

**AN EXPLORATION OF TEACHERS' CONCEPTUALIZATION OF EMOTIONAL AND  
BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES (EBD) AND WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE THE  
STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS THEY ADOPT WHEN WORKING WITH  
INDIVIDUAL PUPILS DIAGNOSED WITH EBD.**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
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in Applied Educational and Child Psychology**

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## Dedication

**This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my parents Hannah and Maurice O’Leary whose guidance, support and love of learning continues to be a constant inspiration.**

*Those we hold most dear never truly leave us. they live on in the kindnesses they showed, the values they shared and the love they brought into our lives.*

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

**SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology**

**Declaration**

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted for any degree.

This research is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology.

This thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is included.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research study explored the perspective of 10 primary school class teachers who were working with students presenting with challenging behaviours. The teachers were asked to reflect on five separate but interconnected topics in relation to their role. These included: their understanding and attribution of behaviour and its impact on the school community; their perception of the contributors to their self-efficacy; the interventions they had selected and the process involved in this selection; their engagement with CPD and how this had impacted on their practice and finally their perception of the supports they had received both from within their schools and from external professionals.

The methodology selected was a qualitative approach based on the researcher's constructivist, pragmatic epistemological position. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the participants and the data was analysed and interpreted using systematic thematic analysis based on the framework presented by Braun & Clarke (2006).

Interpretation of the data suggested that the teachers attributed student behaviour to external factors which they had a limited capacity to control and which related mainly to biological or environmental influences. Addressing the students' behaviours was reported to have a significant impact on the class teachers and other school personnel. The individual students also struggled to cope within a mainstream school environment at a social, emotional and academic level and were regularly removed from the classroom environment. The teachers reported that their overall self-efficacy relating to their professional competence was high but the current situation had challenged their confidence and sense of efficacy. The interventions

adopted by the teachers were both proactive and reactive and were selected on the basis of managing the student's behaviour. The interventions were mainly behaviourist in nature and did not always address the student's need as identified by the teachers. The participants had engaged in limited CPD in relation to challenging behaviour and the majority of the teachers reported that this limited access to training had not enhanced their practice. The schools where the teachers worked had not developed a whole school support system to address challenging behaviour and, while the teachers reported that their interactions with colleagues were generally positive and helpful, this support was accessed in a random, unstructured manner. There was limited involvement with external agencies by the participants but the teachers reported that a consultative approach would be the preferred model of engagement with other professionals.

This research study highlighted a range of issues in relation to developing more effective support structures within the school environment and the need for the ongoing promotion of a climate of professional development and the use of evidence-based practice. It also highlighted a range of challenges for the discipline of educational psychology in ensuring that the role of educational psychologists is both influential and relevant to teacher practice.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

ASD – Autistic Spectrum Disorder

BESD – Behavioural, Emotional Social Difficulties

BPS – British Psychological Society

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

DfE – Department for Education (UK)

DES - Department of Education and Skills (Ireland)

EBD – Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties/Disturbance/Disorder

EP – Educational psychologist

ERIC – Education Resources Information Center

ESRI - The *Economic and Social Research Institute*

IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IYTCM – Incredible Years – Teacher Classroom Management

NCSE – National Counsel for Special Education

NEPS - National Educational Psychological Service

NEWB – National Education Welfare Board

ODD – Oppositional Defiance Disorder



OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education (UK)

PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment

PSI – Psychological Society of Ireland

PsyArticles – Psychology Articles

PsycInfo – Psychological Information

PDST – Professional Development Service for Teachers

SEBD – Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

SEN – Special Educational Needs

SESS – Special Education Support Service

SP ED – Special Education

TALIS - Teaching and Learning International Survey

TUSLA - Child and Family Agency (Ireland)

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

## 1.1 Overview

This chapter details the background, rationale and aims underpinning the current research study. Section 1.2 outlines the background and motivation for undertaking the enquiry, while Section 1.3 identifies the aims of the research project. The research questions to be addressed are outlined in the Section 1.4, while Section 1.5 clarifies the use of terminology within the context of this research study. Section 1.6 outlines the original and distinct contribution of the research study to the field of educational psychology and Section 1.7 provides a summary of the chapter.

## 1.2 Background and Rationale for Undertaking the Research Study

The researcher is a senior educational psychologist working with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) in the Republic of Ireland (Table 1).

**Table 1 - Role of NEPS Psychologists**

*NEPS stands for the National Educational Psychological Service. It is a nationwide service funded by the Department of Education and Science. NEPS psychologists specialise in working with the school community and work with both primary and post-primary schools. They are concerned with learning, behaviour, social and emotional development. Each psychologist is assigned to a group of schools.*

*Psychologists work in partnership with teachers, parents and children in identifying educational needs. They offer a range of services aimed at meeting these needs, for example, supporting individual students (through consultation and assessment), support and development with school staff and special projects and research.*

Department of Education and Skills (2018)

An increasing component of this role involves supporting students, school staff and parents in addressing challenging behaviour and supervising and managing a local team

of educational psychologists who are also encountering similar issues in the course of their professional practice.

There is a significant body of evidence within the literature indicating that challenging behaviour is becoming an increasing issue within the school environment. In an international survey, the OECD found that 60% of teachers were working in schools where the principal reported that challenging behaviour impacted on instruction. In the same survey teachers reported that, on average, 13% of teacher time was spent on disciplinary issues and this was reported to be 11% in Ireland (OECD, 2009). Beaman, Wheldall, & Kemp (2007) found that approximately 50% of the educators in their study reported that they were spending more time dealing with student misbehaviour than they should. Addressing challenging behaviour has also been identified as one of the most challenging aspects of a class teacher's role (Dicke, Parker, Marsh, Kunter, Schmeck, & Leutner, 2014; Maguire, Balland & Braun, 2010; Sullivan, Johnson, Owens, & Conway, 2014).

Evidence also suggests that supporting teachers who are working with students presenting with challenging behaviour is a significant component of the role of educational psychologists working within the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). When recording cases referred to NEPS for the academic year 2017/2018, behaviour was identified as the primary reason for referral in 29% of cases in the Laois/Offaly area. This is also evident in the 2015/2016 annual report of the National Council of Special Educational Needs (NCSE) where almost 18% of resource teaching hours were allocated to students under the categories of *Emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problem* and *Severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problem* (National Council for Special Education, Education (NCSE), 2017).

A noteworthy development within the Irish education system in the academic year 2017/2018 was the introduction of a new model of resourcing students presenting with a range of special educational needs (SEN). Prior to September 2017 students with SEN could receive additional support from a general allocation of resources to the school or they were supported by the receipt of individual resource teaching hours if they met criteria set out in Department of Education and Skills Circular SP ED 08/02 (DES, 2002). The new model that is now in operation provides one unified allocation of resources to each school based on a profile of their perceived needs (DES, 2017). All students with SEN in the school are now supported from this resource allocation based on an evaluation by staff of their individual level of need. This model allows for more autonomy and flexibility in how school staff meet the needs of students with SEN but it also requires school staff to reflect on the structures they have in place and how best to utilize resources. This is particularly relevant in the context of supporting students with challenging behaviour as these students need a more flexible approach to addressing behavioural issues which can be complex and unpredictable (Levine, Emery, & Pollack, 2007).

The role of psychologists working with NEPS has evolved since its inception in 1999. Traditionally, psychologists spent a significant amount of their time engaging in once off assessments with individual students. Currently there is a move towards a more consultative model of working with individual students and staff and psychologists are also engaging in an increasing level of support and development work with schools.

*In common with many other psychological services and best international practice, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) has adopted a consultative model*

*of service. The focus is on empowering teachers to intervene effectively with pupils whose needs range from mild to severe and transient to enduring.*

*Psychologists use a problem solving and solution focused consultative approach to maximise positive outcomes for these pupils. NEPS encourages schools to use a continuum based assessment and intervention process whereby each school takes responsibility for initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention for pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties (Department of Education and Skills, 2018)*

The researcher has a particular interest in the area of behavioural difficulties and was a member of a NEPS working group which produced a resource document for schools as a support for teachers working with students with emotional and behavioural difficulties (*Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties, BESD*). This document includes a range of resources to support teachers and promotes a systematic problem solving approach to planning an intervening with challenging behaviour (DES, 2010). The model outlined in this document is now actively promoted by support agencies working with schools and school staff - DES Inspectorate, NCSE, SESS, PDST and NEPS.

One of the key challenges for NEPS psychologists when implementing the current model of service is to develop the most effective and influential means of supporting and working with teachers who are addressing challenging behaviour. While NEPS psychologists engage in evidence based practice in an attempt to deliver a quality service to students and teachers, there is an underlying concern that there may be a disparity between their priorities, perspectives and formulation of issues and those of the teachers they work with on a routine basis. NEPS psychologists regularly seek feedback and evaluation from teachers who attend formal training they provide such as

The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management programme IYTCM (Webster-Stratton, 2004) and FRIENDS for Life (Barrett, 2012). While the training is generally rated very positively, this does not necessarily guarantee that it results in any significant change in practice. The challenge and complexity of transferring theory and training into practice is well documented in the literature (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Randi & Corno, 2007). Other important issues that need to be considered within this context are the perspectives, motivations and decision making processes that influence teacher practice. One area where there has been limited research, especially within the Irish context, is the process teachers engage in when selecting interventions. In order to adopt the most effective and supportive approaches when engaging with teachers, psychologists need to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the perspectives and priorities of the teachers they work with and the factors which influence and impact on them in their everyday practice (Wong, Wong & Peng, 2010; Kang, 2008).

### **1.3 Aims of the Research Study**

The overall aim of this research study was to get an insight into the perspectives of a cohort of individual class teachers on their understanding of challenging behaviour and the factors that have influenced and impacted on their practice. Poulou (2001) argues that, unless there is an awareness of the practitioner's beliefs, values and attitudes, one can never know what barriers need to be overcome and what training needs must be addressed.

The aims of the research were to:

- explore the teachers' perspectives and understanding of challenging behaviour.
- reflect with the participants on their sense of self-efficacy and the factors they believe may influence this when working with challenging students.

- explore what training or professional development the teachers have engaged in, and their perception of its relevance and how it has impacted on their practice.
- elicit the teachers' views on the supports they have received when working with challenging students and explore how they perceive the role of external professionals (especially NEPS) within this context.

Having gained an insight into the real life experiences and opinions of a cohort of class teachers, it is intended to reflect on this information in the context of the relevant research in this area and to identify how

- NEPS psychologists may enhance their practice when supporting individual students in the context of working more effectively with class teachers.
- NEPS psychologists may engage in more influential support and development intervention with school staff.
- schools may develop more effective whole school systems to support class teachers when addressing challenging behaviour.
- class teachers can access structured support to cope with challenging situations in their classrooms.
- class teachers can be supported to engage in more systematic, reflective and evidence based practice when developing intervention plans for individual students.
- parents can be engaged in a more consultative and collaborative role with school staff.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions were identified



1. How do class teachers conceptualize challenging behaviour and their role in addressing this behaviour?
2. What is the perceived impact of challenging behaviour on students, school staff and school resources?
3. What factors do teachers believe influenced their selection of the strategies and interventions they have adopted for individual pupils and to what extent do they feel these interventions have been effective?
4. How do the class teachers describe their self-efficacy and what factors do they believe contribute, maintain and challenge their self-efficacy when working with a student presenting with challenging behaviour?
5. What are the class teachers' perceptions of the value of any training or CPD they have attended regarding the management of challenging behaviour?
6. What supports are available to the class teachers within their schools and how do they perceive the role and influence of external professionals, especially NEPS psychologists?

### **1.5 Use of Terminology in Relation to Student Behaviour**

It is widely acknowledged in the literature that terms such as challenging behaviour, misbehaviour, disruptive behaviour are subjective and embedded within social, political and cultural contexts (Visser, 2002; Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013; Taylor, 2000; Elkind, 1998; Casella & Page, 2004; Cannella, 1997). Challenging behaviours can be described as existing on their own or within the context of diagnosed conditions such as ADHD, ASD, ODD and Conduct Disorder. They can also be associated with assessed intellectual disabilities. Labels such as EBD, SEBD and BESD appear interchangeable and are often used to describe both externalizing and internalizing behaviours. These

labels are frequently used to facilitate public discourse or when government agencies are allocating supports and resources. Within the Irish context, the term EBD has been used since 2002 by the DES and NCSE to describe emotional and behavioural difficulties with a view to allocating resources and supports (Circular SP ED 08/02, DES, 2002).

While the focus of this research study and literature review is on the perspectives of teachers working with students exhibiting externalizing behaviours such as aggression and disruption of classroom activities which present a challenge to class teachers, there is an acknowledgement that students presenting with internalizing, non-disruptive behaviours are often ignored and warrant equal attention by policy makers and practitioners (Schoenfeld & Janney, 2008). Students presenting with significant internalizing behaviours also come under the umbrella of EBD as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which stipulates five characteristics of EBD:

1. An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, and health factors.
2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory relationships with peers and teachers.
3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. (IDEA, 2004).

