23.
- Jones, T. L., Baxter, M. A. J., & Khanduja, V. (2013). A quick guide to survey research. *Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England*, *95*(1), 5-7.
<https://doi.org/10.1308/003588413X13511609956372>
- Kavenská, V., Smekalová, E., & Šmahaj, J. (2013). School psychology in the Czech Republic: Development, status and practice. *School Psychology International*, *34*(5), 556-565.
- Kenny, N., McCoy, S., & Mihut, G. (2020). Special education reforms in Ireland: changing systems, changing schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1-20.
- Kinsella, W., Murtagh, L., & Senior, J. (2014). *Review of NCSE Resource Allocation Process and Evaluation of Deployment of Resources in Schools*.
- Kjær, B., & Dannesboe, K. I. (2019). Reflexive professional subjects: knowledge and emotions in the collaborations between teachers and educational-psychological consultants in a Danish school context. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, *28*(2), 168-185.
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, *24*(1), 120-124.
- Krause, J. M., & Lynch, B. M. (2018). Faculty and student perspectives of and experiences with TPACK in PETE. *Curriculum Studies in Health and Physical Education*, *9*(1), 58-75.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/25742981.2018.1429146>
- Kuutti, K. (1996). Activity theory as a potential framework for human-computer interaction research. *Context and consciousness: Activity theory and human-computer interaction*, 1744.
- Lacey, P. (2013). *Support Partnerships: Collaboration in Action*. Taylor & Francis.
- LaDonna, K. A., Artino Jr, A. R., & Balmer, D. F. (2021). Beyond the guise of saturation: Rigor and qualitative interview data. In (Vol. 13, pp. 607-611): The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education.

- Lambert, N. M., Hylander, I., & Sandoval, J. H. (2004). *Consultee-Centered Consultation: Improving the Quality of Professional Services in Schools and Community Organizations*. Taylor & Francis.
- Langemeyer, I., & Roth, W.-M. (2006). Is cultural-historical activity theory threatened to fall short of its own principles and possibilities as a dialectical social science? *Outlines. Critical Practice Studies*, 8(2), 20-42.
- Leadbetter, D. J. (2004). The role of mediating artefacts in the work of educational psychologists during consultative conversations in schools. *Educational Review*, 56(2), 133-145.
- Leadbetter, J. (2008). Activity theory and the professional practice of educational psychology. *Frameworks for practice in educational psychology: A textbook for trainees and practitioners*, 197-217.
- Leadbetter, J., Daniels, H., & Stringer, P. (2005). Sociocultural Psychology and Activity Theory: new Paradigms to inform the practice of Educational Psychology—Special Issue. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 22(1), 6-18.
- Leese, J., Li, L. C., Nimmon, L., Townsend, A. F., & Backman, C. L. (2021). Moving beyond “until saturation was reached”: Critically examining how saturation is used and reported in qualitative research. *Arthritis Care & Research*, 73(9), 1225-1227.
- Lenth, R. V. (2001). Some Practical Guidelines for Effective Sample Size Determination. *The American Statistician*, 55(3), 187-193. <https://doi.org/10.1198/000313001317098149>
- Leont’ev, A. N. (1978). *Activity, consciousness, and personality*. Prentice-Hall.
- Letts, L., Wilkins, S., Law, M., Stewart, D., Bosch, J., & Westmorland, M. (2007). Guidelines for critical review form: Qualitative studies (Version 2.0).
- Lodge, A., & Lynch, K. (2004). *Diversity at school*. Institute of Public Administration for the Equality Authority.
- Lynch, K., & Lodge, A. (2002). *Equality and power in education*. Routledge & Falmer.
- Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: guided by information power. *Qualitative health research*, 26(13), 1753-1760.
- Mapp, T. (2008). Understanding phenomenology: the lived experience. *British Journal of Midwifery*, 16(5), 308-311. <https://doi.org/10.12968/bjom.2008.16.5.29192>
- Marrs, H., & Little, S. (2014). Perceptions of school psychologists regarding barriers to response to intervention (RTI) implementation. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 18(1), 24-34.
- Maslow, A. H. (1981). *Motivation and personality*. Prabhat Prakashan.
- McChesney, K., & Aldridge, J. (2019). Weaving an interpretivist stance throughout mixed methods research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 42(3), 225-238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2019.1590811>
- McCoy, S., Banks, J., Frawley, D., Watson, D., Shevlin, M., & Smyth, F. (2014). Understanding special class provision in Ireland. *The National Council for Special Education*.

- McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews. *Global qualitative nursing research*, 2, 2333393615597674.
- McKee, N. P. (1992). Lexical and semantic pitfalls in the use of survey interviews: An example from the Texas-Mexico border. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 14(3), 353-362.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education. Revised and Expanded from "Case Study Research in Education."*. ERIC.
- Mertens, D. M. (2014). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. SAGE publications.
- Mertler, C. A. (2018). *Introduction to Educational Research*. SAGE Publications.
- Mishra, P., Pandey, C. M., Singh, U., Gupta, A., Sahu, C., & Keshri, A. (2019). Descriptive statistics and normality tests for statistical data. *Annals of cardiac anaesthesia*, 22(1), 67.
- Murphy, E., & Rodriguez-Manzanares, M. A. (2008). Using activity theory and its principle of contradictions to guide research in educational technology. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 24(4).
- Mwanza, D. (2002). *Towards an activity-oriented design method for HCI research and practice*. Open University (United Kingdom).
- Mägi, K., & Kikas, E. (2009). School psychologists' role in school: Expectations of school principals on the work of school psychologists. *School Psychology International*, 30(4), 331-346.
- Naglieri, J. A., & Kaufman, A. S. (2008). *IDEIA and specific learning disabilities: What role does intelligence play?* Springer Publishing.
- National Adult Literacy Agency. (2008). *A Plain English checklist for documents*. National Adult Literacy Agency. <https://www.nala.ie/publications/a-plain-english-checklist-for-documents/>
- National Council for Special Education. (2011). *Inclusive Education Framework: A guide for schools on the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs*. https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/InclusiveEducationFramework_InteractiveVersion.pdf
- National Council for Special Education. (2013). *Choosing a School: A Guide For Parents and Guardians of Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs*. Meath: NCSE https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Choosing_School_11_08_13W_060913.pdf
- National Council for Special Education, (2013). *Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools*. Meath: NCSE
- National Council for Special Education. (2014). *A Better and More Equitable Way. Delivery for Students with Special Educational Needs. A Guide for Parents/Guardians and Students*. Trim, Co. Meath: NCSE
- National Council for Special Education. (2017). *NCSE Press Release 18th January 2017 NCSE Welcomes a Better and More Equitable Way of Allocating Teaching Resources for Special*

- Needs*. https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/inline-files/NCSE_Press_Release_New%20Model_18.01.17.pdf.
- National Council for Special Education. (2019). *Policy Advice on Special Schools and Classes An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society?* NCSE.
- National Council for Special Education. (2020). *The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) welcomes the continuation of pilot School Inclusion Model for forthcoming school year* <https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NCSE-Press-Release-5-August-2020-Pilot-SIM.pdf>
- National Educational Psychological Service. (2007a). *Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support*. Available from <https://assets.gov.ie/40684/97bbea80d96b4057bf3f1f01107c7db4.pdf>
- National Educational Psychological Service. (2007b). *SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS: A Continuum of Support. Guidelines for Teachers*. . https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_guidelines.pdf
- National Educational Psychological Service. (2010). *A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools*. https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_post_primary_continuum_teacher_guide.pdf
- National Educational Psychological Service. (2019a). *Effective interventions for struggling readers (Second Edition)*.
- National Educational Psychological Service. (2019b). *Working together to make a difference for children*. Department of Education & Skills. https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_parent_leaflet.pdf
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2014). *Internal Clinical Guidelines. British Journal of Medicine, 5*.
- Neilsen, R. (2009). *Travellers' tales: The expatriate English language teacher in the new global culture*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Newman, D. S., McKenney, E. L. W., Silva, A. E., Clare, M., Salmon, D., & Jackson, S. (2017). A qualitative metasynthesis of consultation process research: What we know and where to go. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 27*(1), 13-51.
- Newman, D. S., & Rosenfield, S. A. (2019). *Building competence in school consultation: A developmental approach*. Routledge.
- Nkoma, E., & Hay, J. (2018). Educational psychologists' support roles regarding the implementation of inclusive education in Zimbabwe. *Psychology in the Schools, 55*(7), 850-866. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22147>

- Norwich, B., & Kelly, N. (2004). Pupils' views on inclusion: moderate learning difficulties and bullying in mainstream and special schools. *British Educational Research Journal*, 30(1), 43-65. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920310001629965>
- Nugent, M., Forrestal, R., Long, P., & Larney, R. (2019). *Consultation in NEPS; A Guide for Psychologists*. National Educational Psychological Service.
- Nugent, M., Jones, V., McElroy, D., Peelo, M., Thornton, T., & Tierney, T. (2014). Consulting with groups of teachers. Evaluation of a pilot project in Ireland. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 30(3), 255-271.
- O'Gorman, E., & Drudy, S. (2010). Addressing the professional development needs of teachers working in the area of special education/inclusion in mainstream schools in Ireland [Article]. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 10(s1), 157-167. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2010.01161.x>
- O'Riordan, J. (2017). Inclusion and its implementation in a rural primary school in Ireland. *REACH: Journal of Inclusive Education in Ireland*, 30(1), 45-55.
- O'Farrell, P., & Kinsella, W. (2018). Research exploring parents', teachers' and educational psychologists' perceptions of consultation in a changing Irish context. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 34(3), 315-328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2018.1461612>
- Panteri, M., Calmaestra, J., & Marín-Díaz, V. (2021). Roles of the school psychologist—Current versus preferred roles in the greek schools: A case study from the island of Crete [Article]. *Education Sciences*, 11(8), 439. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11080439>
- Parkinson, S. (2004). Training and practicing standards for educational psychologists in the Republic of Ireland: Current trends and future possibilities. *School Psychology International*, 25(4), 439-454.
- Parkinson, S. (2015). 'Inclusive' educational policy in Ireland - An illusory quest? In A. O'Donnell (Ed.), *The Inclusion Delusion? Reflections on Democracy, Ethos, and Education* (pp. 113-130). Peter Lang Publications.
- Pas, E. T. (2012). Case metamorphosis through consultation. In *Becoming a School Consultant* (pp. 195-209). Routledge.
- Passenger, T. (2013). Introduction to educational psychology practice. In A. J. Holliman (Ed.), *The Routledge International Companion to Educational Psychology*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203809402.ch3>
- Patrick, H., Anderman, L. H., Bruening, P. S., & Duffin, L. C. (2011). The role of educational psychology in teacher education: Three challenges for educational psychologists. *Educational Psychologist*, 46(2), 71-83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2011.538648>
- Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health services research*, 34(5 Pt 2), 1189-1208.