Cameron (1998) described behaviours that were aggressive, physically disruptive, socially disruptive, authority- challenging and self-disruptive as ‘challenging’. The term

‘challenging behaviour’ will therefore be used in this research study as more accurate generic descriptor of the range of externalizing behaviours which are the focus of this research inquiry and which are perceived as problematic and disruptive by class teachers.

### **1.6 Original and Distinctive Contribution of the Research Study**

This research study aimed to provide the following original and distinctive contribution to the fields of education and psychology:

- An exploration of how class teachers within the Irish school system perceive challenging behaviour and its impact on their professional practice.
- An insight into the factors that influence a class teacher’s selection of interventions when working with a student exhibiting challenging behaviour.
- An exploration of class teachers’ perspective on the impact of psychology and research evidence on their understanding of behaviour and its potential to influence their professional practice.
- An insight into how class teachers supporting students presenting with challenging behaviour within the Irish school system are supported by within-school structures and external professionals.
- An exploration of the relationship between teachers’ beliefs, learning and practice.

### **1.7 Summary**

This introductory chapter described the rationale and aims underpinning the current research study. The research questions were identified and the original and distinctive contribution of the study was outlined. The research literature pertinent to the topics under investigation will be reviewed and analysed in Chapter 2.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of the Literature**

## **Chapter 2 Review of the Literature**

### **2.1 Overview**

This chapter provides an overview of the literature relating to the research topic and research questions and highlights their relevance in the context of the current research study. Section 2.2 outlines the systematic approach undertaken by the researcher when reviewing the literature. Sections 2.3 – 2.7 evaluate the literature in relation to: teachers' understanding of challenging behaviour and the impact this behaviour has on students, school staff and school resources (2.3); the impact of perceived self-efficacy on teacher performance and the decisions they make in their everyday practice (2.4); the nature and effectiveness of interventions selected by class teachers when managing challenging behaviour (2.5); teacher learning and professional development (2.6); and the perceived effectiveness of supports systems for teachers both within the school system and from external agencies (2.7). The relevance of the literature review to the research study is outlined in Section 2.8 and Section 2.9 provides a summary of the chapter.

### **2.2 Configuring Literature Review**

The approach adopted by the researcher when reviewing the literature can best be described as a configuring literature review as outlined by Gough, Thomas & Oliver (2012). They describe such a review as a process of conceptual synthesis which aims to understand patterns and explore differences which emerge from heterogeneity across the research. A configuring review is exploratory in nature and analyses evidence from across a range of research paradigms. The researcher adopted a structured and comprehensive approach to the literature review which was adapted from the steps outlined by Mertens (2005). The steps undertaken are summarized in Table 2

**Table 2 Steps Undertaken in the Review of the Literature**

Step 1	Identify the key topics to be researched	The topics investigated included teachers' attribution and understanding of behaviour. The role of self-efficacy and the impact on teacher performance. Classroom interventions in relation to managing challenging behaviour. Key issues in relation to teacher learning and CPD, support systems for teachers, and whole school behavioural support systems.
Step 2	Review of secondary sources to get an overview of the research topics.	This involved searches of the <i>Review of Research in Education</i> and the <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> .
Step 3	Identify primary sources of information	This involved identifying main databases in education and psychology ERIC EBESCO PsycINFO and PsyARTICLES and key journals in education, psychology and research in education.
Step 4	Conduct search	Based on a reading of the abstracts, the full text versions of relevant papers were reviewed to establish if they were relevant to the research inquiry. Relevant articles were printed for further analysis.
Step 5	Additional Research in the Irish context	An additional search was conducted for research and publications produced by Irish government agencies including DES NEPS NCSE NEWB and SESS.
Step 6	Review articles in detail	An analysis of each paper was undertaken to determine its relevance to the inquiry.

		Relevant information within the article was summarized and noted. A follow up search of some research articles referenced in these original articles was also undertaken if it was believed that they might provide addition insight on the research topics. A bibliography of research articles, books and papers was created
Step 7	Analyse research findings and synthesize results.	Research articles were collated in accordance with research topics. This allowed the researcher to develop an overarching and comprehensive perspective on the information gathered on each aspect of the research.
Step 8	Application of the literature review in the research study.	Analysis of the information gathered in the literature review allowed the researcher to develop a conceptual framework on which to formulate, design and analyse the current research study

The researcher's approach to the literature review was influenced by the constructivist philosophical perspective (the researcher's philosophical position will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3). This allowed the researcher to be open to new perspectives and ideas emerging in the course of the literature review (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The researcher was also cognizant of sourcing articles which presented alternative and often conflicting opinions and findings on the research topics. To this end, careful consideration was given before excluding research from the literature review to ensure this was not based on a particulate bias or perspective on the part of the researcher or a difficulty integrating the information with a general consensus emerging from other research on the same topic.

## **2.3 Teachers Attribution of Behaviour and the Impact of Managing Challenging Behaviour on the School Community**

### **2.3.1 Perspectives on behaviour**

Human behaviour has been explained from a range of theoretical perspectives. Some of the more prominent and influential perspectives are summarized in Table 3. It should be noted that each of these theoretical perspectives have been modified and developed into more sophisticated models which overlap and are less disparate from each other than originally presented.

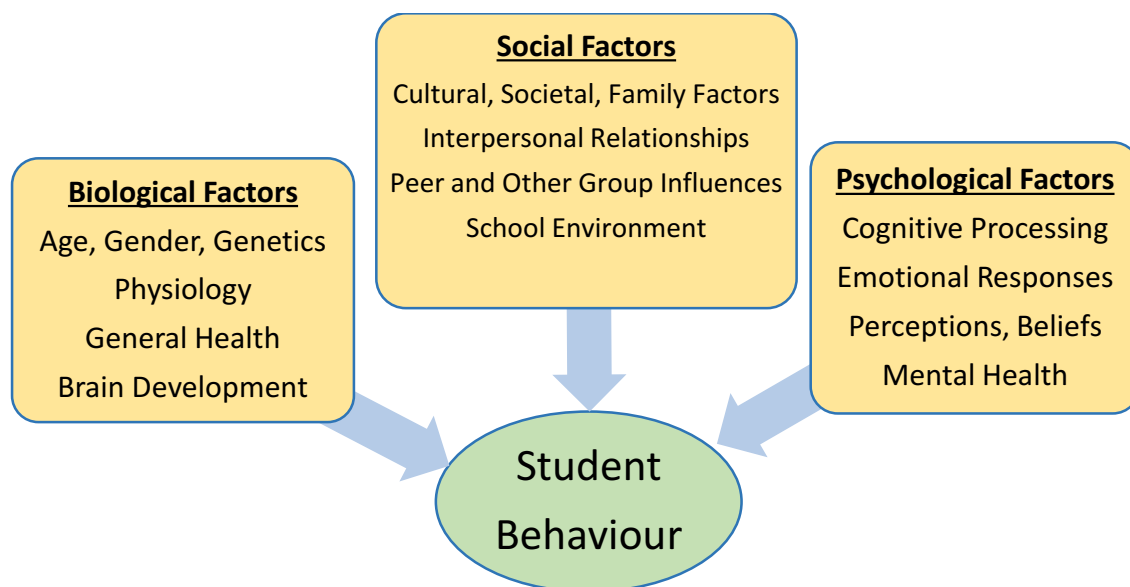
**Table 3 Theoretical Approaches to Understanding Human Behaviour**

<b>Theoretical Perspective</b>	<b>Underlying premise</b>
Biological	Behaviour is determined by biological and physiological factors such as developmental physical maturation, brain function, genetics, hormones
Cognitive	Behaviour is the result of thought processes and mental constructions
Psychoanalytic	Behaviour is influenced by early childhood experiences, libido and the impact of unconscious thought
Behaviourist	Behaviour is shaped by experiences of stimulus/response and cause effect
Social Learning	Behaviour is learned through reciprocal interaction with one's social environment.



The researcher takes the view that each of these perspectives has made a valuable and unique contribution to understanding human behaviour but, taken in isolation, they are also limited in their explanation of behaviour through their distinct perspective and the exclusion or marginalization of other possible contributory factors to understanding behaviour. Following a review of the literature, the researcher favours the perspective which is consistent with the position of NEPS which is a biopsychosocial theoretical framework for understanding and addressing student behaviour (DES, 2010). This model incorporates an integrated approach which acknowledges the multifactorial influences on behaviour which are outlined in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 Multifactorial Influences on Behaviour**



The biopsychosocial model was originally put forward by Engel within the discipline of medicine as he believed that the existing bio-medical model did not adequately explain the complex nature of illnesses particularly in the field of mental health (Engel, 1992). This approach promoted a more holistic approach to understanding illness and challenged what he believed to be the increasingly reductionist perspective being followed by the medical profession which attributed illness in a large extent to biological factors. The principles of this model have also been espoused in other frameworks such as Christensen's modification of

Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework (Christensen, 2010; Bronfenbrenner, 1979 (see Appendix 1). Diagnosed conditions such as ADHD and ODD and their associated behaviours are now being understood through a biopsychosocial lens (Cooper, 2008; Rutter, 2008). While not always explicitly described in terms of the biopsychosocial theoretical framework, aggression is also widely understood and explained in the literature in terms of genetic, biological, environmental and social influences (Berkowitz, 2003; Lindsay, 1998; Tremblay, 2015). The biopsychosocial model has received some criticism from different perspectives. Slee (2015) has argued that, within this model, the impact of environmental factors and context are often minimized or ignored.

In the context of understanding behaviour, the biopsychosocial model approach does not espouse a particular theoretical explanation of human behaviour but promotes understanding behaviour from a range of contexts within this framework. The significance of this model is not only that it recognizes the range of factors that may impact on behaviour but considers how these factors interact with each other to create a complex reality for each individual (Hernandez & Blazer, 2006; Frith, 1992). Cooper & Jacobs (2011) describe nature and nurture 'being in constant fluid and dynamic interaction' (pg 57). It is a particularly useful framework when formulating behavioural issues within the classroom and is helpful when reflecting on the genesis of challenging behaviour when working with school staff and parents. The biopsychosocial model for understanding behaviour is now widely referred to in the literature within the Irish context (Madden & Senior, 2018; DES, 2010; Desforges & Lindsay, 2010).

### **2.3.2 Impact of behaviour on the school community**

A number of international studies have identified how student misbehaviour impacts on teachers, generating anxiety and psychological distress (Everaert & Van der Wolf, 2007; Lambert, McCarthy, O'Donnell, & Melendres, 2007). Addressing challenging behaviour has

been identified as a significant stressor for teachers (Forlin, 2001; Klassen & Chui 2010; Chaplain, 2008) and can lead to depression and burnout (Hastings & Bham, 2003). Madden et al (2018) found that 37% of teachers in their survey (within the Irish context) reported that 6-20% of their class presented with challenging behaviour. Rogers (1994) claimed that children with behavioural difficulties may only represent 5% of the student population but they had the capacity 'to drain the emotional life' out of teachers due to the frequency and intensity of their behaviours.

Not only does behaviour impact on the individual teacher but on the school system (Little & Aikin-Little, 2009). Shevlin, Kenny, & Loxley (2008) found that students presenting with SEBD are the most difficult to accommodate in mainstream because of their impact on the wider school community due to disruption of classroom activities and displays of aggression towards students and staff. This is also supported in other research (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Corbett, 2001; Hodkinson 2006; Croll & Moses 2000). Kauffman (1999) found that children with EBD are the most likely to be included in restricted and exclusionary practice. High exclusion rates for students presenting with behaviour difficulties are widely reported in the literature (Farrell & Polat, 2003; Jull 2008; Russell 2008; O'Connor, Hodkinson, Burton & Torstensson, 2011). Research would also suggest that exclusions and suspensions can be ineffective and are more likely to lead to an increase in inappropriate behaviours (Hemphill et al, 2006).

Research evidence also highlights how challenging behaviour impacts on the other students in the classroom. An Ofsted review of primary school inspection reports suggests that, 34% of teachers were spending 5-10 minutes or more per hour managing disruptive behaviour (Ofsted, 2014). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report found that 15% of students reported that they could not learn well due to the disruptive behaviour of their peers

(OECD, 2012). Disruptive behaviour can also impact on the classroom environment which can create an atmosphere where it more difficult to intervene and which undermines interventions the teacher has put in place (Barth, Dunlap, Dane, Lochman & Wells, 2004; Dishion, McCord & Poulin ,1999). It can have a particularly negative impact on peers presenting with anxiety and internalizing behaviours (Lewinsohn, Clark, Hops & Andrews, 1990).

Research would suggest that teachers need to consider how the individual student's behaviour is perceived by their peer group. There can be a perceived inequity in the treatment of students with challenging behaviour. Broomhead (2013) found in their interviews with parents and school staff that there can be a misunderstanding as to why some students get access to an individualized reward system and other students can perceive this as unfair and biased. Cooper et al (2011) highlight how teachers need to be aware of the power of the peer group. There found that peer interactions can be a positive or negative influence within the classroom environment which can have particular relevance for interventions that aim to promote positive social and emotional engagement.

There is significant evidence in the research that the impact of challenging behaviour on other students in the classroom is a major concern for class teachers. Teachers believe they spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with behaviour problems compared with time spent on instruction and academic activities (Cains & Brown, 1996; OECD, 2009). Failure to address misbehaviour compromises the learning environment whereby academic activities are interrupted, curriculum content is not covered, teacher authority is undermined, and most importantly, there are decreased opportunities to learn (Blankenship, 1988; Cains et al, 1996; Cartledge & Johnson, 1996; Fields, 1999; Little & Hudson, 1998; Martin, Linfoot, & Stephenson, 1999).