- Perkins, R., Moran, G., Shiel, G., & Cosgrove, J. (2011). *Reading literacy in PISA 2009: A guide for teachers*. Educational Research Centre Dublin.
- Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2003). Evidence, hierarchies, and typologies: horses for courses. *J Epidemiol Community Health, 57*(7), 527-529. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.57.7.527>
- Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2010). Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies. *International journal of nursing studies, 47*(11), 1451-1458.
- Psychological Society of Ireland. (2010). *Code of Professional Ethics*.
<https://www.psychologicalsociety.ie/footer/Code-of-Ethics>
- Raaen, F. D. (2011). Autonomy, candour and professional teacher practice: A discussion inspired by the later works of Michel Foucault. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 45*(4), 627-641.
- Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D. and Jasper, M. 2001. *Critical reflection for nursing and the helping professions: A user guide*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Roschelle, J. (1992). Learning by collaborating: Convergent conceptual change. *The journal of the learning sciences, 2*(3), 235-276.
- Roschelle, J., & Teasley, S. D. (1995). *The construction of shared knowledge in collaborative problem solving*. Springer.
- Rose, R., Shevlin, M., Winter, E., & O'Raw, P. (2015). Project IRIS-Inclusive research in Irish schools: A longitudinal study of the experiences of and outcomes for children with special educational needs (SEN) in Irish schools. Dublin; NCSE Research Report 19.
- Roth, W.-M. (2004). Activity Theory and Education: An Introduction. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 11*(1), 1-8.
- Rothi, D. M., Leavey, G., & Best, R. (2008). On the front-line: Teachers as active observers of pupils' mental health. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(5), 1217-1231.
- Ruel, E., Wagner Iii, W. E., & Gillespie, B. J. (2015). *The practice of survey research: Theory and applications*. SAGE Publications.
- Ryan, C., & Downes, P. (2007). Future steps for NEPS. *Beyond educational disadvantage, 354-367*.
- Sandelowski, M., & Leeman, J. (2012). Writing Usable Qualitative Health Research Findings. *Qualitative Health Research, 22*(10), 1404-1413. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732312450368>
- Shevlin, M., Kearns, H., Ranaghan, M., Twomey, M., Smith, R., & Winter, E. (2009). Creating inclusive learning environments in Irish schools: Teacher perspectives. *The National Council for Special Education*.
- Shevlin, M., Winter, E., & Flynn, P. (2013). Developing inclusive practice: Teacher perceptions of opportunities and constraints in the Republic of Ireland. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 17*(10), 1119-1133.
- Skerritt, C., O'Hara, J., Brown, M., McNamara, G., & O'Brien, S. (2021). Enacting school self-evaluation: the policy actors in Irish schools. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 1-23*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2021.1886594>

- Swan, D. (2014). Educational psychology in Ireland and its Psychological Society of Ireland division—A history. *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, 35(1), 25-32.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03033910.2014.905220>
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2003). Issues and dilemmas in teaching research methods courses in social and behavioural sciences: US perspective. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6(1), 61-77.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2009). Integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods*, 2, 283-317.
- Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *BMC medical research methodology*, 8(1), 1-10.
- Thomas, J. T. (2010). *The ethics of supervision and consultation: Practical guidance for mental health professionals*. American Psychological Association.
- Trainor, A. A. (2008). Diverse approaches to parent advocacy during special education home—school interactions: Identification and use of cultural and social capital. *Remedial and Special Education*, 31(1), 34-47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932508324401>
- Travers, J. (2009). The suppression of 128 special classes for pupils with mild general learning disabilities: A response. *REACH: Journal of Inclusive Education in Ireland*, 23(1), 2-12.
- Travers, J. (2017). Does the new model for special education teacher allocation in Ireland reach the equity bar? *REACH: Journal of Inclusive Education in Ireland*, 30(2), 101-105.
- Travers, J., Balfe, T., Butler, C., Day, T., McDaid, R., O'Donnell, M., & Prunty, A. (2010). Addressing barriers and challenges to inclusive education in Irish schools. In: St Patrick's College.
- Treiman, D. J. (2014). *Quantitative data analysis: Doing social research to test ideas*. John Wiley & Sons.
- TUSLA. (2019). *Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019- 2023* Dublin
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2006) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities .General comment No. 4, Article 24: Right to inclusive education, (2016). <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57c977e34.html>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for action on special needs education: adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education; Access and Quality. Salamanca, Spain, 7-10 June 1994*. Unesco.
- United Nations General Assembly. (1989). *Adoption of a convention on the rights of the child*. In. New York: United Nations.
- Vogl, S. (2013). Telephone versus face-to-face interviews: Mode effect on semistructured interviews with children. *Sociological Methodology*, 43(1), 133-177.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0081175012465967>

- Vygotsky, L. S. (1987). Thinking and speech. *The collected works of LS Vygotsky, 1*, 39-285.
- Wagner, P. (2000). Consultation: Developing a comprehensive approach to service delivery. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 16*(1), 9-18.
- Walcott, C. M., Hyson, D., McNamara, K., & Charvat, J. L. (2018). Results from the NASP 2015 membership survey, part one: Demographics and employment conditions. *NASP Research Reports, 3*(1), 1-17.
- Watkins, M. W., Crosby, E. G., & Pearson, J. L. (2001). Role of the school psychologist: Perceptions of school staff. *School Psychology International, 22*(1), 64-73.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/01430343010221005>
- Webb, P. T., Briscoe, F. M., & Mussman, M. P. (2009). Preparing teachers for the neoliberal panopticon. *Educational Foundations, 23*, 3-18.
- Webster-Stratton, C., Reinke, W. M., Herman, K. C., & Newcomer, L. L. (2011). The incredible years teacher classroom management training: The methods and principles that support fidelity of training delivery. *School Psychology Review, 40*(4), 509-529.
- Winter, E., & O'Raw, P. (2010). Literature review of the principles and practices relating to inclusive education for children with special educational needs. *National Council for Special Education. Trim, Northern Ireland.*
- Wolfendale, S. E., Bryans, T. E., Fox, M. E., Labram, A. E., & Sigston, A. E. (1992). *The profession and practice of educational psychology: Future directions*. Cassell Educational.
- Woolfson, R. C., Harker, M., Lowe, D., Shields, M., Banks, M., Campbell, L., & Ferguson, E. (2006). Consulting about consulting: Young people's views of consultation. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 22*(4), 337-353.

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Summaries of Included Studies Table.

Study	Country, School Type & Location	Participant Descriptions	Study Design	Aims	Measures & Analysis	Recruitment
Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki (2014)	Finland Sixty-seven primary schools in three municipalities in southern Finland	N= 547 “school professionals” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63.6% were classroom teachers, • 5.9% principals, • 8.8% special Education teachers, • 8.6% subject teachers, • 3.5% special education classroom or small group teachers, • 7.5% school nurses and • 2.2% school physicians 	Quantitative Survey	To understand how the perceived importance of the psychologists roles vary by role, frequency of cooperation with psychologist, school size and number of children with SEN enrolled in the school	Internet Questionnaire was used to collect data. Questionnaire was adapted from earlier studies (e.g., Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Watkins et al., 2001), Questionnaire was revised after pilot study Descriptive and parametric statistics were applied	A subsample was used from a larger study (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2010).

Ashton & Roberts (2006)	UK Twenty- two mainstream primary schools in the local borough	N=30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 SENCOs • 8 School Psychologists 	Qualitative Exploratory questionnaire	To understand what SENCOs value and see as the unique to psychologists	An open questionnaire was designed for this study. It had three questions which asked the SENCO to discuss the unique contribution of the SP, what SP activities and skills are valued. This questionnaire was then adapted for SP data collection. Content analysis was used.	All mainstream primary schools in the borough received a questionnaire by internal post.
Bell & McKenzie (2013)	Australia Government, Catholic, and independent primary and secondary schools across Melbourne, Australia	N=345 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 138 school psychologists • 107 parents • 100 teachers 	Quantitative Survey	To ascertain what factors, predict greater psychologist involvement in systemic rather than child-centred tasks.	Three surveys which were designed and used in previous research were adapted and used: School Psychologist Survey, Teacher Survey and Parent Survey. Descriptive and parametric statistics were applied	School principals and psychologists across Melbourne were contacted and invited to participate. Participating principals were asked to distribute surveys to staff.
Beltman, Mansfield, & Harris (2016)	Australia Primary schools	N=9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 school psychologists 	Qualitative Interviews	To explore the extent to which school psychologists support teacher resilience	Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data.	Convenience sampling was used to contact psychologists

	described as 'disadvantaged' in Western Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 mainstream primary school teachers 			Data was analysed using a "codes-to-theory model" and direct quotes were used to support the presence of themes.	known to the researchers. Principals of purposefully chosen schools were contacted and asked to recommend teachers who may be eligible and interested to participate.
Boyle & MacKay (2007)	United Kingdom Mainstream primary and secondary schools in four local authorities in the Dunbarton Division of Strathclyde Region	N=136 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 112 primary school principals • 24 secondary school principals or main teachers of pupil support 	Quantitative Survey	To identify specific factors which determine the value placed by school principals on the contribution of the SP to pupil support.	Likert scale questionnaire was used. Descriptive and parametric statistics were applied	Questionnaires were posted to schools and were completed anonymously and returned by post using stamped, addressed envelopes provided.
Farrell, Jimerson, Kalambouk	Cyprus, Denmark, England, Estonia,	N= 1105 teachers	Quantitative Survey	To compare teachers' perceptions of school psychologists in different	A questionnaire with a mixture of open and closed questions was used to ascertain perceptions of	Representatives in each country received copies of the

a, & Benoit (2005)	Greece, South Africa, Turkey, and the USA			parts of the world.	the school psychologist in different countries.	questionnaire and distributed it to schools with whom they had contact. Teachers who had regular contact with the psychologist were asked to fill out the questionnaire.
	The eight countries were chosen to reflect different stages in the development of schools psychology services				This questionnaire was translated and edited by representatives in each country where necessary.	
					Descriptive and parametric statistics were applied	
Gilman & Gabriel (2004)	USA	N= 1710	Quantitative Survey	To assess teachers' knowledge, satisfaction, and perceived helpfulness of the psychological services.	An adapted version of the School Psychology Perception Survey (Gilman & Gabriel, 2003) was used to assess how the profession is perceived by stakeholders.	School psychologists and/or research assistants distributed the survey to teachers in the schools they were working in.
	Eight separate school districts across four states; Georgia, Nebraska, Arizona, and Florida	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1533 teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 123 preschool teachers ○ 721 elementary teachers ○ 245 middle school teachers ○ 245 high school teachers 		The study also examined the differences between psychologist and teacher perceptions of the SP role and desired future roles.	Questionnaire was revised after pilot study	
					Descriptive and parametric statistics were applied	