What is sometimes overlooked in conversations with professionals regarding challenging behaviour is the impact on the individual student themselves. There is broad consensus in the literature as to the negative impact of behavioural difficulties on the student's progress socially, emotionally, academically and for their longer term future. Students with behaviour problems perform less well academically and socially than their peers (Baker, Grant & Morlock, 2008). Children with behavioural difficulties are found to be stigmatized (Goldstein & Johnson, 1997; Corrigan, River, Lundin, et al, 2000; Barg, Armstrong, Hetz & Latimer, 2010; Hastings & Brown, 2002; Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2012) and socially marginalized (Patterson Kupersmidt, & Griesler, 1990). Skinner, Nedderniep, Robinson, Ervin, & Jones (2002) noted a correlation between the pattern of exclusion of the student by the disciplinary procedure employed by teachers and peer rejection. Within the Irish context, the ESRI study *Growing up in Ireland*, found that children with EBD are more susceptible to bullying (Greene et al, 2010). Barnardo's (2006) found a high correlation between social disadvantage and SEBD. Other studies have found increased and disproportionately high levels of exclusionary discipline applied to students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Youdell (1996) suggested that students are labelled 'good' and 'bad' based on their level of compliance and, rather than been viewed as having different learning needs, they are viewed as impossible learners.

### **2.3.3 Attribution theory**

Attribution theory is frequently mentioned in the literature when explaining how teachers perceive student behaviour. Sanderson (2010) refers to Heider as the 'father of attribution theory' (pg 112). Heider developed his theory to explain how humans understand the world around them but then extended it to specifically address how people perceive their own and others' behaviours. He believed that people used a range of attributions to explain human

behaviours. He divided these attributions into two broad categories, *Internal* which referred to factors related to personal qualities intrinsic to the person (such as ability, mood, effort or attitude) or *external* influences which referred to situational factors (such as the task, the role of other people, the environment or luck). These attributions can lead to a person having a very different perspective on their own and others' behaviour and their role in what is taking place.

Kelley (1967) cited in Hewstone & Jaspars (1987) used a covariation model to explain people's attribution of behaviour. He identified three sources of information that led to attributions which were *consensus* the degree to which others in the same situation behave in the same manner, *distinctiveness* in how different behaviours occur as a result of different stimuli and *consistency* in how frequently the same behaviours occur with similar stimuli in different situations.

Weiner (1992) focused his attribution theory on achievement and how people perceived their success or lack of success at a task. He suggested that attribution of achievement can lead to a positive or negative affect. When attribution led to positive affect, this resulted in an expectancy of success and a willingness to continue to engage with a task whereas attribution that led to negative affect resulted in low expectancy of future success. He categorized attributions along three dimensions (Weiner, 2005). Stability (stable/unstable) whether the cause of behaviour will remain stable over time which influences a person's expectancy of future success. Locus of control (internal/ external) which reflects the extent to which a person believes they can influence a situation and often determines the level of persistence they may demonstrate at a task. Controllability (controllable/uncontrollable) contrasts the factors one can control such as effort, skills commitment and factors beyond a person's control such as aptitude, luck and other's actions.

As described in the literature, attribution theory provides an interesting framework for understanding how humans interpret and respond to behaviour. However, it is acknowledged in the literature that, if people rely solely on their attributions, it can be a flawed process. People tend to focus their attention on the person displaying the behaviour and attribute the behaviour to internal factors rather than considering environmental or situational factors. However, the opposite may be true when reflecting on one's own behaviour. Jones & Nisbett (1971) referred to the actor/observer bias where people tend to look at a person's internal motivations when focusing on others, while often focusing on situational factors when evaluating their own behaviour. They also found that people tended to focus on situational factors when evaluating the behaviour of those close to them.

Some relevant issues that arose in the literature relating to attribution theory is that there can be a self-serving bias in attributions, so failure may be attributed to external factors and success to internal factors (Miller & Ross, 1975). An interesting explanation put forward for this is not related to self-esteem but to protecting one's image. This may be particularly relevant when a person is attempting to preserve their professional reputation within a workplace. A cultural difference has also been identified in attribution. Individualistic cultures tend to make internal attributions of behaviour while collective cultures tend to make external attributions of behaviour (Al-Zahrani et al, 1993; Triandis et al, 1988).

In the context of this research study, attribution theory raises some pertinent questions relating to how teachers may understand student behaviour and how this impacts on the strategies they adopt in their practice.

#### **2.3.4 Teachers' understanding and attribution of behaviour.**

Before addressing challenging behaviour, teachers need to develop an understanding of the factors that contribute to that behaviour (Jones & Jones, 2007; McInernery, 2009; Osher, 2010; Sullivan et al, 2014). They make constant decisions in their classrooms based on their beliefs, attitudes and priorities (Calderhead, 1996; Nespor, 1987; Richardson, 1994). According to Poulou (2001) and Poulou & Norwich (2000) teacher belief systems are key to informing their practice. This viewpoint is supported in other research studies (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Cheng, 1996; Coladarci, 1992; Hoy and Woolfolk, 1993; Ross, 1988). According to Rubie-Davies et al (2012), 'instructional practices do not just happen they are predicated on beliefs' (pg 286). Johansen, Little & Akin-Little (2011) suggest that causal statements of behaviour are created on the basis of perceptions. Cooper and Burger (1980) found that teachers' attributions of low achievement are often attributed to motivation and family. These findings are also supported by Tollefson et al (1990) and Georgiou, Christou, Stavrinides, & Panaoura (2002).

Attribution theory is frequently used to explain a teacher's response to behaviour. Georgiou et al (2002) suggested that if a behaviour is attributed to a controllable factor on the part of the student such as their motivation or intent then the teacher's response is likely to be more critical whereas if the behaviour is deemed out of the student's control then the teachers were more likely to respond with empathy. This was supported by other research where teachers were reported to adopt a care-taking role when the behaviour was deemed out of the students control (Castelli, Addimando & Pepe, 2015; Georgiou et al, 2002; Lucas, Collins, & Langdon 2009). Teachers who attribute behaviour to parents or within-child factors were found to be more likely to seek the support of outside services (Miller, 2003; Athanasiou, Geil, Hazel & Copeland, 2002).



A review of the literature suggests that teachers may view behavioural difficulties too narrowly (Kohn, 2006; Sullivan et al 2014; McInerney, 2009). Denholm (2006) suggested that teachers tended to see challenging behaviour as within child and beyond their influence but this evaluation of student behaviour is not supported by research evidence (Richardson, 1990). Orsati et al (2013) discuss the potential negative impact of teacher discourse where the description of the behaviour becomes enmeshed with the description of the child.

Miller (2003) points to the risk of relying on attributions to understand behaviour - 'attributions of cause are not objective truths' (pg 145). He suggested that people can act on their beliefs rather than factual evidence (Miller, 2003). Teachers also need to be aware of the role they may play in maintaining inappropriate behaviour (Johansen et al, 2011) and how their personal views and beliefs impact on their practice (Grieve, 2009).

It is important to note here that research evidence also highlights significant variation between teachers and that teachers do not act as a unified group (Georgiou et al, 2002; Koth, Bradshaw & Leaf 2008; Newberry & Davis, 2008). An OECD report on the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) found that the attitudes of teachers and disciplinary climate in the classroom varied more between teachers than among schools (OECD, 2009).

## **2.4 The Role of Teacher Self-Efficacy and its Impact on Addressing Challenging Behaviour**

### **2.4.1 The impact of teacher self-efficacy.**

The theory of self-efficacy was initially put forward by Bandura (1997). He defined self-efficacy as a belief in one's capacity to bring about the actions needed to succeed in a particular situation. He stated that 'perceived self-efficacy refers to belief in one's agentic capabilities, that one can produce given levels of attainment' (pg 382). Bandura frequently used the term 'perceived self-efficacy' which reflects his belief that it is a subjective attribute. Self-efficacy

is linked to other concepts such motivation, self-esteem and confidence, however these are distinctive if associated constructs. For example, Mayer (2010) strongly links self-efficacy and motivation as he believed self-efficacy and feelings of success lead to increased motivation. Neill (2005) distinguishes between self-esteem and self-efficacy in that he describes self-esteem as a 'feeling' of worth and value while self-efficacy is described in terms of 'doing' and that one is 'up for a challenge'. Bandura (1997) distinguished between self-efficacy and confidence. He described confidence as a 'nondescript term that refers to the strength of belief but does not necessarily specify what the belief is about' while self-efficacy refers to 'one's agentive capabilities'(pg 382). Emmer & Hickman (1991) suggest that self-efficacy has a significant role in mediating between a person's knowledge and skills and their behaviour.

Self-efficacy can be subject to challenge and change. A recurring theme in the literature is the reciprocal nature of self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998) and the question arises does high self-efficacy lead to success or success lead to high self-efficacy? LaMorte (2016) described self-efficacy as a dynamic and reciprocal interaction between the person, environment and behaviour.

Gibson & Dembo (1984) suggested two dimensions of teacher self-efficacy. They referred to personal teacher self-efficacy which referred to a teacher's belief in their own ability and general teaching self-efficacy which refers to their belief in teaching as a profession.

There is a significant body of research in relation to the teaching profession and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has been closely aligned with teacher behaviours (Allinder, 1995; Caprara Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2008; Domsch, 2009; Ross, 1992; Woolfolk Hoy & Davis, 2006). Teachers were found to work harder, become involved in informal learning, be more persistent and feel less stressed – (Bandura, 1997; Lohman, 2006). Zee, de Jong & Koomen (2016) in a review of research in the area of teacher self-efficacy found a positive correlation

between self-efficacy and teacher psychological wellbeing, including their sense of personal accomplishment, job satisfaction and commitment.

Much of the research in relation to teacher self-efficacy relates to its impact on teacher performance, academics or inclusion. However, many of the teacher characteristics and behaviours identified are particularly relevant to working in a difficult classroom environment with students presenting with challenging behaviour. There is a broad consensus in the literature that teacher self-efficacy influences teacher attitudes, teacher behaviours and practices (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2006). High self-efficacy is closely associated with motivation, confidence and persistence in the face of challenge. Teachers with high self-efficacy were also found to assume greater responsibility for meeting the needs of learners (Pas, Brashaw, & Hershfeldt 2012; Soodak, Podell, & Lehman 1998) and they are more willing to modify their teaching to accommodate students' needs (Stein & Wang, 1988). However, the evidence for a direct causal relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student outcomes is less clear with a lack of evidence that high teacher self-efficacy leads to better student outcomes (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Stein et al, 1988; Klassen et al, 2011).

Self-efficacy has been identified as a barrier to stress and burnout (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt & Leaf, 2010). Skaalvik et al (2007) identified factors that act as a buffer between teacher burnout and stress. These included a belief in one's ability to effectively teach students, the capacity to adapt to individual student needs, maintaining discipline, coping with change and engaging effectively with colleagues and parents. Brouwers & Tomic (2000) in a longitudinal study found a link between burnout and self-efficacy in that burnout was often preceded by reported low self-efficacy.

In his theory, Bandura (1997) places particular emphasis on the role of self-efficacy in relation to coping with stressful situations. He stated that perceived self-efficacy influences coping behaviour and is a self-sustaining process. He identified four sources of self-efficacy. Mastery experiences where one has experience of accomplishing new and challenging tasks, vicarious experiences where one is exposed to positive role models, social persuasion where one receives positive feedback from those around them and finally emotional and physiological state which includes one's overall health and emotional well-being. Maddux (2009) suggested another influence on self-efficacy which he referred to as 'imaginal experiences' where one is able to visualize being successful and overcoming a challenge.

Scanlon & Barnes-Holmes (2013) in their research within the Irish context found a mismatch between teacher perception of their competence in general and their competence with managing challenging behaviour. Similar findings were reported by Main & Hammond (2008) when they interviewed pre service teachers in Australia while on teaching practice in mainstream schools. Again in line with other research, the reciprocal nature of self-efficacy was evident in that the challenges the teachers encountered impacted on their self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al, 1998). Devine, Fahie & McGillicuddy (2013) found that teachers in the Irish context reported feeling challenged in intense classroom environments and reported feelings of guilt, self-questioning and uncertainty.

The research on self-efficacy has particular implications for the management of challenging behaviour (Buell, Hallum, Gamel, McCormack et al, 1999; Baker, 2005). There is significant evidence on how self-efficacy impacts on teacher performance in the relation to the management of student behaviour (Martin et al, 1999). Baker (2005) found a correlation between self-efficacy in relation to classroom management and teacher readiness for managing challenging behaviour. Woolfolk, Rosoff and Hoy (1990) found that teachers with high self-

efficacy use a wider range of behaviour management techniques and there is evidence that these teachers use more proactive behaviour management techniques (Blankenship, 1998; King Sears, 1997). Teachers with high self-efficacy were also inclined to use more positive behaviour strategies (Emmer et al, 1991). Soodak & Podell (1993) found that teachers with high self-efficacy believed that difficult students are teachable and these teachers also appeared to cope better with perceived failure. On the other hand, Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer (2004) found that teachers who are less confident in their approaches are less consistent and more likely to take things personally.