							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 199 special education teachers • 87 school psychologists • 90 school administrators
Gilman & Medway (2007)	USA Eight separate school districts across four states; Georgia, Nebraska, Arizona, and Florida	N=1374 educators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 mainstream preschool teachers • 702 mainstream elementary teachers • 226 mainstream middle school teachers • 232 mainstream high school teachers • 4 special education preschool teachers • 104 special education elementary teachers • 49 special education middle school teachers • 47 special education high school teachers 	Quantitative Survey	To compare the results of special education and mainstream teachers their satisfaction, and perceived helpfulness of the psychological services.	An adapted version of the School Psychology Perception Survey (Gilman & Gabriel, 2003) was used to assess how the profession is perceived by stakeholders. Questionnaire was revised after pilot study Descriptive, parametric, and non-parametric statistics were applied	Used data collected from Gilman & Gabriel, 2004 (see above)	

Jimerson, Annan, Skokut, & Renshaw (2009)	New Zealand	N=65 School Psychologists	Quantitative Survey	To understand the characteristics, training, roles, activities, preferences, research interests and challenges for educational psychologists in New Zealand.	The International School Psychologists Survey (ISPS) was used. Analysis of data was not described.	Invitations to participate were sent via e-mail to 180 of the estimated 200 educational psychologists who worked in the country.
Kjær & Dannesboe (2019)	Denmark Four schools in two Danish municipalities	N= 33 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 PPR employees (includes psychologists, speech and language therapists etc) • 17 school staff members 	Qualitative Fieldwork Observations and Interviews	Examining how dilemmas are produced and dealt with in consultative practices related to inclusion between PPR staff and school staff	Observations of workshops and eight consultative meetings Semi-structured interviews Thematic analysis was used to analyse data from observations, interviews, and fieldwork notes.	Not reported
Kavenská, Smekalová, & Šmahaj (2013)	Czech Republic	N=63 School Psychologists	Quantitative Survey	To describe models of functioning for Czech school psychologists, and provide descriptions of their work in different types of school, their job content, their relations	Online questionnaire comprising of 58 quantitative and 13 qualitative questions. Analysis of data was not described.	The questionnaire was posted on a website and participants completed it online.

				with others, and similar characteristics		
Mägi & Kikas (2009)	Estonia Elementary schools, primary schools, high schools & special schools.	N= 107 school principals	Quantitative Survey with small scale structured interview follow-up	To investigate principals' perceptions and expectations of school psychology services.	Likert Scale survey was developed. Follow up interview consisted of 8 structured questions. Descriptive, parametric, and non-parametric statistics were applied. Method of qualitative analysis was not specified.	All schools listed on the Ministry of Education website were emailed a survey to complete and asked to return it either by post or email.
Mars & Little (2014)	Washington, USA	N= 7 school psychologists	Qualitative Interview	To understand the barriers and challenges for RtI implantation and the impact of RtI on the role of the psychologist.	Interview type was not specified No interview questions provided Consensual qualitative research was used to analyse data collected	Emails with invitations to participate were sent to all 200 school psychology graduates from the school psychology graduate programmes in Washington.
Nkoma & Hay (2018)	Zimbabwe	N=107 school principals	Qualitative Interview	To understand the meaning that	Phenomenological interviews	Convenience sampling was

	Three provinces: Manicaland, Masvingo, and Midlands.	N=13 trainee and qualified school psychologists		educational psychologists ascribe toward their support roles in the implementation of inclusive education practice	Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used.	used to select the three provinces closest to the researcher and criterion sampling was used to invite all trainee/educational psychologists with more than 1 year of experience to interview.
O'Farrell & Kinsella (2018)	Ireland Three primary schools	N=9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 NEPS psychologists • 3 teachers • 3 parents 	Qualitative Interviews	To evaluate teacher, parent, and psychologist perceptions of consultation	Separate semi-structured interviews were used. Thematic Analysis was used to analyse the findings and direct codes are used to support the presence of themes	Psychologists were recruited via convenience sampling. These psychologists were then requested to contact teachers and parents of children referred to them and distribute information and consent forms.

Panteri et al (2021)	Crete Kindergarten, elementary schools, secondary schools, high schools, and vocational schools in four prefectures including Heraklion, Chania, Rethymno, & Lasithi	N= 336 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 279 teachers • 57 psychologists 	Quantitative Survey	To understand school psychologist and teacher perceptions of the school psychology service and to evaluate its perceived usefulness.	Likert Scale survey was developed. Descriptive and parametric statistics were applied	“Snowball sampling”, was used to recruit participants whereby the researchers sent the survey to teachers with whom they were already familiar and asked them to forward it on to colleagues in other schools.
Rothì, Leavey, & Best (2008)	UK England	N=30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 secondary school teachers • 8 primary school teachers • 8 special school teachers • 1 Montessori school teacher 	Qualitative Interview	To examine teachers’ views about the involvement of psychologists with pupils with possible mental health difficulties.	Semi-structured interviews Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used.	Interviewees were recruited by making direct contact with schools across England. Only one teacher per school was interviewed (nominated by the school).
		This sample includes three headteachers and four				

		deputy/assistant headteachers				
Watkins, Crosby, & Pearson (2001)	USA One school district in the south west	N= 522 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 419 mainstream class teachers • 52 special education teachers • 18 administrators • 33 support staff 	Quantitative Survey	Compare the views of school staff and psychologist in relation to ideal vs actual psychology service delivery.	Likert Scale questionnaire was used. Descriptive, parametric, and non- parametric statistics were applied	All staff received their own questionnaire via intercampus mail.

Appendix B:

Studies Excluded from Review and Rationale

Study	Rationale
Arivett, D., O. Rust, J., S. Brissie, J., & S. Dansby, V. (2007). Special education teachers' perceptions of school psychologists in the context of individualized education program meetings. <i>Education</i> , 127(3), 378-388.	Exclusion Criteria 5: This study did not explore the current practices of the psychologist, instead it analysed teacher beliefs about the helpfulness or importance of the psychologist, exclusively during IEP meetings.
Athanasίου, M. S., Geil, M., Hazel, C. E., & Copeland, E. P. (2002). A look inside school-based consultation: A qualitative study of the beliefs and practices of school psychologists and teachers. <i>School Psychology Quarterly</i> , 17(3), 258–298.	Exclusion Criteria 5: This was a pilot study of different consultation models and thus does not qualify.
Bond, C., Cole, M., Fletcher, J., Noble, J., & O'Connell, M. (2011). Developing and sustaining provision for children with motor skills difficulties in schools: The role of educational psychologists. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 27(4), 337–351.	Exclusion Criteria 5: This study evaluated action research and thus does not qualify.
Davies, S. M. B., Howes, A. J., & Farrell, P. (2008). Tensions and dilemmas as drivers for change in an analysis of joint working between teachers and educational psychologists. <i>School Psychology International</i> , 29(4), 400–417. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034308096439	Exclusion Criteria 5: This study evaluated action research and thus does not qualify.
Hoffman, A. R., & Jenkins, J. (2002). Exploring reading specialists' collaborative interactions with school psychologists: Problems and possibilities. <i>Education</i> . 4.751-807	Exclusion Criteria 4: Participants only included reading specialists, and no data was collected from psychologists or teachers.
Hosp, J. L., & Reschly, D. J. (2002). Regional differences in school psychology practice. <i>School Psychology Review</i> , 31(1), 11-29.	Exclusion Criteria 2: Although published in 2002 this study was conducted in 1998 and is therefore ineligible.

- Little, S., Marrs, H., & Bogue, H. (2017). Elementary school psychologists and response to intervention (RTI). *Contemporary School Psychology, 21*(2), 103–114. Exclusion Criteria 5: This study does not investigate the current practice of the psychologist but instead looks at their perceptions and attitudes towards RTI.
- Kitching, A. E. (2018). Mind-Shifts for enhancing the engagement of educational psychologists in the promotion of holistic school wellbeing. *Educational & Child Psychology, 35*(3), 8–19. Exclusion Criteria 5: This study evaluated action research and thus does not qualify.
- Smillie, I., & Newton, M. (2020). Educational psychologists' practice: obtaining and representing young people's views. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 36*(3), 328-344. Exclusion Criteria 5: This study does not seek to understand the role of the psychologist, but instead looks at how they ascertain and include the voice of the child.
- Raviv, A., Mashraki-Pedhatur, S., Raviv, A., & Erhard, R. (2002). The Israeli school psychologist: A professional profile. *School Psychology International, 23*(3), 283-306. Exclusion Criteria 2: Although published in 2002 this study was conducted in 1997 and is therefore ineligible.
- Ritchie, T., Rogers, M., & Ford, L. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on school psychology practices in Canada. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 36*(4), 358–375. Exclusion Criteria 5: The scope of this study is too narrow as it seeks to understand how the professional identity of the psychologist as well as the time spent on different activities was impacted at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Shapiro, E. S., & Heick, P. F. (2004). School psychologist assessment practices in the evaluation of students referred for social/behavioral/emotional problems. *Psychology in the Schools, 41*(5), 551–561. <https://doi-org.libraryproxy.mic.ul.ie/10.1002/pits.10176> Exclusion Criteria 5: The scope of this study is too narrow as it seeks to understand only the assessment practices of the school psychologist and thus does not provide a coherent overview of their role.
- Suldo, S. M., Friedrich, A., & Michalowski, J. (2010). Personal and systems-level factors that limit and facilitate school psychologists' involvement in school-based mental health services. *Psychology in the Schools, 47*(4), 354–373. <https://doi-org.libraryproxy.mic.ul.ie/10.1002/pits.20475> Exclusion Criteria 5: The scope of this study is too narrow as it seeks to understand only the barriers and facilitators to psychologist involvement in mental health services.

- Thielking, M., & Jimerson, S. R. (2006). Perspectives regarding the role of school psychologists: perceptions of teachers, principals, and school psychologists in Victoria, Australia. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 16(2), 211–233.
- van der Aalsvoort, G. M., & Elliott, J. (2007). Inclusion and the role of educational psychologists [Editorial]. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 24(3), 4–7
- Vivash, J., Dockrell, J., & Lee, F. (2018). The re-alignment of educational psychologists in supporting primary schools to enhance provision for children with speech, language, and communication needs. *Educational & Child Psychology*, 43–59.
- Exclusion Criteria 5: This study sought to understand what stakeholders believe psychologists should do and thus, does not address their current practice.
- Exclusion Criteria 1: This is an editorial and not primary research.
- Exclusion Criteria 5: This study does not explore the existing practice of the psychologist but instead makes recommendations for their involvement with children with speech, language, and communication needs.
-

Appendix C:

WoE A Criteria and Rationale Table

WoE A score	Criteria	Rationale
High (3)	Average score of 0.67-1 across the judgement areas	Possible scores range from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-17 (NICE Guidelines, 2014) • 0-16 (Letts et al., 2007)
Medium (2)	Average score of 0.34-0.66 across the judgement areas	This criteria converts them into scores between 1-3.
Low (1)	Average score of 0-0.33 across the judgement areas	

Appendix D:

Example of Completed Coding Protocol for Qualitative Studies (Letts et al., 2007)

Rothi, D. M., Leavey, G., & Best, R. (2008). On the front-line: Teachers as active observers of pupils' mental health. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(5), 1217-1231.

	Comments
<p>STUDY PURPOSE:</p> <p>Was the purpose and/or research question stated clearly?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> no</p>	<p>Outline the purpose of the study and/or research question.</p> <p>Examining teachers' views of the involvement of the Educational Psychologist with children who may have mental health difficulties.</p>
<p>LITERATURE:</p> <p>Was relevant background literature reviewed?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> no</p>	<p>Describe the justification of the need for this study. Was it clear and compelling?</p> <p>The authors highlight the need for a clear understanding of the role of the EP in relation to mental health. They present a clear and concise argument that the EP does not have sufficient guidance or training to deal with mental health issues and yet they are still seen as one of the key contributors.</p>
	<p>How does the study apply to your practice and/or to your research question? Is it worth continuing this review?¹</p> <p>This study investigates teachers' perceptions of the role of the EP and also their experiences of working with an EP. Therefore, it is relevant to the current review.</p>
<p>STUDY DESIGN:</p> <p>What was the design?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> phenomenology</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> ethnography</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> grounded theory</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> participatory action research</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> other</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Was the design appropriate for the study question? (i.e., rationale) Explain.</p> <p>The authors justified their use of the phenomenological design, as they felt this allowed an in depth exploration of the topic, whilst also enabling participants to express their own views and opinions.</p> <p>The authors also utilised a grounded theory approach, in which participant data was collected and analysed, before comparing it to literature and theory.</p>

<p>Was a theoretical perspective identified?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> yes</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> no</p>	<p>Describe the theoretical or philosophical perspective for this study e.g., researcher's perspective.</p> <p>While the authors do not explicitly state a theoretical perspective in their paper, it appears that they have adopted a constructivist stance.</p>
<p>Method(s) used:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> participant observation</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> interviews</p> <p><input type="radio"/> document review</p> <p><input type="radio"/> focus groups</p> <p><input type="radio"/> other</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Describe the method(s) used to answer the research question. Are the methods congruent with the philosophical underpinnings and purpose?</p> <p>The interview methods are appropriate for the assumed theoretical perspective, as it allows for participants to present their own views and experiences, in order to construct an understanding of the phenomenon being studied.</p>
<p>SAMPLING:</p> <p>Was the process of purposeful selection described?</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> no</p>	<p>Describe sampling methods used. Was the sampling method appropriate to the study purpose or research question?</p> <p>The sample was purposively selected to represent teachers who had experience of working with EPs. In order to gain an accurate understanding of the phenomenon, participants were selected for maximum variability. Participants were recruited from a variety of school types and roles.</p>
<p>Was sampling done until redundancy in data was reached?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> no</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> not addressed</p>	<p>Are the participants described in adequate detail? How is the sample applicable to your practice or research question? Is it worth continuing?</p> <p>The participants are described in adequate detail with information about their age, gender, role and school type. However, it may have been useful to have information about the years of experience gained by each teacher. This sample is relevant to this review as the data collected represents the views of a variety of teachers.</p>
<p>Was informed consent obtained?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> no</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> not addressed</p>	<p>Informed consent is not addressed in the study.</p>
<p>DATA COLLECTION:</p> <p>Descriptive Clarity</p> <p>Clear & complete description of site: <input type="radio"/> yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> no</p> <p>participants: <input checked="" type="radio"/> yes <input type="radio"/> no</p> <p>Role of researcher & relationship with participants: <input checked="" type="radio"/> yes <input type="radio"/> no</p> <p>Identification of assumptions and biases of researcher: <input type="radio"/> yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> no</p>	<p>Describe the context of the study. Was it sufficient for understanding of the "whole" picture?</p> <p>While the participants are described in adequate detail, there is no reference to where the interviews were undertaken. Furthermore, the exact questions asked by the researcher are not available to the reader and thus, we cannot fully understand the context for the answers provided.</p> <p>What was missing and how does that influence your understanding of the research?</p> <p>Additionally, the researcher has not identified their own biases and while they have undertaken adequate measures to ensure objectivity in both data collection and analysis, this still represents a significant limitation. Therefore, the findings of the study must be interpreted with caution.</p>

<p>Procedural Rigour Procedural rigor was used in data collection strategies? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not addressed</p>	<p>Do the researchers provide adequate information about data collection procedures e.g., gaining access to the site, field notes, training data gatherers? Describe any flexibility in the design & data collection methods. While, the researchers do not provide the exact questions used in the interview, they do give adequate overview of the data collection process and how it was structured. They also discuss the use of semi-structured interview to enable the flexible collection of relevant data. Finally, they highlight the use of an external researcher to collect data, in order to prevent researcher bias during participant interviews.</p>
<p>DATA ANALYSES:</p> <p>Analytical Rigour Data analyses were inductive? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not addressed</p> <p>Findings were consistent with & reflective of data? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no</p>	<p>Describe method(s) of data analysis. Were the methods appropriate? What were the findings? Data was analysed using the interpretive phenomenological analysis approach. Firstly the data was analysed and grouped under themes and subthemes. These were then compared with relevant literature in order to gain an understanding of the findings within the context of the current research. Two researchers analysed and coded the data separately and their findings were analysed by a third separate researcher, who had not been involved in data collection or analysis.</p>
<p>Auditability Decision trail developed? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not addressed</p> <p>Process of analyzing the data was described adequately? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not addressed</p>	<p>Describe the decisions of the researcher re: transformation of data to codes/themes. Outline the rationale given for development of themes. The researchers created themes using direct quotes or paraphrasing. This ensured that the themes were direct representations of the information that had been collected. The interpretation was also reviewed by an external researcher to ensure that it was justifiable in terms of the data collected.</p>
<p>Theoretical Connections Did a meaningful picture of the phenomenon under study emerge? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no</p>	<p>How were concepts under study clarified & refined, and relationships made clear? Describe any conceptual frameworks that emerged. The authors provide a compelling argument that the teachers' perspectives of the EP is heavily influenced by the time constraints and lack of resources, with which the EP operates.</p>

<p>OVERALL RIGOUR</p> <p>Was there evidence of the four components of trustworthiness?</p> <p>Credibility <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no</p> <p>Transferability <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no</p> <p>Dependability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no</p> <p>Comfirmability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no</p>	<p>For each of the components of trustworthiness, identify what the researcher used to ensure each.</p> <p>Credibility: Analyst triangulation</p> <p>Dependability: External audit</p> <p>Confirmability: Decisions were documented and justified clearly in relation to data collection and analysis</p> <p>What meaning and relevance does this study have for your practice or research question?</p> <p>This study provides a credible qualitative account of teachers perceptions of the EP. This is directly relevant to the review question.</p>								
<p>CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>Conclusions were appropriate given the study findings? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no</p> <p>The findings contributed to theory development & future OT practice/ research? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no</p>	<p>What did the study conclude? What were the implications of the findings for occupational therapy therapy (practice & research)? What were the main limitations in the study?</p> <p>The authors conclude that teachers perceive EP services to be impaired by a lack of funding. Teachers in general would prefer more consultation with a focus on early intervention and prevention. They also expressed frustration at the long wait time for assessment. Despite these issues, teachers still value the service of the EP.</p>								
<p>Average Woe Across Judgement Areas</p> <p>Sum of X/N= 14/16= 0.875*</p> <p>X= the actual score obtained by the study</p> <p>N= the highest possible score obtainable if 2 marks are given for each section</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="268 1563 1327 1877"> <thead> <tr> <th>WoE A score</th> <th>Criteria</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>*High (3)</td> <td>Average score of 0.67-1 across the judgement areas</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Medium (2)</td> <td>Average score of 0.34-0.66 across the judgement areas</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low (1)</td> <td>Average score of 0-0.33 across the judgement areas</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Overall Rating of Evidence: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/></p>		WoE A score	Criteria	*High (3)	Average score of 0.67-1 across the judgement areas	Medium (2)	Average score of 0.34-0.66 across the judgement areas	Low (1)	Average score of 0-0.33 across the judgement areas
WoE A score	Criteria								
*High (3)	Average score of 0.67-1 across the judgement areas								
Medium (2)	Average score of 0.34-0.66 across the judgement areas								
Low (1)	Average score of 0-0.33 across the judgement areas								

Appendix E:

Example of Completed Critical Appraisal Checklist for a Questionnaire Study (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2014)

Article Reference: Panteri, M., Calmaestra, J., & Marín-Díaz, V. (2021). Roles of the School Psychologist–Current versus Preferred Roles in the Greek Schools: A Case Study from the Island of Crete. *Education Sciences*, 11(8), 439.

RESEARCH QUESTION & STUDY DESIGN

1. Was a questionnaire the most appropriate method?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

VALIDITY & RELIABILITY

2. Have claims for validity been made, and are they justified? (Is there evidence that the instrument measures what it sets out to measure?)