On a cautionary note, the research on teacher self-efficacy is generally based on self-reports rather than observations or any measure of competence. Questions arise in the literature as to how meaningful this measure may be in that such findings may be susceptible to bias, inaccurate self-reflection or poor self-awareness (Holzberger, Philipp, & Kunter, 2013; Wubbels, Brekelmans, & Hooymayers, 1992; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003). This has been found to be particularly pertinent in the case of pre-service and novice teachers (Onafowora 2005). Emmer et al, (1991) expressed concern that unrealistically high self-efficacy might actually impede a teacher from making changes to their practice to improve performance. Main et al, (2008) also strike a cautionary note in that high self-efficacy does not necessarily imply effective practice and other measures such as observation need to be considered when reviewing teacher behaviour and competence. The research evidence also suggests that teacher self-efficacy may not be a unitary construct in that teachers may perceive their effectiveness differently in different aspects of their role.

While a review of the literature raises question as to the nature of self-efficacy, how it is measured and what it represents, it would appear evident that there is a correlation between teachers who perceive themselves with high self-efficacy and their levels of motivation, their

use of positive proactive teaching strategies, their job satisfaction and confidence. The opposite would also be supported in the research where teachers with low self-efficacy were found to be more subject to stress, burnout and a lack of motivation.

#### **2.4.2 Collective self -efficacy**

Another facet of self-efficacy that is discussed in the literature is the concept of collective self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) described 'collective self-efficacy as a shared belief of a group of people about organizing and managing action phases needed for producing skills at certain levels' (pg 477). The impact of collective self-efficacy is also referred to in a number of more recent research studies (Antonelli, 2005; Cooper, 2010; MacKenzie, 2000; Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2004). According to Jhanke (2010) collective self-efficacy comes from a positive and supportive environment, shared agreement on vision and aims, quality professional development and shared leadership. A positive school climate is also impacted by the quality of supports and the quality of collaboration between staff (Cohen, 2009; Hoy et al, 1993). The leadership role of the school principal has been identified as a significant factor in developing a sense of collective self-efficacy (Fancera, 2009; Scurry, 2010; Calik, Sezgin, Kavgaci, & Cagatay Kilinc, 2012). Collective self-efficacy was also found to lead to persistence within a school environment in overcoming obstacles (Demir, 2008; Goddard, 2002; Hoy et al, 2002).

A strong correlation has been identified between collective self-efficacy and individual teacher self-efficacy (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000; Kurt, 2009; Lev & Koslowsky, 2009; Mackenzie 2000; Skaalvik et al, 2007) . Bandura (1997) referred to this correlation as reciprocal causality when interpreting this relationship.

While a direct causal relationship may not have been established between individual and collective self-efficacy, the research suggests that, when there is a sense of high collective self-efficacy within a whole school environment, such a climate would appear to strongly influence

the efficacious beliefs of individual teachers. The research would also suggest that collective self-efficacy is not only generated by positive relationships within the school environment but through practical measures such as support systems and professional development. (Jhanke, 2010; Cohen, 2009; Hoy et al, 1993).

## **2.5 Interventions for Addressing Challenging Behaviour**

### **2.5.1 Types of interventions**

Teachers' belief systems about behaviour and classroom management influence their practice and the selection of interventions (Little, Sterling & Farrell, 1997; Bester, 2007; Shindler, 2009). A review of the literature suggests that there are a wide range of responses from teachers as to interventions they adopt (Lewis et al, 2008). One form of categorization of behavioural interventions which is widely used in the literature is the adoption of proactive or reactive strategies when addressing challenging behaviour (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Kounin, 1977; Schempp & Johnson, 2006; Sullivan et al, 2014). Reactive strategies are focused on an immediate termination of problem behaviour and usually involve reprimands, the implementation of a consequence or the removal of the student (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008; Infantino & Little, 2005). Maag (2001) suggested that the use of such strategies may be a default position as teachers may not have adequate training in alternative approaches and they are quick and easy to administer. They may also have the desired short term outcome of stopping the inappropriate behaviour (Lerman & Vorndran, 2002). Main et al (2008) found that preservice teachers were more inclined to align themselves to reactive strategies rather than proactive strategies when addressing challenging behaviour. Concerns regarding the use of reactive strategies have been identified in the literature (Ducharme & Shecter, 2011; Lerman et al, 2002; Maag, 2001). These include the possibility of reinforcing negative behaviour through increased attention or removal of a student from an undesired activity, the student's

inability to generalize from the current situation to other situations, and a failure to address the environmental factors and skill deficits that may be triggering the behaviour. Ducharme et al (2011) also suggested that the short term effectiveness of reactive strategies may reinforce a teacher's use of these approaches in the future. Proactive strategies focus on modifying and structuring the classroom environment, relationship building between teacher and students and the development of the student's skills and understanding in relation to emotional regulation, self-awareness, conflict resolution and social skills.

Cooper et al (2011) discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the educational interventions adopted to address challenging behaviour and how these have evolved and developed through the decades. They suggest that behaviourist and cognitive approaches tend to be the most popular as they are more easily adapted to the mainstream school environment and therapeutic interventions may require additional training and expertise and may also raise some ethical issues in their implementation.

The popularity of behaviourist approaches is widely reported in the literature (Gable, Hester, Rock & Hughes, 2009) even though practitioners may report a range of perspectives on student behaviour. Examples of behaviourist approaches include reward/sanctions, schedules and rules and time out. These approaches are not concerned about internal processes but focus on how modifying external factors can shape and modify behaviour. They have been criticised for focusing on surface behaviours (Maag, 2001; Lerman et al, 2002) and possibly masking or ignoring underlying issues (Cooper et al, 2011).

Interventions adopting a cognitive behavioural approach (Vygotsky, 1989) are increasing in popularity. This approach involves influencing thought processes to alter behaviour. The underlying assumption is that inappropriate behaviour is influenced by dysfunctional thought



processes. Interventions such as anger management, problem solving skills and emotional regulation are often based on a cognitive behavioural approach.

While therapeutic interventions are less likely to be adopted within the classroom environment, psychodynamic approaches that focus on the relationships within the school such as nurture groups have grown in popularity and have been proven to generate positive outcomes (Boxall, 2002; Sanders, 2007; Scott & Lee 2009). Poor experience of non-supportive relationships has been associated with aggressive, non-compliant behaviour (Ashman & Lawler, 2008; Dearing Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006). For high risk children, positive pupil teacher relationships have been found to be an important determinant in addressing challenging behaviours (Baker, 2006; Buyse et al, 2008; Silver et al 2005).

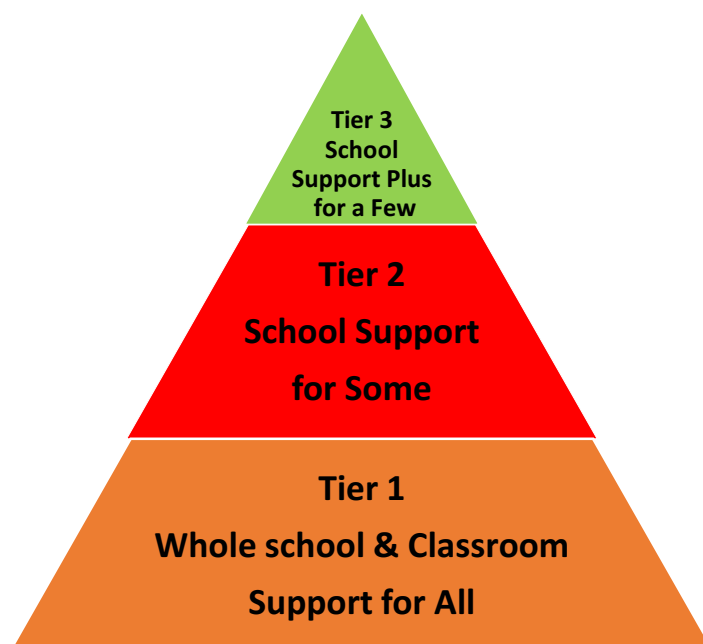
It is the researcher's view that the classification of interventions in terms of a particular approach can be problematic as the same intervention can be viewed from different theoretical perspectives. For example, a reward system can be implemented from a behaviourist perspective but it could also be viewed as creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom and supporting the development of a positive relationship with the student. Group rewards when implemented in a particular context could be viewed as supporting the development of social skills and joint collaboration. A key question here is the understanding and intention of the teacher implementing the intervention rather than the intervention itself. Danforth (2007) questions whether the purpose of an intervention may be to create social homogeneity and conformity rather than addressing the needs of the individual pupil. Over emphasis of interventions that address surface behaviours that ignore underlying emotional processes may not generate long term effects (Bowers, 2004). Hart (2010) identified the benefit of a range of approaches and suggested that there needs to be an integration and synthesis of these approaches to achieve the maximum benefit for the student. The IYTCM (Webster-Stratton,

2004) is an example of a broad based programme that draws on a wide range of approaches when addressing challenging behaviour.

### **2.5.2 Classroom management**

The staged or tiered model of intervening with children with a range of SEN is now widely promoted within the Irish education system (DES 2007). This model promotes intervention at 3 levels - whole school systems, classroom approaches and individual supports ( Figure 7).

**Figure 2 NEPS Continuum of Support Model**



The first tier of intervention is at the whole class and/ or school level. (School wide supports are discussed in Section 2.7.3).

There is a substantial body of evidence and consensus in the literature that effective classroom management is important in preventing, reducing and addressing disruptive behaviour (Akin-Little, Little & Laniti, 2007; Wang et al, 1993/1994) and that variables within the classroom environment influence behaviour (Alberto & Troutman, 2013; Emmer et al, 2001; Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stitcher & Morgan, 2008). Hart (2010) identified the key elements of effective

classroom management which have been identified in the literature. These were rules, reinforcement of appropriate behaviour, structured response to undesired behaviour, student teacher relationships, high expectations, procedures to address chronic misbehaviour and structuring of the classroom environment. It is evident from the literature that effective classroom management has a significant role in meeting the needs of the majority of students presenting with challenging behaviour. However, within the tiered model of intervention, it is acknowledged that 5-7% of students may require additional individual intervention (DES, 2010).

### **2.5.3 Selecting interventions**

Spindler & Biott (2000) suggested that the practices adopted within a school play an important role in how individual teachers select and implement interventions while Main et al (2008) found that preservice and novice teachers reported using strategies they had observed in other classrooms or had direct experience of using. However, they also found that the interventions selected did not necessarily correspond with research on best practice in relation to behaviour management. Murik et al (2005) suggested that, as teachers appeared to be significantly influenced by their previous experiences when selecting interventions, they should be provided with more opportunities to reflect on these experiences and share learning on effective best practice.

The importance of being proactive rather than reactive when selecting interventions is widely supported in the literature (Emmer et al, 2001; Sullivan et al, 2014). The effectiveness of having agreed procedures when behaviours escalate has also been found to be significant (Akin-Little et al, 2007). However, the research suggests that this is not always the practice in schools and teachers are frequently adopting reactive strategies when responding to challenging behaviour. Reactive approaches were found to be a default strategy as they were quick and easy to

administer and resulted in a short term outcome (Maag, 2001; Lerman et al, 2002). A common approach to addressing a challenging situation is to control the behaviour rather than address the underlying issue (Osher et al, 2010; Sullivan et al, 2014). Poulou et al, (2000) found that, while teachers reported that they preferred positive strategies, their practice involved more punitive and negative strategies. Main et al (2008) also found a lack of structure in the approaches used by teachers.

Freiberg and Lamb (2009) suggested that the selection of interventions may not relate to the needs of the child and that behaviourist approaches which are widely adopted by class teachers may be more teacher centred than child centred. This may be related to the need of teachers to regulate the behaviour to manage and control the classroom environment. There is also evidence that teachers can perceive behavioural interventions as a series of tricks and recommendations that can fix a difficulty rather than addressing the underlying behaviour (Landau, 2009; Maguire et al. 2010). Teachers are therefore responding to the disruptive behaviour rather than reflecting on the purpose and function of the behaviour (Fantuzzo & Atkins, 1992; Skiba, Peterson & Williams, 1997)

#### **2.5.4 The role of educational psychologists in recommending interventions**

The role of educational psychologists in supporting students with SEN has long been recognized (Bradshaw et al, 2010; Hart, 2010) and in particular the role of consultation between psychologists, parents and teachers in relation to behaviour. The popularity of behaviourist recommendations made by educational psychologists is widely reported in the literature (Miller, 1989; Frederickson & Cline, 2002). Rees et al (2003) found that psychologists recommended some therapeutic interventions in only 56% of cases with students with behavioural difficulties and the majority of their recommendations involved behaviourist interventions. Frederickson et al (2002) found that half of the educational psychologists in their

study recommended behaviourist strategies with high frequency. Misgivings have been reported in the literature as to the effectiveness and appropriateness of such approaches (Camerson et al, 1994; Lake, 2004; Nie & Lau, 2009; Broomfield, 2006). They suggest these approaches can involve a reductionist and oversimplification of behavioural issues. Arguments have also been put forward that over use of one of the most popular behaviourist interventions such as reward systems can reduce intrinsic motivation and fail to foster essential social skills (Lake, 2004). Nie & Lau (2009) have put forward the view that behavioural strategies on their own will not meet the needs of these students. It is also suggested that the popularity of such approaches among educational psychologists may be influenced by the need to develop dominant approaches for the purposes of training educators and psychologists and the demand for quick fix solutions (Braden et al, 2001; Broomfield, 2006). Hart (2010) found that, while educational psychologists promote behavioural strategies within their practice, they view behaviour from a much wider perspective. He suggested that they need to promote these perspectives when working with teachers.