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

3. Have claims for reliability been made, and are they justified? (Is there evidence that the questionnaire provides stable responses over time and between researchers e.g., Cronbach's Alpha of 0.7 or higher reported)

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

FORMAT

4. Are example questions provided?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

5. Did the questions make sense, and could the participants in the sample understand them? Were the questions clear and simple?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

PILOTING

6. Are details given about the piloting undertaken?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

7. Was the questionnaire adequately piloted in terms of the method and means of administration, on people who were representative of the study population?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

SAMPLING

8. Was the sampling frame for the definitive study sufficiently large and representative?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

DISTRIBUTION, ADMINISTRATION & RESPONSE

9. Was the method of distribution and administration reported?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

10. Were the response rates reported, including details of participants who were unsuitable for the research or refused to take part?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

11. Have any potential response biases been discussed?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

CODING AND ANALYSIS

12. What sort of analysis was carried out and was this appropriate? (e.g. correct statistical tests for quantitative answers, qualitative analysis for open ended questions)

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

RESULTS

13. Were all relevant data reported?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

14. Are quantitative results definitive (significant), and are relevant non-significant results also reported?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

15. Have qualitative results been adequately interpreted (e.g. using an explicit theoretical framework), and have any quotes been properly justified and contextualised?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

CONCLUSIONS & DISCUSSION

16. Have the researchers drawn an appropriate link between the data and their conclusions?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

17. Have the findings been placed within the wider body of knowledge in the field (e.g., via a comprehensive literature review), and are any recommendations justified?

Yes

No

N/A

Unknown/ Unable to Code

Average Woe Across Judgement Areas

Sum of X/N= 11/16= 0.6875*

X= the actual score obtained by the study

N= the highest possible score obtainable if 1 mark is given for each question (excluding any criteria which are not applicable).

WoE A score	Criteria
High (3) *	Average score of 0.67-1 across the judgement areas
Medium (2)	Average score of 0.34-0.66 across the judgement areas
Low (1)	Average score of 0-0.33 across the judgement areas

Overall Rating of Evidence: 3 2 1 0

Appendix F:

Overview of WoE B

WoE B assesses the relevance of the study design to answer the specified review question. WoE B standards were created in accordance with the typologies of evidence as outlined by Petticrew and Roberts (2003). The current review sought to investigate the work of the school psychologists and their interactions with teachers and was thus, a review of the process delivery of school psychology. The authors suggest that systematic reviews represent the highest quality research when evaluating process delivery, followed by qualitative research and then finally survey studies and non-experimental evaluations. However, systematic reviews were not included in this review as they did not satisfy the inclusion criterion of primary research studies. Thus, qualitative studies were awarded the highest rating for WoE B, with survey and non-experimental evaluations receiving a medium weighting. Table F1 provides a synopsis of WoE B criteria and scoring.

Table F1

WoE B Criteria and Scoring

WoE B Weighting	Description
3 (High)	○ Qualitative Research
2 (Medium)	○ Survey Studies and Non-experimental Research
1 (Low)	○ No other studies will be included in this research in line with the inclusion criteria and therefore, the Low WoE B weighting will not apply.

Appendix G:

Overview of WoE C

WoE C is review specific, measuring the extent to which the study and its findings are relevant to answering the review question (Gough, 2007). The WoE C criteria was devised by the reviewer, with reference to inclusion and exclusion criteria. For a “High” WoE C rating, the main aim of the study must be to collect data on the current work of psychologists or their interactions with teachers. Furthermore, a high WoE C rating will be given to studies which include both teachers and psychologists. Table G1 provides a synopsis of WoE C criteria and scoring.

Table G1

WoE C Criteria and Scoring

WoE C Weighting	Description
3 (High)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The primary aim of the study is to collect data on the existing work of the school psychologists. • The perspectives, experiences, or opinions, of both psychologists and teachers are compared and discussed.
2 (Medium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A secondary aim of the study is to collect data on the existing work of school psychologists and their interactions with teachers. • Data was collected only from either teachers or psychologists, but a diverse range of participants was used to ensure maximum variability in responses (i.e., study may have only collected teacher data but sought to get the opinions of both mainstream teachers, support teachers and principals).
1 (Low)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data in the study refers to the existing work of school psychologists and their interactions with teachers. • Perspectives, experiences, and opinions of one uniform group of teachers or psychologists was collected.

Appendix H:

The Adapted Eight-Step Model of Activity-Oriented Design Methods (Mwanza, 2002)

The Eight-Step Model			Current Research		
<i>Identify the...</i>	<i>Question to ask</i>	<i>Research Questions/Concepts</i>	<i>Survey Questions</i>	<i>Interview Questions</i>	
Step 1	Activity of Interest	What sort of activity am I interested in?	The joint work between the NEPS psychologist and mainstream primary school staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often does joint work occur? • How does joint work occur? (e.g., telephone, Zoom, face to face etc.) • What is the nature of joint work? (Consultation, Assessment, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you describe the kind of joint work which was undertaken? (e.g., assessment, consultation, problem-solving, training, etc).
Step 2	Objective	Why is the activity taking place?	To promote the inclusion of all children, particularly those with special educational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What categories of additional needs have been the basis for joint work? • At what level of the Continuum of Support do psychologists and staff engage most frequently? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me about your experience(s) of joint work with the NEPS psychologist/school staff? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What was the basis for the joint work? (e.g., needs of the school community, professional development needs, or needs of students)

Step 3	Subjects	Who is involved in carrying out the activity?	For the purpose of this research, the subjects will be the NEPS psychologist, school principal, class teacher, special education teacher/school SENCO.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender • Age • Role of respondent • Years of experience in current • Highest level of qualification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender • Highest Level of Education • School Type (School Staff Only) • Current Role • Years of Experience in Current Role
Step 4	Tools	By what means are the subjects performing this activity?	Research Question: How are tools used to facilitate successful joint work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At what level of the Continuum of Support do psychologists and staff engage most frequently? • Which staff members are responsible for requesting joint work with the psychologist? • What is the nature of collaboration? (Consultation, Assessment, etc.) • What facilitates joint work? • What works well? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What “tools” facilitated the joint work in this instance? (e.g., Continuum of Support, skills, knowledge, guidelines, frameworks, personnel such as the SET). • What if anything could have been used to further develop joint working? (e.g., additional time allocation, support, and development work, etc.)

Step 5	Rules and Regulations	Are there any rules, regulations or norms governing the performance of this activity?	Research Question: What rules, regulations and norms influence the joint work of NEPS psychologists and primary school staff?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What expectations, rules, or policies influenced the joint work? • Have the roles of the psychologist/ school staff changed in the past five years? How? Why? • What facilitated joint work? • Were there any barriers for joint work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were there any expectations, or assumptions, in place for your joint work? (e.g., parental expectations or school routines) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How did these impact upon the joint work? • Were there any policies or procedures which governed your joint working with the psychologist/school staff members? (e.g., NEPS policies, school policies, or circulars around the Special Education Teacher Allocation Model and Irish exemptions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How did these impact upon the joint work?
-----------	--------------------------	--	--	---	--

Step 6	Division of Labour	Who is responsible for what, when carrying out the activity and how are the roles organised?	Research Question: What are the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder for joint work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of the psychologist for joint work? • What is the role of the principal for joint work? • What is the role of the class teacher for joint work? • What is the role of the special education teacher/SENCO for joint work? • Have these roles changed over the past five years? How? Why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you describe the roles and responsibilities undertaken by each stakeholder? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How were roles and responsibilities shared between school staff and NEPS psychologists? ○ What factors do you feel influenced the roles and responsibilities undertaken by each stakeholder?
Step 7	Community	What is the environment in which this activity is carried out? Who else must be considered?	School context Other community members: Students, Parents, SNAs, SENOs Other services, e.g., CAMHS, Disability Services, Primary Care, NCSE, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School context • What other members of the school community have been involved in joint work? • What other service providers have influenced or contributed to joint work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were there any other services involved in this joint work? How did this impact on joint work? • What is the unique contribution of joint work between NEPS psychologists and school staff in comparison to other agencies or services?

Step 8	Outcome	What is the desired Outcome from carrying out this activity?	Research Question: How does joint work between the NEPS psychologist and staff support inclusion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the unique contribution of joint work between the NEPS psychologist and school staff for the inclusion of students with SEN? • Were inclusion needs met as a result of joint work? Please explain your answer. • What were the benefits of joint work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the impact of this joint work in terms of inclusion? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How did it impact upon policies and procedures in the school? ○ How did it impact upon teaching approaches in the school? ○ How did it impact upon the child and their everyday experiences of school?
-----------	---------	--	--	--	---

Appendix I:

Ethical Approval from MIREC



Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee

MIREC-4: MIREC Chair Decision Form

APPLICATION NO.

A20-052

1. PROJECT TITLE

An Exploration of The Lived Experiences of Primary School Staff and Educational Psychologists of Collaboration to Facilitate the Inclusion of Students with Additional Needs in Ireland in the previous five years.

2. APPLICANT

Name:	Caoimhe McCarthy
Department / Centre / Other:	EPISE
Position:	Postgraduate Researcher

3. DECISION OF MIREC CHAIR

<input type="checkbox"/>	Ethical clearance through MIREC is required.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ethical clearance through MIREC is not required and therefore the researcher need take no further action in this regard.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ethical clearance is required and granted. Referral to MIREC is not necessary.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ethical clearance is required but the full MIREC process is not. Ethical clearance is therefore granted if required for external funding applications and the researcher need take no further action in this regard.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Insufficient information provided by applicant / Amendments required.

4. REASON(S) FOR DECISION**5. DECLARATION (MIREC CHAIR)**

Name (Print):	Dr Marie Griffin
Signature:	
Date:	2 nd December 2020

Appendix J:

Demographic Information for Survey Participants

Table J1

Demographic Information for Teaching Staff Survey Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Respondent Gender	Male	46	16.8
	Female	228	83.2
Respondent Role	Class Teacher	52	19.0
	SET	57	20.8
	SENCO	3	1.1
	Deputy Principal	13	4.7
	Administrative Principal	124	45.3
	Teaching Principal (SET)	12	4.4
	Teaching Principal (Class)	13	4.7
Respondent Experience in Years	Teaching <5 years	13	4.7
	5-10 years	23	8.4
	11-20 years	108	39.4
	>20 years	130	47.4
Highest Level of Qualification	Bachelor of Education	111	40.5
	Professional Master of Education	5	1.8
	Master's degree	68	24.8
	Postgraduate Diploma	82	29.9
	PhD	6	2.2

School Socioeconomic status	Type:DEIS	54	19.7
	Non-DEIS	215	78.5
School Type: Gender	Mixed	250	91.1
	Single sex	19	6.9
School Geographical Location	Type:Rural	133	48.5
	Urban	136	49.5

Table J2

Demographic Information for Psychologist Survey Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Respondent Gender	Male	7	12.7
	Female	48	87.3
Work Experience as psychologist	a<5 years	6	10.9
	5-10 years	20	36.4
	11-20 years	17	30.9
	>20 years	12	21.8

Appendix K:

Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Hi _____, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I understand that schools are quite busy at the moment and so I really appreciate your time. How are you finding this term? Are you looking forward to the midterm break?