### **2.5.5 Evidence based practice**

Evidence based practice is defined by the Department for Education (DfE), UK as a ‘combination of practitioner expertise and knowledge of the best external research and evaluation based evidence’ (DfE, 2014). The research in relation to using evidence based practice presents a significant dilemma. Firstly, there is broad consensus in the literature as to the benefit and effectiveness of using evidence base practice (Simonsen, Fairbanks et al, 2008; Trinder & Reynolds, 2000), and the positive outcomes when using evidence based practice (Sebba et al, 2012; Cordingly, 2013; Godfrey, 2014; Mincu, 2014). Hammersley (2004) presents an argument for the use of evidence based practice. Where teachers move from hints and tips to a better learning culture where staff work together to understand what appears to

work and why. This support for evidence based practice has come not only from researchers and psychologists but from practitioners on the ground including teachers and principals (Handscomb & McBeath, 2003; Greany 2015; Godfrey 2016).

Despite this strong espousal of evidence based practice, the research into practice on the ground is less clear. The consistent use of evidence based practice by teachers is not supported in the research (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011; Taylor, 2013; Nelson et al, 2015). Walker et al (1996) referred to the ‘research to practice’ gap. DeJong (2005) also found that teachers are not using evidence based practice to any significant extent. Brown and Zhang (2016) found that individual teachers report that they believe in evidence based practice but it is not the cultural norm at a whole school level.

The following explanations have been forwarded in the research for this mismatch between the apparent support for using research evidence and the reality of teacher practice. Those engaging in research fail to make their research relevant to teachers in a practical way, this includes issues regarding where information is published, terminology used, and raising awareness of how research can make a difference (Hargreaves, 1996; Cain, 2015). There is inadequate input in preservice training as to the value of evidence based practice (Begeny & Martens, 2006) and models of professional development are inadequate (Fixsen, Naoom et al, 2005). The use of evidence base practice and associated planning also place time demands on teachers (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Teachers struggle to get time to work collaboratively with their colleagues and other activities can be prioritized over research informed professional development (Godfrey, 2014; Galdin-O’Shea, 2015; Roberts, 2015).

Brown and Zhang (2016) also discuss the possible conflict between top down implementation of evidence based practice driven by government and local authorities seeking to ensure accountability and effectiveness, and the bottom up evidence based practice driven by the

practitioners to ensure a process of enquiry and innovation. They suggest that school leaders encounter the practical dilemma of promoting quality bottom up evidence based practice where research evidence is combined with practitioner judgement and top down pressures to ensure accountability and compliance with official requirements. It should also be acknowledged that research has found that there is a cohort of teachers who believe evidence based behavioural interventions are not effective (Johansen et al, 2011).

Another issue that needs to be addressed, and which is sometimes ignored, is the active role of the teacher. Teachers should not passively implement interventions recommended by other professionals or colleagues. Strain and Dunlop (2008) described an effective evidence based practitioner as one who identifies best practice and implements interventions based on the evidence gathered within their individual context. Marchant & Anderson (2012) found that it was not only the research evidence for an intervention but the level of ‘buy in’ from the stakeholders that resulted in a change in practice.

#### **2.5.6 The role of planning in delivering effective interventions**

Miller (2003) suggested that any response to challenging behaviour requires careful analysis of the behaviour and the context in which it occurs. However, in a review of the preparation engaged in by teachers within the Irish context, Devine et al (2013) found that the majority of planning involved preparation for classroom pedagogy and accessing materials and not collaboration at a school level or consultation regarding individual students. Main et al (2008) also found a lack of structure in planning when addressing challenging behaviour even though there is a significant body of evidence in the literature as to the efficacy of systematic approaches to behaviour management (Didden, Duker & Korzilius, 1997).

There is now a consistent approach adopted by governmental agencies working with schools in Ireland regarding the promotion of coherent planning in relation to supporting all students

with SEN and students with behavioural difficulties in particular (DES, NEPS, SESS, NCSE). The BESD document produced by NEPS (DES, 2010), which is now widely promoted by these agencies, provides a range of documents and resources to support planning at each level of the tiered model of support. The BESD document promotes a solution focused, problem solving approach (Appendix 2) which involves planning and collaboration between school staff parents and the individual student. The benefit of such systematic approaches to behaviour management is widely acknowledged in the research (Didden et al, 1997; Robinson & Wilczynski, 2001).

Functional Behaviour Analysis (FBA) is a detailed and comprehensive approach to assessing the needs of individual students presenting with challenging behaviour (Snell & Brown 2000). However, while effective planning in the classroom may not require the level of detailed analysis of FBA, the function and context of a student's behaviour always needs to be considered. Gage, Lewis, & Stichter, (2012) suggest that failure to consider the function of behaviour can escalate or reinforce behaviour. Similar findings were reported in other research studies (Ingram, Lewis-Palmer & Sugai, 2005, Newcomer & Lewis, 2004). A review of the literature highlights the importance of functional assessment and coherent planning when developing an effective intervention plan for students presenting with challenging behaviour (Gresham et al, 2004; Newcomer et al, 2004).

## **2.6 Professional Development and Teacher Learning**

### **2.6.1 Transformative learning theory**

Dewey put forward a model of learning which is particularly relevant in the context of teachers' professional development. His model involved a process of 'reflection, continual reorganization, reconstruction and transformation of experience' (Dewey, 1916, pg. 50). He suggested that a person needs to make connections between what they do and the consequences



to them and those around them to ensure an educative experience. Interestingly, he suggested that when experiences were passive and repetitive, learning was less likely take place but, when confronted with more challenging experiences, it is the attempt to solve problematic situations that leads to reflection and learning. He also believed that there is a lack of value in learning which happens in isolation detached from experience.

Mezirow (1991) developed his transformative learning theory using a constructivist framework which suggests that learning happens through a process of interpreting and reinterpreting one's experiences to create meaning. He believed that conceptual understanding, beliefs, judgement and feelings shape one's interpretation of a situation. Meanings and understanding change when a person finds their existing meaning flawed or dysfunctional. While Mezirow's theory continues to be influential and frequently referred to in the literature (Christie, Carey, Roberston & Grainger, 2015), it has been criticized because of its focus on the individual and a failure to address the impact of the social context on learning and for excluding the influence of intuition (Taylor, 1997; Collard and Law, 1989; Clark & Wilson, 1991; Tenant, 1993).

### **2.6.2 Issues relating to professional development**

Sutherland et al (2008) argue that a person's perception of skill inadequacy has a detrimental effect on their overt actions. There is a significant body of research regarding the adequacy of training for teachers working with students presenting with challenging behaviour. Johansen et al (2011) found that teachers have inadequate training or CPD in behaviour management. This is supported by other research which indicates that teachers feel ill equipped to manage challenging behaviour. (Hastings et al, 2002; Begeny et al, 2006; Baker, 2005; Billingsley, Fall & Williams, 2006; Wagner et al, 2006). Jones & Jones (2007) found that 90% of teachers believe they need more training. Scanlon et al (2013) found that Irish teachers, despite motivation and educational competence, believe they lack the skills to manage challenging

behaviour. They also suggest that a lack of specific training results in more negative interactions in the classroom which has the potential to increase negative attitudes among teachers. LeBlanc, Richardson & Burns (2009) found that providing teachers with information on best practice and a better understanding of student behaviour impacted positively on their perceptions and confidence.

CPD is described as a 'job embedded, career long process with a learner focused perspective' (De Vries, Jansen & van de Grift, 2013 pg 215). They classified CPD activities into three groups - updating knowledge and skills, reflection, and collaboration with colleagues. They believed that each of these components is essential to ensure effective professional development.

Brown & Greany (2017) identify four elements that need to be in place to ensure effective professional development. These are the teacher's capacity, school culture, school leaders promoting the use of research evidence and effective structures, systems and resources to facilitate research use and the sharing of good practice. They suggest that school leaders can be a barrier or gateway to research and learning. Day & Sammons (2013) suggested that school leaders need to be transformational and learning centred. It is significant that the TALIS summary report for Ireland found that principals in Irish primary schools indicated a stronger engagement in administrative leadership than instructional leadership relative to other OECD countries (Shiel, Perkins, & Gilleece, 2009). They were also rated below the OECD average for instructional management and direct supervision of instruction within their schools.

Spindler et al, (2000) found that the school structures play a significant role in professional development and effective professional development can influence teacher behaviour (Little et al, 1997). Some of the key components of effective professional development which have been noted in the literature are modelling, role play, self-assessment, use of evidence based practice,

consultation, self-monitoring and performance feedback (Slider, Noell & Williams, 2006; Reinke, Lewis-Palmer & Merrell, 2008).

Richardson & Fallona (2001) suggest that teaching is not just about method and technique but about manner. CPD should lead to teachers having a greater awareness of their beliefs and style and how these impact on their classroom management. Borg (2001) and Pajares (1992) highlight the importance of teacher beliefs as filters through which people screen new knowledge and experiences for meaning. Baker (2005) suggests that professional development should not be a one size fits as teachers and schools differ in their needs.

MacNaughton, Hughes & Smith (2007) in their report on the Children Who Challenge Project (Victoria, Australia) present a model of professional development which had a significant impact on practice. This project involved an action learning circle (Wade & Hammick, 1999) which promotes building on teacher strengths and critical reflection. The teachers engaged in eight two hour sessions of reflection during the programme. The key findings were that the teachers reported new insights into children's perspective on their behaviour, greater awareness of evidence based practice, increased confidence when engaging with other professionals in the course of their work and they were given time for planning and reflection.

The TALIS report provides an interesting snapshot of professional development within the Irish context. The researchers found that 90% of primary teachers reported that they had attended some form of professional development within the previous 18 months. This is consistent with the OCED average. However, the average time spent on this CPD (6 days) was below the OCED average (15 days). While the majority of teachers reported that they would like to engage in further CPD (54%), 45% of teachers were not aware of how to access appropriate training (Shiel et al, 2009). It is likely that the majority of courses attended by teachers in the survey were courses approved to access extra personal vacation (EPV) days.

Within the Irish education system primary teachers can access 3 EPV days if they attend a 5 day approved course during their summer holidays. While these courses are an opportunity to engage in learning, they may not provide the most appropriate structure and content to meet the specific needs of individual teachers.

### **2.6.3 The role of consultation and external professionals**

Consultation has been growing in popularity as a preferred means of engagement between external professionals, school staff, parents and students over the past two decades (Dinkmeyer, Carson & Michel, 2016; Sheridan et al, 2017). However, this trend has been slower to gain momentum in Ireland (Nugent et al 2014). Consultation has been defined by Wagner as ‘a voluntary, collaborative, non-supervisory approach established to aid functioning of a system and inter-related systems (Wagner, 2000, pg 11). The quality of interaction between parents, educators and other professionals has been found to improve student’s academic, social and behavioural functioning (Hoskins et al, 2006). A problem solving approach to addressing behavioural issues has been found to have the most positive results (Sheridan et al, 2017; Wilczynski, Mandal, & Fusilier, 2000). There is evidence that teachers rate the consultation process positively (Munro, 2000; Sheridan, Welch & Orme, 1996). However, there is limited research on the longer term impact on teacher practice and outcomes for students (Sheridan et al, 1996). Munro (2000) found that teachers believed they had benefitted from engagement with an EP in a more sustained manner. In the same study psychologists also reported satisfaction in spending additional time in preventative work. The consultation process has also been evaluated positively by psychologists, and teachers within the Irish context (Larney, 2003; Nugent et al, 2014). One of the key benefits from effective consultation is the potential to empower and build capacity among teachers and parents (Dickson, 2000; O’Farrell et al, 2018). However, a key element in the success of consultation is that all parties value this process

(Gutkin & Curtis, 2008; Erchul et al, 2010). To assist this process there needs to be a common understanding the consultation process (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999; Wagner, 2000). In their study within the Irish context, O'Farrell et al (2018) found that there was a disconnect between teachers understanding of consultation and parents and psychologists understanding of the process. Parents and psychologists viewed consultation as a collaborative process to facilitate joint problem solving while teachers viewed consultation as collaborative process where they would receive advice from another professional. Factors that have been found to influence effective consultation include the training and experience of the consultant, a mutual understanding of the consultation process and the relationship between the psychologist and the consultees (Wampold & Brown, 2005; Hurwitz, Kratochwill & Serlin, 2015).

#### **2.6.4 The role of reflection**

Reflection has been identified as an essential component of professional development (Cheetham & Chivers, 2001; Buehl & Fives, 2011). It has been found to broaden perspectives and help teachers evaluate practice (Bolton, 2005), it helps teachers address challenging situations and experiences (Loughran, 2002) and it plays a significant role in helping teachers develop greater self-awareness and an insight into their reactions and perceptions (Hammond-Stoughton, 2007). Reflection therefore is seen as a key component in teacher learning and practice (Emmer et al, 2001; Jones & Jones, 2007; Levin & Nolan, 2010; Sullivan et al, 2014).

McGarr & McCormack (2014) highlighted the challenge of evaluating reflective practice as it is not a unitary construct. They suggest that reflection can be functional and practical aiming to address issues to improve practice, or it can be critical/emancipatory where a teacher reflects on their underlying assumptions and challenge conventional wisdom. They suggest that less experienced and student teachers tend to engage in practical reflection to help them 'survive' as they cope with the challenges of the classroom. Within the Irish context there is an increasing

emphasis on reflection in teacher training and evaluation (McGarr et al, 2014). However, Hartford et al (2008), in an investigation into reflective practice among practicing and pre service teachers in Ireland, found a ‘transient form of reflection rather than evidence of critical reflection’ (pg 509). They also suggested that student teachers were in a somewhat challenging position of maintaining a positive perspective on their professional progress while critically evaluating their practice. There is some evidence in the research that cultural norms within a school can have an influence on the capacity for teachers to engage in critical reflection particularly in the context of probationary and newly appointed teachers. This climate can condition teacher expectations (Rippon et al, 2003), exert a powerful enculturation on newly appointed teachers (Killeavey, 2001) and promote conformity to practice norms (Roberts et al, 2008).

Murik, Shaddock et al (2005) and Godfrey (2014) found that teachers need time to address issues and to reflect on their experiences and share effective best practice. Teachers who are given limited time to explore the causes of behaviour and appropriate interventions may be reluctant to teach children with challenging behaviour (Hastings et, 2002).

## **2.7 Support Systems for Teachers Working with Students Presenting with Challenging Behaviour**

### **2.7.1 Support for individual teachers**

According to Biglan (2008) the prevalence of teacher burnout and stress is among the highest recorded across a range of professionals. Disciplinary issues, poor school wide support and increasing numbers of student with SEN were identified as contributors to burnout (Talmor Reiter & Feigin, 2005). Ironically they found that burnout was highest among committed teachers who had high expectations which were not met. School climate has been found to

correlate with teacher stress, self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Butt et al, 2005; De Noble et al, 2005; Collie et al, 2012; Pakarinen et al, 2010; Tschannen-Moran et al, 2001).

Jennings & Greenberg (2009) acknowledged that teachers' mental health impacts on their ability to support students presenting with challenging behaviour. Similar views were expressed in other research papers (McLean et al, 2015; Zinsser et al, 2013). Scanlon et al (2013) suggest a two pronged approach to address both teacher stress and teacher skills which includes training and professional development and the development of solution focused stress management interventions within the school environment. Bond & Bunce (2000) found the implementation of techniques from the ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) programme (Hayes, 1999) within schools reduced workload stress and improved mental health. Interestingly, in their evaluation of support systems for pre-school teachers, Zinsser et al, (2016) found that the implementation of a structured, comprehensive social and emotional learning programme for students also impacted on the well-being of teachers. They found that teachers reported higher job satisfaction, they felt more supported in managing challenging behaviour and they had a more positive view of the workplace climate. One possible explanation for this finding may be that structured programmes that promote student well-being and resilience - such as the FRIENDS for Life programme (Barrett, 2012) – often involve a training component for teachers which may impact on their awareness of mental health and well-being. Zinsser et al (2016) also found that the teachers (who tended to work independently in their classrooms) shared common perspectives on their work place climate and the supports they received.

### **2.7.2 The influence of colleagues**

Human beings need access to social support systems (Carroll, 1998). Weindling (2005) found that over 90% of the primary teachers in their study reported that they work collaboratively

with colleagues in their own school, however only half of the teachers had worked with colleagues from other schools. Female primary teachers were found to work more collaboratively than their male colleagues. The majority of teachers in the survey reported that they would be open to the concept of collaborative working, with a particular focus on increased collaboration with teachers in their own school, teachers from other schools and parents. Teachers strongly believed that increased collaborative working would prompt them to reflect on their own practice, improve their teaching and improve student learning. However, the teachers were also more interested in joint training with other professionals than training in how to work with other adults. The main obstacle to collaborative working was viewed as lack of time. The findings of the TALIS report (OCED, 2009) found that teachers engaged in significantly more ‘exchanging of ideas’ and sharing of resources than joint professional practice with their colleagues. This discrepancy was found to be above average within the Irish context (Shiel et al, 2009).

### **2.7.3 School wide support systems**

There is broad consensus within the literature of the benefit of school wide support systems (Richter, Lewis & Hagar, 2012; Rogers, 2006; Shearer & Butcher, 2005) for both teachers and students. The School Wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is an example of a comprehensive framework to develop a school wide support system for addressing behaviour (Sugai & Horner, 2009). It has six components which include developing consensus driven expectations, the development of critical skills among staff, the use of positive reinforcement, continual monitoring of the efficacy of interventions, the involvement of all relevant personnel, and the integration of supports provided for individuals, groups and the whole school population. The SWPBIS is now widely used in the US, Canada and Australia (Chapman & Hofweber, 2000) and has been positively evaluated in the literature (Lassen et al,



2006; Nelson et al, 2002; Sugai et al, 2000; Cohen, Kincaid & Childs, 2007). Among the key findings were increased prosocial behaviours, reduction in problem behaviour, increased academic performance and a reduction of exclusionary discipline. There were also positive outcomes reported for teachers in increased self-efficacy (McIntosh, Bennett & Price 2011; Ross & Horner, 2009). It is significant that research into the SWPBIS programme found that schools who demonstrated less fidelity when implementing the programme did not achieve the same outcomes (McIntosh et al, 2011). Two other interesting findings of this study were that the majority of students (90%) were adequately supported by the school wide systems within the programme and that the best outcomes were in schools supporting communities at higher risk of poverty when the fidelity to the programme was moderate to high. While the SWPBIS is one example of a whole school behaviour support system, it encapsulates the key principles of a comprehensive whole school approach and its evaluation highlights the positive outcomes that can be achieved with a comprehensive, systematic approach to addressing challenging behaviour.

The implementation of a school wide support system for addressing challenging behaviour takes commitment on behalf of the school community. It is acknowledged in the literature that the implementation of a comprehensive school wide support system takes time and requires careful planning for a successful outcome (Chapman & Hofweber, 2000; Luiselli et al, 2005; Pearce et al, 2011; George & Kincaid, 2008). A school wide support system needs to be evaluated on an ongoing basis to determine effectiveness and to address changing situations and new challenges (Mackay, 2009; Crowley, 2003).

Radford (2000) identified factors that supported a school wide support system. These included listening to all voices, and allowing time for discussion and planning for meetings. She also suggested that the use of an outside consultant to facilitate meetings made it easier for staff to

express their feelings. The importance of including all staff in the development of such policies was highlighted by De Nobile & London (2012). They suggested that policies which were developed collaboratively were more likely to be effective rather than policies that were handed down from management. The importance of collaboration with all staff in the development of a school wide support system is also supported in other research (Cross et al, 2011; Kasler & Elias, 2012; Yeung, 2012).

It is important that schools build their capacity to address challenging behaviour from within their own resources as external support services are not available on a day to day basis (MacNaughton et al, 2007; Kilgallon & Maloney, 2003).

#### **2.7.4 The Role of school leadership**

Lindsay & Thompson (1997) suggested that the role of the school principal cannot be underestimated in establishing the ethos and philosophy of a school. The impact of the role of the principal on the implementation of whole school support systems is well documented in the literature (Rogers, 2006; Yeung, 2012). Principals can support this process through providing moral support and encouragement, advocacy for suggested changes in practice and material and practical support (Yeung, 2012; Waldron et al, 2011). De Grauwe (2000) argued that the quality of educational provision depends more on the management of resources rather than the amount of resources. When teachers are unable to deal with a problem they should feel confident to go to school management (Simkins, Sisum & Memon, 2003; Noorudin et al, 2014) and school leaders should aim to create a positive and supportive atmosphere among their staff (O' Donnell et al, 2005).

#### **2.7.5 The role of parents**

The parent/practitioner relationship is critical when addressing challenging behaviour. Parents are often bystanders when interventions are planned and understanding parents' struggles can

lead to a better understanding of the home environment (Hee, Park, Alber, Morgan & Fleming, 2011)

Interventions have been found to be more effective when parents are involved (Ingersoll & Dvortscak, 2006) and it is more likely that effects can be generalized and maintained (Kuhn, Lerman & Vorndran, 2003). Parents can also provide valuable information which can lead to a better understanding of the students (Fox, Benito & Dunlap, 2002). Family involvement can also promote teacher self-efficacy and confidence (Garcia, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). The benefits of including parents in a collaborative process have been identified as promoting a sense of ownership, generating a better understanding of approaches being adopted and creating the opportunity for the development of a consistency of message between home and school (Cross et al, 2012; Kasler et al, 2012; Sugai et al 2009; Michail, 2009). The research literature also suggests that effective collaboration with parents needs to involve educating parents on the objectives and benefits of the practices being adopted and providing them with support in developing their knowledge and skills in implementing effective interventions at home (Mackay, 2012; Shearer et al, 2005; Cross et al, 2011).

Social and cultural factors as well as levels of education have been found to influence the quality of parents' interactions with schools (Trainor, 2010; Weis et al, 1998; Jones & Gansle, 2010).

#### **2.7.6 The role of external agencies**

Hart (2010) maintains that educational psychologists are ideally placed to support teachers when addressing challenging behaviour. Comer (2004) suggested that teachers may be engaged in a power struggle within their class when meeting the needs of students and a power struggle within the school environment to access support. Teachers may only access support if they can translate their concerns into the language of other professionals and communicate their needs

into the discourse of learning support teachers or educational psychologists. She found that transferring theory to practice and power struggles are significant issues for teachers and they often feel a lack of control.

Collaborative practice among agencies is acknowledged to be at its most effective when it is organized around the needs of the individual and takes into account the way in which local services are delivered (WHO, 2010). There is evidence in the literature that, while governmental agencies espouse to provide an integrated service to students, there is significant variations in practice on the ground and different professionals are working from different perspectives (Burton et al, 2009; Department of Health (DoH), 2008; Goodman & Burton, 2010). Edwards (2009) suggested that organizations are often failing to keep pace with governmental objectives and aspirations. Williams and Sullivan (2010) found that collaborative working between agencies continues to remain a challenge and there is a complex interplay between structural factors and the influence of individuals. Leadbetter et al (2007) suggest that it is only when the tensions and contradictions between services are identified and acknowledged that measures can be taken to resolve them. Thistlethwaite, (2012) investigates how engaging in inter-professional training can promote and enhance collaborative working.

While the benefits of accessing external supports and advice have been acknowledged in the literature (Barnhart et al, 2008; Bohanon et al, 2012), Kasler & Elias (2012) raised a concern that overreliance on external professionals in the development of a school wide support system could impact on long term sustainability and maintenance of the process.

## **2.8 Relevance of the Literature Review to the Research Study**

The research literature suggests that teachers are more likely to attribute behaviour to within child factors and home environment than factors such as school environment or teaching style. This has implications for the interventions they select and their perception of their capacity to

intervene with challenging students. The research also highlights the impact of managing challenging situations on the class teacher, other school staff, peers and the students themselves. This research study will explore the perceptions of the class teachers on these issues to get an insight to their perceptions and attributions of behaviour and its impact within their school environment.

High teacher self-efficacy has been associated with motivation, persistence and confidence whereas teachers who report low self-efficacy are likely to be more susceptible to stress and burnout. Self-efficacy is linked to teacher attitudes and performance and their willingness to engage more effectively with students in a difficult classroom environment. The research also indicates that self-efficacy is cyclical in nature and can be influenced by challenging situations. The research indicates that teacher self-efficacy is likely to be a significant component in how class teachers engage with challenging students. This research study will explore the class teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy and whether their current situation may have challenged their self-efficacy.

The research highlights the benefits of adopting a structured, coherent approach to addressing challenging behaviour and the implementation of evidence based practice. The research suggests that the interventions which teachers adopt tend to be predominately behaviourist in nature irrespective of the student's needs. The research would also suggest that teachers may adopt reactive and punitive measures in the absence of a systematic approach when addressing challenging situations. Structured planning and assessment has been identified as essential in developing a coherent response to challenging behaviour. This research project aims to explore the interventions adopted by a cohort of Irish teachers and the process involved in selecting interventions. The research will also explore the use of evidence based practice and the planning teachers have engaged in when working with the students in their class.

A review of the literature suggests that effective professional development and the implementation of evidence based practice can support teachers in addressing challenging behaviour. However, there appears to be a research to practice gap in relation to teacher practice. This research study will provide the class teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences of professional development and how it has impacted on their practice.

Research evidence highlights the importance of support systems for class teachers who are managing a challenging situation in their classroom. Whole school support systems can be particularly effective in providing class teachers with the structure and support they need in a challenging environment. This research project will explore the efficacy of the support systems that are available to the class teachers in their schools and reflect on their experiences of working with external agencies – especially NEPS.