So, before we begin, I was wondering if you could tell me a bit about your own background.

Demographic Information Prompts (if necessary).

- Gender
- Highest Level of Education
- School Type (School Staff Only)
- Current Role
- Years of Experience in Current Role

That is great thank you for that information.

Soon I will be asking you some questions in relation to your joint work with the NEPS psychologist/ primary school teaching staff and how it impacts upon the inclusion of all students. It is important to remember that I am interested in your own experiences and that there are no right or wrong answers.

When you filled out the survey you may have noticed that definitions of joint work and inclusion were provided at the start, and I just want to remind you of those definitions again. Joint Work is defined as any interaction or engagement with the NEPS psychologist/school staff member. Inclusion is defined as a process which ensures that all members of the school community are empowered to attend, participate, and succeed in the school. Do you have any questions about those definitions?

Ok now I am going to ask you some questions and it may be helpful to reflect on one or two specific experience or experiences of joint work in order to answer these questions. Just a reminder before we begin that no identifiable information about this situation that we are discussing will be published in the final report. Also, please remember that you are completely free to skip any question or to withdraw from the interview at any stage.

Section 1: Roles and Responsibilities.

- Can you tell me about your experience(s) of joint work with the NEPS psychologist/school staff?
 - What was the basis for the joint work? (e.g., needs of the school community, professional development needs, or needs of students)
 - Can you describe the kind of joint work which was undertaken? (e.g., assessment, consultation, problem-solving, training, etc.).
- Can you describe the roles and responsibilities undertaken by each stakeholder?
 - How were roles and responsibilities shared between school staff and NEPS psychologists?
 - What factors do you feel influenced the roles and responsibilities undertaken by each stakeholder?

**Remind participant of confidentiality & right to skip and withdraw.*

Section 2: Resources and Supports

- What “tools” facilitated the joint work in this instance? (e.g., Continuum of Support, skills, knowledge, guidelines, frameworks, personnel such as the SET).
- What if anything could have been used to further develop joint working? (e.g., additional time allocation, support, and development work, etc.)
- Were there any other services involved in this piece of joint work? How did this influence or contribute to your joint work?
- What do you feel is the unique contribution of joint work between NEPS psychologists and school staff in comparison to other agencies or services?

**Remind participant of confidentiality & right to skip and withdraw.*

Section 3: Expectations

- Were there any expectations, rules, or assumptions, in place for your joint work? (e.g., parental expectations or school routines)
 - How did these impact upon the joint work?
- Were there any policies or procedures which governed your joint working with the psychologist/school staff members? (e.g., NEPS policies, school policies, or circulars around the Special Education Teacher Allocation Model and Irish exemptions)
 - How did these impact upon the joint work?

**Remind participant of confidentiality & right to skip and withdraw.*

Section 4: Inclusion

- What was the impact of this joint work in terms of inclusion?
 - How did it impact upon policies and procedures in the school?
 - How did it impact upon teaching approaches in the school?
 - How did it impact upon the child and their everyday experiences of school?

Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix L:

Stages of Thematic Analysis, Sample of Initial Coding and Sample Theme Synopsis

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data

During the interviews the researcher took notes of any ideas, potential themes, or codes that were generated during the discussion. Each interview was then transcribed verbatim immediately afterwards, enabling the researcher to become familiar with the data. Once transcription was completed, the researcher read back over the interview and listened to the audio recording again to ensure accuracy. This data was then compared to the dataset as a whole and brief notes with any additional thoughts were recorded.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

During this phase the researcher read back over the data and systematically coded relevant data using NVivo 12 software, with the aim of highlighting each individual concept at both the semantic and latent levels (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). Thus, some pieces of data were grouped into various different codes. A sample of this initial coding process is presented in Table 6. Once initial codes were generated, all relevant data was compiled into separate code labels.

Table L1

Sample of Initial Coding Process for Single Interview

Data	Initial Codes
<p>Interviewer (I)</p> <p>So, you felt that your role was to provide reassurance, as well as information about possible interventions or programmes, is that correct?</p>	
<p>Participant (P)</p> <p>Yeah, and I think as well, the other thing I've kind of learned over the years is the importance of empathizing with them, you know, that you're on their side. That's major, you know, that they don't feel like you're coming in kind of going, oh, well, you only did X, Y and Zed. You know, it's really important to kind of say, oh, gosh, yeah, that sounds really difficult on both the teacher and the child okay. And I</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychologist Experience • Expertise versus empathy

know you've done a lot and I know you know all these things. So that piece is really important before you come in with kind of like, what about trying this? That time spent establishing a relationship and trust because I wouldn't have met these teachers before this. I think the previous year was like an input on the continuum of supports, which I did, but I didn't even meet the principal on that day because she wasn't there. So, I hadn't met any of these staff members before. And it was really I suppose around trying to build up a bit of a relationship with them as well. And, you know, I was on their side.

I: Okay, and what do you feel helped you to develop that empathy or understanding?

P: Working with the child for the assessment was an eye-opener for me in this case. Well, if it wasn't for COVID, I would definitely at least have done an observation. I don't know if an assessment was necessary, but it helped in terms of my own understanding. I think we kind of got an hour with the child. And I mean, it was so difficult for me that I could only imagine then how it had been for the classroom teacher and the SNA because I just had never come across a child like him before. And yeah, it really opened my eyes and allowed me to say to myself, it has been extremely difficult for staff. I mean I found it really hard for one hour, not to mind dealing with it for all your working day, which is, you know, really, really difficult.

- Teacher and child wellbeing
 - Recognising teacher expertise
 - Difficulty of trying to establish relationship during first meeting
 - Time taken to develop trust between school and psychologist
 - Supportive rather than scrutinising/inspecting
 - Impact of COVID-19 restrictions on direct work
 - Assessment used to support psychologist formulation/empathise
 - Understanding the brevity of the situation by working directly with child/Emotional impact
 - Developing and expressing empathy for staff
-

Phase 3: Creating initial themes

For this third phase of Reflexive Thematic Analysis, initial codes were clustered and grouped to represent meaningful patterns in the data. For instance, the initial codes of “solution-

focused consultation”, “group consultation” and “NEPS problem-solving model” were grouped together under “Consultative Tools”. Additionally, in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the principal and SET for joint work, the initial codes of “supporting parents before, during and after NEPS involvement”, “communicating with other services” and “involving all relevant school staff” were categorized as “The Mediator”. This phase also involved breaking up some initial codes to ensure that they could be examined in sufficient detail. For example, in relation to the theme of Experience, the initial code was subdivided into “Experiences of Joint Work”, “Teacher Experience of SEN”, and “Psychologist Experience”. This classification of the data provided a better insight into how each of these tools facilitated a more cohesive working relationship.

Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes

During the fourth stage of analysis, the researcher was tasked with developing, reviewing, and refining each individual theme. In order to do this, the researcher first read through all of the collated data from the semi-structured interviews and surveys for each theme using NVivo 12. Each theme was then critically reviewed to ensure that it was highlighting the most important aspects of the dataset and also providing a coherent narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). For instance, some themes lacked the necessary representation across the dataset to remain as standalone themes and were therefore, grouped into pre-existing themes. For example, “Private Diagnostic Assessment” was merged with the subtheme of “Prioritisation for Joint Work”, wherein school staff noted that when discussing which children to prioritise for joint work with the psychologist, they often considered the economic capacity of parents to avail of private assessments. Similarly, the themes were also reviewed in relation to existing literature, for example, some studies, included in the systematic review, suggested that special education teachers and principals were inclined to have greater contact with and knowledge of NEPS psychologists. Therefore, within the theme of “The Mediator”, data which highlighted how SETs and principals communicate information and support from the psychologist back to the class teacher was grouped into the subtheme of “The Liaison between Class Teacher and Psychologist”.

Phases 5& 6: Defining and naming themes and producing the report

In the final stages of thematic analysis, the themes are reviewed for relevance and coherence in relation to the overall narrative that has been generated from the data. A synopsis of each theme was then developed under a concise but informative title. These summaries also

included rich and compelling data extracts which serve to not only confirm the accuracy of the generated themes, but also provide greater insight into that participant's own individual stories. A sample synopsis of the theme "Experiences" can be seen in Table L2. These theme summaries were mapped onto the CHAT framework to facilitate the organisation and production of the final report.

Table L2

Synopsis of Theme "Experience"

Title: Experience

This theme encapsulates how the experiences of the participants tended to facilitate more successful joint working with one another. It incorporates not only the stakeholders' professional development and work experience, but also their prior meetings. The first subtheme which was generated from both the psychologist and school staff datasets was "Prior Experience of Joint Work". Within this subtheme, teachers and principals reported learning from each encounter with their psychologist and consequently applying this information to their practice going forward. For example, SET1 commented, "So, if somebody has dyslexia, it's not going to be vastly different to another child with dyslexia or the challenges they face, so we know what to look out for, and what to have done in advance, just to make sure that we're not wasting ... the time of the NEPS psychologists." Whereas psychologists noted that if they had worked with a school previously, this experience resulted in a more trusting and collaborative relationship as the basis for future joint work.

The second subtheme was "Teachers Experiences of SEN". Within this subtheme teachers and principals commented on how professional development courses from both the NEPS and other services, enabled them to feel more empowered and knowledgeable in relation to the inclusion. Additionally, it was noted that experience of working in special schools and classes also provided staff with information on how to use strategies and resources to support inclusion in the mainstream classroom. Similarly, psychologists noted that if teachers had experience of working with children with SEN, they tended to be more receptive towards joint work for inclusion. For example, NP4 noted that "...One teacher... had experience of working with children with autism and had a real interest in the area... Whereas I think maybe other staff members just felt a little bit paralyzed by their lack of expertise and that was definitely a barrier for them."

The final subtheme was “Experience of the Psychologist”. Teachers and principals noted how some psychologists appeared to have an interest or speciality in some areas of SEN, such as Autism, English as an Additional Language, or emotional difficulties. Thus, school staff noted that engaging in work which was of particular interest to a psychologist was mutually beneficial for both stakeholders. In fact, TP1 commented that “She takes a particular interest in asylum seekers and refugees. And we have quite a large population of that cohort in our schools ... I think her knowledge has actually been enhanced because of working well with us as well.” Whilst additional training or areas of interest were not highlighted by the psychologists themselves, they did note that over time their own experiences enabled them to enhance their use of the consultative model of service. One survey respondent noted that “As I became more experienced as an EP, my confidence for suggesting joint working developed... This included facilitating reviews for children whom I had assessed and over time, encouraging schools to take the lead in such meetings.”

Appendix M:

Sample of Direct Quotes, Final Codes, Subthemes and Themes for Each Research Question

Research Question	Direct Quotes	Codes	Subthemes	Themes
1	<p>NP1: I think, yes, I think schools would have moved away from their, their concept of learning support, which at that time was Maths and English to the whole, the idea that a child would have sensory regulation needs and that learning support time could be spent having a run around or playing basketball with them. I think that they really struggled with the concept that that was learning support. So yeah, broaden their own perception of what it meant to be a learning support teacher.</p> <p>Psychologist Survey Respondent: An example that springs to mind would be a post primary school whereby the student was school refusing... There was initially slight resistance when we explored together how reducing demands would be such a positive. When the staff saw the benefits, they quickly trusted me and were fully invested in the work.</p> <p>NP2: I think it was his first time teaching a class... I think he got into very quickly a very kind of disciplinarian kind of approach and almost like the old school kind of master idea, I think, you know, and it just wasn't working with this child. He wasn't responding to that whatsoever, you know, so the relationship between the two of them was really poor to start with, you know, yeah. So, like, one of the suggestions I had was that he wanted to have someone to one time with the child tried to kind of build up a more positive relationship.... I think that helped things you know, and that he was a bit more positively disposed towards the child. It was all about the relationship really.</p>	<p>Broadening the focus from purely academic</p> <p>Behaviour management</p>	<p>Teaching approaches</p>	<p>Daily Practice</p>

TP2: ...we would have dealt with her much differently after having had the the advice from the psychologist or having done the course than beforehand.... You know, she would have liked doing certain things. So, we nearly had to bring everything back to that. There was no way that we could be confrontational or oppose her- that never worked. And we would have tried to do that like say, Come on X, you know, you this is what you have to do, etc. That didn't work with her, and we discovered that from our psychologist.

NP3: Yeah, we'd one actually and it because there is actually a circular on it now, but reduced timetables used to come up a lot. And you know, I suppose you do everything for the for the good of the child and sometimes, it might seem right in your mind. But when you kind of reflect on it, then in a group just as we would in peer supervision It might sound you know, actually, maybe that's not the best option. So, yeah, definitely. I have kinds of schools have kind of rolled back on reduced timetables, having maybe got the perspectives of others you know.

AP2: Well, it's, I suppose incredible years taught the teachers to look at not just behaviour but what was causing the behaviour. And then that led them to, to branch out and to see okay, well, if this is the cause, then we have to deal with cause first and sort out the cause. And, you know, this child needs to break out with us for for five minutes or two or three. So, it, like, it changed the class teaching from the old style where everybody sits in the chair and looks up and pays attention. They changed from that to a lot more movement, a lot more coming and going. A lot more use of the SNAs, I suppose, for preventative kind of work for helping children to be able to manage in the classroom. And I suppose, like the teachers would have learned things like the turtle technique and looking at the whole idea of counting the frequencies of behaviours, and intensity behaviours, as opposed to just saying,

oh, that child is just bold. You know, looking kind of learned to kind of to dig down deeper into seeing what was behind this behaviour or why was this behaviour happening.

- 2 NP3: I ran into a little issue in that, I suppose because the school were new to me. I hadn't had the time to maybe build the trusting relationship... [if] I had more time to build a relationship and, work with them over a period of time, even on different cases, or trainings, maybe... they would have seen the positive success stories of other students and they would have been more trusting...
- Psychologists must "earn" the trust of their schools
- Establishing relationships
- Relationship

NP3: And I feel that if it had been if the case had come up now, I would have had a bank of kind of other positive experiences with this school, I would hope, where they would feel more trusting... there certainly was a little bit of a sense of maybe disconnect in that, you know, there can be a misperception or here is the expert coming in telling us what to do. Whereas I think had I had more time to build a relationship and, you know, work with them over a period of time, even on different cases, or trainings or that maybe that would have been less so and they would have maybe seen the positive success stories of maybe hopefully with other students and they would have been more trusting.

NP2: So that piece is really important before you come in with kind of like, what about trying this? That time spent establishing a relationship and trust because I wouldn't have met these teachers before this.... So, it was really I suppose around trying to build up a bit of a relationship with them as well. And, you know, show them that I was on their side.

NP2: And I certainly, you know, even still, you do feel a little bit under pressure to kind of come up with solutions. And then if you tried to bring forward things like

you know, using visuals or you know, movement breaks, things like that. We've tried all that, we've done all that - what else have you got? I had some suggestions, I pulled out like one or two things that they could try and then we came back in a few weeks' time. So, we met again in about three weeks' time. They kind of were pleasantly surprised, as was I, that things had actually settled down. So, the two interventions that I kind of suggested did work and that was that was lucky and that kind of built the trust in between us, you know.

NP4: And I think a big part of it, then was the relationship between the psychologists who led the clusters and their groups of schools. There was almost like a sense of identity then amongst the clusters.

Group
consultation
leads to a
more organic
formation of
relationships

3

School staff Survey Respondent: We were lucky that our psychologist gave us lots of time to discuss lots of different issues and provided advice and feedback at the beginning of every year on a wide range of students and challenges around inclusion in our school.

Planning
Meetings

Collective
Enquiry

Consultation

TP2: Well, I have a list at the beginning of the year. And like it's going through the list, and it's actually having the space and the time to figure each one out.

SET2: And I'll be honest, having the mobile phone number of the NEPS psychologist and he's very good at responding and he's, I do kind of feel sorry for him sometimes because him and the other psychologist in my other school, they must be sick of me.

Psychologist
is always at
the end of the
phone

Survey Respondent: Our NEPS psychologist is available at the end of a phone or email to answer any query or support the school meet the needs of all children in the school, not just those on CoS.

AP1: And she's very- she has been very available to me on the phone and really gets back within -definitely within a couple of days more often than not, she will ring me.... So actually, I have to say in that sort of thing to have access to a psychologist who is available to you is hugely important.

AP2: Now I have to say like I can ring psychologist, you know if I need to and which is absolutely marvellous, that's, that's a great support for me. Like I wouldn't say the same kind of support is available to teachers. I'm just thinking now. Like, I suppose they'd come to me if there was a problem and then I might ring the NEPS psychologist, and she would tease it out for me on the phone.

4	<p>NP3: I suppose we keep bringing that consultative message because I do think it brings out the best outcomes not in every case, but I think overall as a model. I suppose that is where the SCPA service just doesn't -doesn't fit. You know because that is just assessment based. So, we're kind of crossing our nose to spite our face you know. it's it's really coming to the fore for me now because, you know, I'm trying to promote this consultative model all year and then when I am leaving this is all that is offered to for them. And their experiences haven't been positive, you know, unfortunately, so I think it's going to need to change definitely.</p> <p>NP1: I have no time for it whatsoever. I just think it should be scrapped because we are saying, to get the best out of your psychologist, you should engage in a consultative process. But when you can't have that you will get a one-off</p>	Does not align with consultative model of service	SCPA	Government Policies
---	--	---	------	---------------------

assessment for a child which produces a report and is never reviewed and can make no difference. So, it's like, saying, you know you can either run with us or here is a pair of crutches and you can just hobble along. Obviously, as a service that's what we have to do because we don't have the staff, but it's a very, very poor substitute. we've got to a point now where schools don't want SCPA because they're saying this isn't going to do what we need to be done. They are saying that the SCPA won't help us because it won't do what we need to be done. That's a real indication of a school knowing the value of a NEPS psychologist.

AP1: So, I want to put this into your database- about the actual frustration about an ordinary principle in an ordinary school, and about how over the next years I have been told I can access one assessment through the SCPA system. And I have I have five or six that I need to assess... everyone deserves to be able to have maternity leave, but the policy is that the schools are just left there. That sexist. It's insulting to the person in the job and it's definitely insulting to all the schools or clients you work with. And it's more than insulting. It's disgraceful- for the children who are left without a service.

Schools feel
abandoned

Survey Response: No NEPS psychologist attached to our school so there is no relationship there between the school and the psychologist. We have been using the SCPA list. It is a stranger coming into the school

AP2: There aren't enough psychologists employed in the country, you know, and they aren't replaced when they go on maternity leave. It's as if they set up the system but they kind of set up not to be 100% successful. You know, like you need to set something up for success, to experience success, like you will set the child up to experience this. Well, it's like with NEPS that it's kind of giving you a taste of what it could be.

Appendix N:

Thematic Maps in Relation each Research Question

Figure N1

Maps for Research Question 1: How Does Joint Work Facilitate Inclusion?

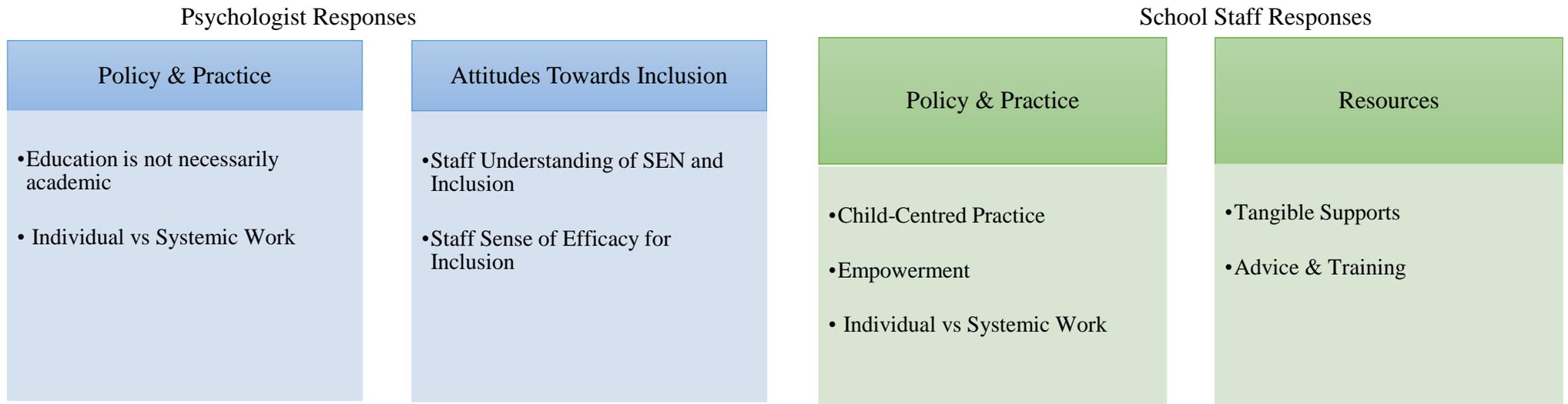


Figure N2a

Maps for Research Question 2: What are the Roles and Responsibilities of Each Stakeholder for Joint Work?