## **2.9 Summary**

This chapter outlined the process undertaken by the researcher in the review of the literature. The key issues and evidence in the literature which were relevant the research topics and research questions were presented and discussed. The relevance of the literature review to the current study was outlined. Chapter 3 will outline the methodology adopted when undertaking the research study.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

## **Chapter 3 - Methodology**

### **3.1 Overview**

The literature relevant to the research topic was explored and analysed in Chapter 2. The relevance of the literature review to the research questions was also discussed. In this chapter Section 3.2 addresses the epistemological and methodological framework underpinning the research study. Section 3.3 outlines the research design and Section 3.4 describes how the data was analysed. In section 3.5 the ethical issues which emerged in the research design were considered and addressed and finally, Section 3.6 provides a summary of the chapter.

### **3.2 Epistemological and Methodological Framework**

#### **3.2.1 Epistemological framework for the research study**

Lincoln and Guba (2000) identified key questions that define a research paradigm. These are interconnected and interdependent. This framework includes *ontology* which questions the nature of knowledge and whether there is a fixed reality which is objective of individuals and the researcher or whether knowledge is constructed by individuals (including the researcher) and influenced by social, cultural and linguistic factors. Secondly, there is *epistemology*, which considers how and what can be known and the relationship between the knower and the known. This is naturally linked to the first question and considers the role of the researcher and their formulation and understanding of the research inquiry. Thirdly, there is *methodology* which is the process by which the researcher attempts to address the research questions by gathering, evaluating and interpreting data/information. The research paradigm one espouses influences the approaches adopted in the formulation, execution and interpretation of the research.

In the researcher's opinion, there is no one philosophical position that can neatly encapsulate and fully explain one's epistemological beliefs to the exclusion of all other theoretical



frameworks. A review of the literature in this area highlights the wide range of divergent standpoints and convincing arguments put forward by proponents of different philosophical positions. However, despite the complexity of defining one's epistemological position it is essential for researchers to reflect on their perspective on the nature of knowledge and its impact on the approaches they adopt when undertaking a research study. Schwandt (2000) argues that, when engaging in any research, one inevitably gets drawn into the debate of what constitutes knowledge and how it is justified. Carr (1995) suggests that research always 'conveys a commitment to philosophical beliefs even if this unintended and even if it remains implicit and unacknowledged' (pg 1). Mertens (2005) also argues that a researcher's theoretical orientation has implications for every decision made in the research process. So, while Mertens (2015) claims that attempting to categorize all psychological research into a few paradigms is a complex if not impossible task, it is also clear that it is important for the researcher to take time to reflect on their own belief systems, philosophical standpoint and how this impinges on all aspects of their research inquiry.

When investigating facets of human understanding and behaviour it is difficult to argue that there is a fixed 'knowledge' and 'reality' that can be accessed objectively and independently and that the information gathered can be generalized and directly applied from one setting to another. It would seem appropriate therefore to consider the individual's perceptions, worldview and life experiences and reflect on how these may have impacted on their actions and behaviours. The following paradigms were considered most influential in the formulation of the current research study.

Constructivism emerged from the philosophy of Husserl's phenomenology and Dilthey's concept of hermeneutics (Clegg and Slife, 2009) which suggests that all meaning, including

research findings, is interpretive. Knowledge is developed within a social context and is ‘ever interpreting and reinterpreting itself’ (Clegg and Slife, 2009, pg, 26). Researchers should therefore attempt to understand the complex world of the lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt, 2000). From the perspective of constructivism there is no objective reality so the researcher’s goal is to understand the multiple constructions of meaning and knowledge. The researcher and the participants are interlinked in an interactive process. Constructivism also suggests that research is a product of the values of the researcher and cannot be independent of them (Mertens, 2015). Research from a constructivist perspective attempts to gain insight into the way people have constructed *their reality rather than reflecting what reality is*. The aim of the research therefore is not to gain ‘knowledge’ but to deepen one’s understanding of the research topic.

Pragmatism was initially put forward by philosophers such as Peirce, James and Dewey (Mertens, 2015). Dewey avoided the harsh dichotomy between the inner lives of human beings and the so called ‘objective reality’ that exists outside of them (Alexander, 2006). James and Dewey were less focused on searching for a truth rather than the ‘workability’ of a research inquiry, developing ‘lines of action’ and evaluating the effectiveness of a research study. Morgan (2007) describes Dewey’s formulation of this process where the researcher undertakes an inquiry to determine the workability of any potential line of action and the results provide ‘warrant’ for the assertions made about that line of action. The pragmatist’s goal is therefore to establish useful connections between research and practice. There is no single methodology associated with pragmatism rather it is a matter of selecting the most appropriate tool of inquiry. Methods are therefore determined by the aims and purpose of the research project (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). However, Greene (2007) warns against ‘trivializing’ this standpoint into adopting a methodology that is convenient or linked to funding or political influence.

Rowbottom & Aiston (2006) suggest that good research is not a matter of selecting the correct tool from the toolbox but designing and crafting one's tools as appropriate.

### **3.2.2 Epistemology and methodology in the context of the current research study**

When formulating the current research inquiry, the researcher reflected on how their ontological and epistemological standpoint became both evident and relevant. The purpose of the inquiry was to develop a deeper understanding of the issues addressed in the research questions rather than reaching any definitive 'truth' or objective body of knowledge. The researcher was not seeking to disprove or support existing theoretical knowledge in this field but hoped to use this prior knowledge and research as a frame of reference to make the most sophisticated and informed approach to the study as possible.

The researcher wanted to explore the subjective experience of the participants. There is an underlying belief and assumption that each participant has constructed their own individual perspective through their unique engagement with their environment and life experiences. There is an acceptance that unpicking this process is a complex and imperfect process and the interaction between the researcher and the participants will have relevance to the nature of data gathered. Finally, any interpretation of the information gathered needs to be framed in the context of transferability and usefulness to practice. Willig (2012) states that qualitative research seeks to describe, understand, maybe explain, but never to predict. The researcher is not attempting to discover generalizable tenets from the research but hoping to establish transferability of the information gathered which would lead to a better understanding and practical application for a psychological service working closely with teachers. It is clear from the description above that the researcher has situated the current enquiry primarily within the realms of constructivism and pragmatism.

In terms of the methodology to be adopted for this study, Patton (2002) identified elements of research questions which were most suitable to qualitative research methods and which are relevant to this study. These include collecting detailed information about the unique qualities and perspectives of individual participants, acknowledging and accepting the diversity among individuals in their understanding and belief systems as to nature of the problem and the actions which they feel lead to desired outcomes. He also suggests that participants may prefer the personal contact often involved in qualitative methods which may allow them a greater opportunity to express their opinions given the complex nature of the research topic. Finally, there are instances where a quantitative approach would not be able to provide appropriate or useful measures to address the depth and complexity of issues which the research topic requires. These issues raised by Patton (ibid) are particularly relevant to the current research enquiry and highlight how a qualitative framework is the most appropriate approach to address the research questions in the context of the researcher's epistemological position.

In terms of selecting a specific research method, the semi structured interview was identified as the most appropriate means of addressing the research questions. Brinkman and Kvale (2015) defined the semi structured interview 'as an interview with the purpose of obtaining description of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret meaning of the described phenomena' (p6). Robson (2002) suggests that the semi-structured interview allows for more 'depth' in the responses sought as the respondents are provided with more flexibility in their response and the researcher has the potential to seek greater clarity on responses and to pursue unexpected issues which may arise. Denzin & Lincoln (2018) describe how the interview process facilitates the telling of a story, suggesting that semi-structured interviews can make better use of the 'knowledge producing potential' of the dialogue than a structured interview.

In this context the interviewer is not only seeking information but they are very much a ‘knowledge producing’ participant in the process.

The semi-structured interview will allow the respondents to discuss issues in as much depth as they wish and the researcher will have the opportunity to explore how the interviewees explain, understand and contextualize the topics they address. The researcher will have the opportunity to pursue any unexpected but relevant issues which may arise in the course of the interviews. The less formal structure of the interviews should encourage respondents to be more open and reflective in their responses. While acknowledging the challenges and limitations of employing any single methodology, the strengths and advantages of using well-crafted, semi-structured interviews was deemed the most effective and appropriate approach in the context of this research study

### **3.3 Reflexivity and the role of the researcher**

Reflexivity is described as the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher (Denzin & Lincoln (2018). ‘Without some degree of reflexivity any research is blind and without purpose’ (Flood, 1999, pg 35). Considering the nature of qualitative research and its epistemological underpinnings, there is an acknowledgment that the research and its findings are not intended to be objective and measurable. Therefore, in this context, reflexivity is particularly relevant and is often viewed as a form of ‘quality control’ or at least a means of ensuring rigor in the research process. The issues that need to be considered are wide ranging and complex and impinge on all stages of the research project. They range from the epistemological position and beliefs of the researcher, to the research design and data collection on to the process of data analysis and interpretation and finally the presentation and communication of the research findings. Each of these stages present a range of dilemmas that

need to be acknowledged and addressed. In the context of this research project, the researcher adopted a pragmatic perspective and attempted to avoid entering into a state of paralysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) or self-doubt in relation to the complexity and depth of the issues which can arise when engaging in a process of reflexivity while at the same time making every effort to become as aware and informed as possible to ensure that relevant issues and challenges are identified, acknowledged and addressed where feasible.

The methodology selected for this research project, the distinct professional roles of the interviewer and the interviewees and the nature of the topic under investigation all necessitated a significant degree of reflection on the part of the researcher to raise awareness of the potential issues of bias and subjectivity which could arise in relation to the formulation of the research design, the interview process itself and the analysis and interpretation of the research data.

In the context of this research study, the researcher, as a practicing EP, has significant experience in working in the area of challenging behaviour and has well established perspectives on what constitutes best practice in relation to behaviour management and the role of the class teacher. It was essential therefore, that the researcher systematically reviewed the literature to ensure that the broad range of issues relevant to the research topic were addressed in the study, not just from the perspective of the psychologist but from the standpoint of school staff, students and parents. The research questions were also open ended and formulated in a manner which were non directive and where the interviewees were facilitated in expressing their individual perspectives on the issues discussed.

Kvale (2002) concluded that ‘a research interview is no open and dominance-free dialogue between equal partners, but a specific form of conversation, which the interviewer controls in accord to his research interests’ (pg 13) while Lincoln & Guba (1985) also raised concerns that, in certain situations, interviewees may provide the responses they believe the interviewer

expects rather than expressing more genuine opinions and beliefs. Le Gallais (2008) discusses the impact of the insider outsider roles between participants and researchers and the challenge of developing a shared meaning and mutual understanding when engaged in a conversation. In the context of this research study, this was particularly relevant as teachers and psychologists may have a different perspective on concepts such as challenging behaviour, behaviour planning, self-efficacy and evidence based practice. It is essential that the researcher is sensitive and alert to such discrepancies in interpretation and understanding. Braun & Clarke (2013) suggested that developing a good rapport with the interviewee was essential in enhancing the quality and authenticity of the interviewees' responses. In the context of this research inquiry, the researcher made every effort to create a positive, relaxed and non-judgemental atmosphere during the interviews. It was also made clear before the interview started that it was the teacher's unique and individual responses that were of interest to the researcher.

During the analysis phase of the research, the researcher was conscious of the potential for unintended bias and subjectivity to emerge when analysing and presenting the research findings. The researcher adopted a range of measures to ensure an accurate and comprehensive analysis of the data. These included implementing a rigorous approach to thematic analysis as outlined in Section 3.4, seeking support from peers in reading the data (Padgett 1998), actively seeking and reflecting on data not consistent with that of the majority of respondents (Maxwell, 1992) and ensuring that more attention was not given to one data set than another (Robson, 2002). The researcher maintained a reflective log during the course of the research study to facilitate a process of reflection and structured deliberation at each phase of the enquiry (see Appendix 13).

Following completion of the final draft of the research thesis, a copy of the analysis, discussion and conclusion was shown to three of the participants for comment. They indicated that, in

their opinion, the findings were a fair and accurate reflection of the issues that emerged for class teachers when addressing challenging behaviour. Some comments were made regarding the need for an emphasis on the requirement for additional training and a whole school approach to behaviour management.

### **3.4 Research Design**

#### **3.4.1 Participants**

Subject selection in qualitative research is purposeful, participants are selected on the basis of who can best inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study (Kuper et al, 2008). The subjects selected must be able to inform important facets and perspectives related to the phenomenon being studied. The number of participants selected for a qualitative research study can vary significantly but the concept of saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), theoretical sufficiency (Dey, 1999) or conceptual depth (Nelson, 2017) need to be considered. Corbin & Strauss (2008) describe saturation as the point in analysis when all categories are well developed in terms of properties, dimensions and variations. Charmaz (2014) highlighted how this is a subjective task and it is difficult if not impossible to determine that ‘completeness’ in the data has been achieved.