Psychologist Roles and Responsibilities

Psychologist Responses

<p>Building Capacity</p>	<p>Establishing & Maintaining Relationships</p>	<p>The Consultation Assessment Dilemma</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and Systemic work • Joint Problem-solving • Psychological insight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy & Understanding • Continuity & Accessibility • Time & Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocating for the Consultative Model • Limitations of Consultation

School Staff Responses

<p>Build Capacity</p>	<p>Maintain Relationship</p>	<p>Assessment</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training • Understanding Other Services • Recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity & Accessibility • Acknowledging Staff Expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Diagnosis and Planning • For Access to Resources

Figure N2b

Maps for Research Question 2: What are the Roles and Responsibilities of Each Stakeholder for Joint Work?

School Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Psychologist Responses

School Staff Responses

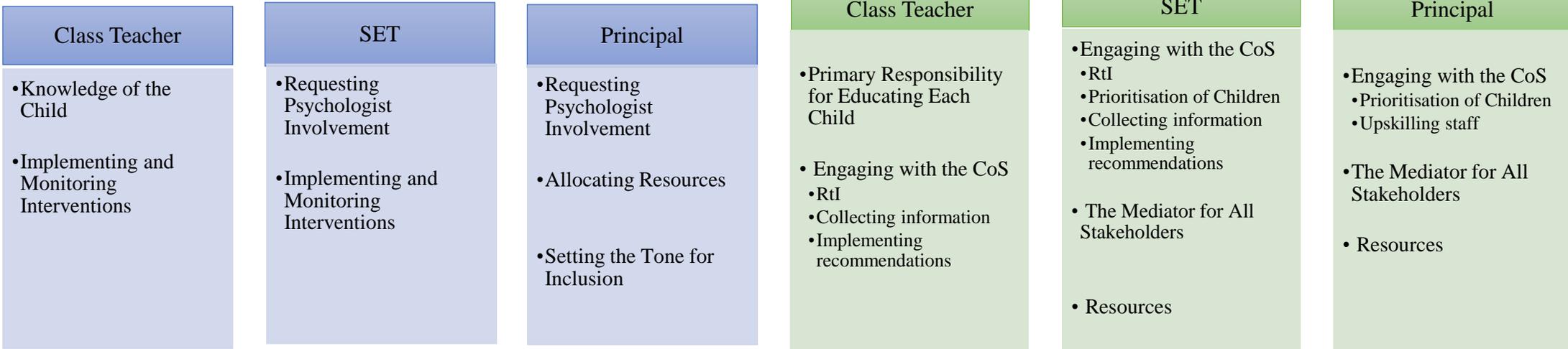


Figure N3

Maps for Research Question 3: How are Structures, Resources, And Supports used to Facilitate Successful Joint Work?

Psychologist Responses

Consultation Model	Experience	Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Consultative Tools •Staff 'Buy-In' for Consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Prior Experience of Joint Work •Experience of staff in relation to SEN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •NEPS Publications •Professional Development

School Staff Responses

Collective Inquiry	Experience	Information
<p>Planning Meetings</p> <p>School Support Plans</p> <p>Always at the end of the phone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Prior Experience of Joint Work' •Teachers Experiences of SEN •Experience of the Psychologist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •NEPS Publications •Professional Development

Figure N4

Maps for Research Question 4: What Rules, Regulations, Expectations, or Norms Influence the Joint Work of NEPS psychologists and School Staff?

Psychologist Responses

Government Policy	Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •SCPA •Irish Exemption Circular •SET Allocation Model •Data Protection •COVID-19 restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •School Allocation • Support and Development Work •Individual vs Systemic work

School Staff Responses

Government Policy	Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •SCPA •Irish Exemption Circular •SET Allocation Model •Data protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychologist Flexibility School Allocation Assessment vs Consultation

Appendix O:

Additional Findings which did not apply to Research Questions

Node of CHAT: Community

Theme: Partnership

Successful joint work was reported to be heavily reliant on the functionality of partnerships. In general, NEPS psychologists were noted to have a good working relationship with professionals from the Health Service Executive, including those working in the Children's Disability Network Teams, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Primary Care Services. In fact, on several occasions it was noted that the NEPS psychologist was called upon to explain the roles of these professionals and to subsequently advise schools in relation to onward referral. For example, SET2 noted "We use NEPS to try and understand all these other external people... because otherwise you would need a degree just to try and figure them all out". Furthermore, NEPS psychologists were generally reported to work in tandem with clinicians from the HSE to support inclusion. AP1 described an experience in which professionals from Primary Care were "brought in to work in conjunction with the knowledge and assistance of NEPS". Similarly, SET2 recalled how the NEPS psychologist had linked with a speech and language therapist from the CDNT in relation to a possible query of autistic spectrum disorder, wherein both professionals undertook separate observations and assessments before comparing and discussing results. This stable partnership between both services appeared to stem from clear role boundaries, as described by AP1 who noted, "We understand it very clearly now that NEPS is school, like ABCs and emotions from Monday to Friday between 9 and 3, and everything else is community care or CAMHS. Additionally, NP1 described the close personal and professional connections that had been developed with his colleagues in the HSE over time. He commented, "...there are some psychologists in the HSE that I would meet once a term for lunch... and if you were to suggest joint work with somebody over a coffee, they will be more likely to work with you". Hence, this sense of certainty and familiarity between HSE staff and NEPS psychologists appeared to facilitate a cohesive and successful working relationship.

Descriptions of the partnership between NEPS psychologists and the specialist advisors from the National Council for Special Education suggest that these connections were less developed. Notably, NP2 felt that there was an overlap in the services that were provided by both of these organisations, wherein the NCSE advisors were reportedly providing teacher

training and advise in relation to individual behavioural difficulties in schools. Hence, she expressed her reluctance to work conjointly until firmer role boundaries had been established. This point was also echoed by several other psychologist participants, such as one survey respondent who highlighted how the issue had recently arisen in their own practice when a lack of role clarity had thwarted efforts to work together. These concerns were summarised aptly by NP4, who noted “I think there is this kind of apprehension like, oh what if an NCSE advisor is involved with the same child. Would we be able to talk to each other or would they go in and give different advice and would I never know?”. Indeed, this fear was substantiated by SET1 who had worked with a specialist advisor in relation to a student that was also under the remit of the NEPS psychologist. He commented, I would go so far as to say that it was never even discussed with NEPS that we had gotten in a behavioural expert from the NCSE. Therefore, it appeared as though the working relationship between these two sets of professionals was virtually non-existent due to inadequate communication structures as well as considerable role ambiguity.

Appendix P:

Extracts from Reflexive Journal

Extract 1:

I have just finished my interview with SET 2 and I was conscious throughout our discussion that her experience as a Shared SET between two schools, is quite similar to my final year of teaching. Although I have briefly outlined my previous experiences as a teacher and current status as a trainee psychologist in the NEPS, at the start of all interviews, I have not generally discussed how my experiences have compared with that of the participant during these interviews. However, I felt compelled to share this information with SET2 throughout the interview in order to not only validate and empathise with her experiences, but also to address my own subjectivity. In particular, I noted that her descriptions of being the sole SET in one small school and the subsequent feelings of isolation and pressure, resonated with my own experiences. We both reflected on how we often resorted to one particular social media group for SETs in search of support, guidance, and information. At the end of the interview, I was concerned that I may have overstepped the role of interviewer by sharing these pieces of information. However, after reading over the transcript, I think these shared experiences led to a much more in-depth and rich conversation in comparison with the first SET interview, in which I did not explicitly compare our narratives. This is something that I try will to be more cognizant of in future interviews.

Extract 2:

My interview with CT1 was very different to the other interviews that I have had so far. Her whole perception of the joint work appears to be much more negative in comparison with the other participants, and I think this is visible in her use of language. For instance, when I asked her what she felt the role of the psychologist was, she noted that they simply “regurgitate their findings after an assessment”. Despite this she expressed her empathy for NEPS psychologists, throughout the interview, and often noted how their “hands were tied”. I was initially very confused by these contrasting depictions, but as the interview progressed, I felt that she was expressing her frustration with the system, rather than her own NEPS psychologist. Additionally, I noted that within this teacher’s school, children who had any sort of diagnosis were given priority when resources such as SET time were being allocated. Therefore, it appeared as though she felt that if a psychologist did not provide, what she referred to as “a good diagnosis”, they were in some way depriving her of extra support and resources. After

reading back over the transcript a few times I noted that I had developed a very clear visual image of this teacher swimming against the tide of the new SET allocation model, wherein, the language that she used is more representative of her frustration and exhaustion rather than resentment or anger.

Extract 3:

I have been using Braun and Clarke's 15-point checklist throughout the qualitative analysis in an effort to monitor the efficacy of the process and I have recently also begun to reflect on the criteria for information power, one of which is dialogue. It is stated that if the researcher is unfamiliar with their given topic or is unwilling to challenge participants during interviews, the dialogue may be quite weak. Although I am no doubt familiar with my topic, I began to question whether or not I had effectively challenged my participants throughout the course of the interviews, so I took the morning to read back through each transcript to try and find evidence of these challenges. I noted that in the interview with CT1 she had described how resources were allocated based on diagnosis within her school and I had responded by asking her if she felt that this was a practice that was unique to her own school in light of the SETAM or whether she felt this practice was more widespread. Upon reflection, I personally feel that this was an effective challenge, as it conveyed a sense of respect and acceptance for this participant's experience, whilst also implicitly referring to the policy which should technically have eradicated this method of prioritisation. Similarly, I also challenged an assertion made by TP1, wherein he expressed his belief that schools would benefit from the reallocation of SETs to the mainstream classroom to lower class sizes. These are just two of the many examples that I came across, but I feel that they are representative of my ability to effectively challenge participants whilst also maintaining respect for their individual experiences.