Based on these considerations it was decided to include 10 participants in the research study. The researcher believed that 10 participants from different schools should be sufficient to provide a rich data set that would reflect a range of perspectives on the research topics. It was hoped that this research sample would strike a balance between having sufficient data to develop an in-depth understanding of participant experiences (an important characteristic of using smaller sample sizes in qualitative research), and the risk of superficial analysis which can be associated with larger scale studies (Boyatzis, 1998). However, the researcher was also open to including additional participants if it was felt that an incomplete picture had emerged



from the data collected from the original cohort of participants. The participants were a homogenous group in that they were primary school class teachers working with students diagnosed with EBD (Emotional Behavioural Difficulties). The criteria for inclusion were that the participants were permanent, qualified class teachers who had a student in their class who had been allocated resource teaching hours from the NCSE based on the category of a Low Incidence Disability *EBD/Severe EBD* as outlined in Circular SP ED 08/02 (DES, 2002). These students had been allocated individual resource teaching hours on the basis of a professional report which stated that they presented with ‘significant and persistent emotional behavioural difficulties’. The diagnosis of EBD using these criteria implied that the majority of students involved were presenting with persistent, externalizing challenging behaviours.

The teachers included in the study were a purposeful sample of class teachers working in a defined geographical area who met the inclusion criteria. The teachers were working in both urban and rural schools. The researcher made contact with a random sample of schools who had been allocated individual resource teaching for students under the category of EBD. These schools had been identified through the NCSE database. None of the schools, students or staff were known to the researcher.

The researcher wrote to the school principals outlining the purpose and nature of the research and requested their consent to approach a class teacher working with the target student to participate in the study (Appendix 3). The researcher made a follow-up phone call to each school to clarify whether the principal was willing for the school to be included in the research study and if there was a class teacher in the school that met the inclusion criteria. All the principals who were contacted were willing for the research to be undertaken on the school premises provided the class teacher gave consent. The researcher visited the school and met with the class teacher to outline the nature and purpose of the research (Appendix 4) and to

obtain their consent to participate in the study (Appendix 5). Having addressed any questions, the researcher arranged a convenient time and date for the interview. All the teachers approached were enthusiastic about participating in the study. However, they were all assured that they could withdraw their consent at any point having had time to reflect on their conversation with the researcher. Seven female and three male teachers gave their consent to participate in the study and their teaching experience ranged from two years to twenty-nine years (Appendix 11).

### **3.4.2 Design of the interview schedule**

The interview schedule was designed with reference to the issues raised in the literature review and research questions (Appendix 7). The questions fell into five broad categories which were

- the teachers' perspectives on their understanding of behaviour,
- the teachers' perception of their self-efficacy
- the process of selecting interventions,
- teacher learning and access to training
- the support systems available to teachers

The questions were framed and reframed in attempt to ensure clarity and to avoid the inclusion of leading questions or phrases. The questions were open ended and aimed to capture the meaning of the lived experiences of the teachers (Marecek, 2003). The interview schedule was given to two primary teachers and two NEPS colleagues to elicit additional perspectives on the structure and content of the questions.

### **3.4.3 Pilot study**

Pilot studies are useful procedures as preparation of a full-scale study, regardless of the research paradigm (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). They can be employed to address any potential

practical issues (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002) and to provide an opportunity to practice using the interview schedule. It can help identify if there are flaws, or limitations within the interview design that allow necessary modifications to the major study (Kvale, 2007).

The interview schedule was piloted with three class teachers (two female and one male) who were working with students presenting with challenging behaviour in their class. The main purpose of the pilot study was to have an opportunity to reflect on the clarity of questions and to ensure that the terminology was understood by the interviewees. It provided the interviewer with the opportunity to consider the structure of the questions to ensure that they were not leading or overly directive. It also provided the researcher with a sense of the length of the interviews and an opportunity to become familiar with implementing the interview schedule and asking follow-on questions (see Appendix 6 for pilot interview questions).

The pilot study raised some issues regarding the use of the terminology '*self-efficacy*' and the '*NEPS consultation model*'. Following the pilot study, the researcher included a brief script to explain these terms within the interview schedule. A number of questions were also rephrased and modified as they were considered to lack clarity or were perceived to be somewhat leading and directive (see Appendix 7 for final interview schedule).

#### **3.4.4 Interviews**

The interviews were held between May and June 2017. It was decided that this was the most appropriate time of year as the class teachers had worked with the students for almost a full academic year so they were able to reflect on the student's progress and the effectiveness of the interventions they had adopted. The interviews took place on the school premises at a time convenient for the class teacher. If the interview took place during school hours, the researcher clarified that the class was appropriately supervised so the teacher was free to engage with the interview without feeling under pressure to return to their class. The researcher made every

effort to ensure that the interviewees were relaxed and comfortable before the interviews started. The interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone. The researcher also made notes following the interviews. The interviews lasted between 38 and 56 minutes (Appendix 11).

### **3.5 Data Management and Thematic Analysis**

A number of measures were adopted to ensure the security and confidentiality of the data collected. The Dictaphone and any notes taken were closely guarded while in transit and then stored in a secured filing cabinet. All the interview transcripts and written records were anonymised and electronic data was also stored on an encrypted mobile device.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The aim of thematic analysis is to identify common, as well as conflicting, truths in the experiences of participants. It has been described as a widely used but poorly defined research process (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). It has been suggested by some authors that thematic analysis should not be viewed as discreet research method but a useful tool that can be applied to a range of research methods (Botatzis, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). However, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that, while thematic analysis is not tied to any particular theoretical framework, it should be considered as a method in its own right. They claim ‘through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data’ (pg 78).

Thematic analysis involves developing themes from the data through a rigorous process of data familiarization and analysis. There are a variety of approaches that can be adopted when analysing the data. The inductive approach involves developing themes from the data itself without reference to the theoretical perspectives of the researcher (Patton, 1990). This approach usually involves analysis of the complete data set and is also referred to as a data driven approach. In contrast, deductive thematic analysis is driven by the theoretical perspectives of

the researcher where the focus is on aspects of the data that are of particular interest to the researcher and can be mapped directly on to specific theories or research questions. From a constructivist standpoint the researcher adopted an inductive approach to the data analysis which sought to explore the unique perspectives of each of the participants without introducing the constraints of existing theoretical frameworks related to the research topics. However, as noted by Braun Clarke (2006) it is important to acknowledge that these approaches are not always as neatly defined in real world research and the researcher cannot free themselves from their theoretical beliefs and prior knowledge in how they read and interpret the data.

During thematic analysis the research data can be analysed at different levels. The researcher can focus on the explicit or semantic meaning contained within the information provided by the participants or the data can be analysed at an interpretative level which explores latent meanings inherent within the data set (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). As outlined by Braun & Clarke either form of analysis, done well, is equally valid and the approach adopted is often influenced by the purpose of the inquiry.

In-depth analysis of semantic meaning is not just reporting superficial meaning within the data but involves a level of interpretation and deliberation. The purpose of this form of analysis is to identify common semantic themes within and between the transcripts and to identify and examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualizations and ideologies that shaped the worldview of the participants. The researcher reflects on the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications, often in relation to previous literature and research.

In the context of this research study and, from a pragmatic standpoint, the aim of the researcher was to develop a better understanding of the perspective of class teachers in relation to their practice with a view to identifying key issues that need to be addressed and also to inform the

practice of educational psychologists. A data driven approach exploring semantic themes was adopted when analysing and interpreting the data.

The following steps were followed in the data analysis. These are broadly in line with the process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) (Appendix 8).

#### Step 1 Familiarization with the data

This involved transcribing the interviews verbatim (see Appendix 9). The researcher listened back to the interviews on a few occasions to ensure accuracy and any significant pauses and hesitations were noted. The researcher then actively read and re read the data set and noted points of interest and initial patterns which appeared significant (see Appendix 14).

#### Step 2 Generating initial codes

The researcher generated initial codes with reference the complete data set. Each segment of the data was labelled and patterns and connections that were identified between segments were classified using colour coding. Each segment of information was given equal importance at this stage (see Appendix 12).

#### Step 3 Reviewing codes

The researcher collated the segments of data associated with each initial code. Through a process of reading through the statements and reflecting on whether these statements linked together in a coherent and meaningful way, the initial codes were reviewed and some were collapsed and reorganized into more coherent and meaningful codes (see Appendix 12).

#### Step 4 Searching for themes

Patterns between codes were identified and codes were sorted and combined into meaningful groups to generate initial themes. This involved physically grouping, regrouping and collating codes.

#### Step 5 Reviewing themes

The initial themes were now reviewed. The statements related to each theme were re-read to determine if they were coherent and formed a meaningful construct. Some of the initial themes were then discarded or combined to create new more coherent overarching themes and subthemes. At this point some of the codes were also combined or subsumed within other themes as deemed more appropriate. The researcher then created a thematic map for each theme to portray how codes and subthemes related to the main themes.

#### Step 6 Defining and naming themes

Having created thematic maps, careful consideration was given to naming each theme subtheme and code to ensure that it accurately reflected its content.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher adhered to the ethical guidelines for carrying out research outlined by both the Psychological Society of Ireland PSI and British Psychological Society (BPS) at all times when undertaking this research inquiry (British Psychological Society, 2014). Ethical approval for undertaking the research was obtained from the University of East London research committee (see Appendix 10).

The following ethical concerns were addressed during the research study. As the data being collected related to schools, school staff and individual students, it was essential that the anonymity of the schools, teachers and the students was ensured through the use of initials and

numbers when recording and storing the data. The teachers were also reminded not to mention any details that would identify the students or school staff during the interview. Should such information have accidentally been included in the recorded interview, it would not have been included in the written transcript. This issue did not arise in the current research study. The participants were fully informed of the nature and purpose of the enquiry and how the data collected would be shared and stored. They were also assured that they could withdraw from the study either during or after the interview.

The researcher was conscious that the questions asked had the potential to generate a sense of inadequacy or highlight a lack of insight or knowledge on the part of the participants. Every effort was made to develop a rapport and a non-challenging atmosphere during the interview. The professional expertise of the interviewer in working in a collaborative, sensitive and supportive role was a significant asset in this process. The questions were phrased in a non-directive, open ended manner which aimed not to project any preconceived expectation on the part of the interviewer on how the interviewee might respond to the topic being discussed.

The researcher was also conscious that the data analysis and reporting was likely to reflect some deficits in the knowledge, training or skill levels of class teachers in how they worked with students presenting with challenging behaviour. It was therefore important that the data collected was presented in a positive and non-judgemental manner that reflected the commitment, expertise and skill levels of the teachers involved while identifying any issues or challenges raised in the data analysis and literature review.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter outlined the epistemological and methodological framework which underpinned the current research design. The research design and data analysis were described in detail.



Finally, the ethical issues which arose when undertaking the research study were identified and addressed. Chapter 4 outlines the researcher's interpretation and analysis of the research data.

## **Chapter Four**

# **Analysis and Interpretation of the Research Data**

## **Chapter 4 Analysis and Interpretation of the Research Data**

### **4.1 Overview**

Chapter 3 outlined the rationale and methodology adopted for gathering and analysing the data for this research project. This chapter describes the implementation of thematic analysis and presents the researcher's interpretation of the research data. Section 4:2 describes the researcher's approach to implementing thematic analysis and summarizes the themes and subthemes developed from the research data. Sections 4:3 to 4:7 presents a detailed analysis of each of the five key themes. Finally, Section 4:8 presents a brief summary of the chapter.

### **4.2 Thematic Analysis of the Data**

The process undertaken by the researcher when implementing thematic analysis was outlined in detail in Chapter 3. The interview schedule was developed under the four broad categories relating to the research questions and literature review. These categories were: teachers' perspectives on their understanding of behaviour: the process of selecting interventions: teacher learning needs and access to professional development: and the support systems available to teachers. The structure of the research interviews could be described as theory driven as the format of the interviews broadly mapped onto this framework. However, the research interviews were analysed using a data driven approach as the purpose of the inquiry was to reflect the individual class teacher's views on the topics under investigation. In the analysis phase, the aim of the researcher was not to map the research data onto existing theoretical frameworks but to get an insight into the teacher's perspective and then, in the discussion phase, to interpret and reflect on this information within the context of the research questions and existing knowledge and research. This is broadly consistent with the inductive approach outlined by Frith and Gleeson (2004), and Patton (1990). The data was analysed and reported

adopting a pragmatic, constructivist approach which sought to examine and interpret the semantic meanings within the text (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Excerpts from the interviews were used to illustrate and support the researcher's analysis. However, as discussed by Braun & Clarke (2016), data analysis and interpretation is not as clearly demarcated as outlined in the literature so some latent meanings were also considered in the analysis.

The data was coded and recoded as outlined in Chapter 3. From the codes and repeated reading of the data, five main themes, 16 subthemes and 86 codes were created. The main themes and subthemes are summarised in Table 4

**Table 4 : Summary of Main Themes and Subthemes**

Main Themes	Subthemes
<b>Theme 1</b> <b>Class teachers' conceptualization of challenging behaviour and its impact within the school context</b>	Class Teachers' attribution and understanding of behaviour.
	Impact of challenging behaviour on the school community.
	Teachers' perspective on their capacity to influence behaviour.
<b>Theme 2</b> <b>The nature of interventions selected by class teachers, their views on the reasons for selecting these interventions and the planning involved.</b>	Influences on the selection of interventions.
	Planning for Intervention.
	Nature of interventions selected by class teachers.
	Consideration when implementing intervention.

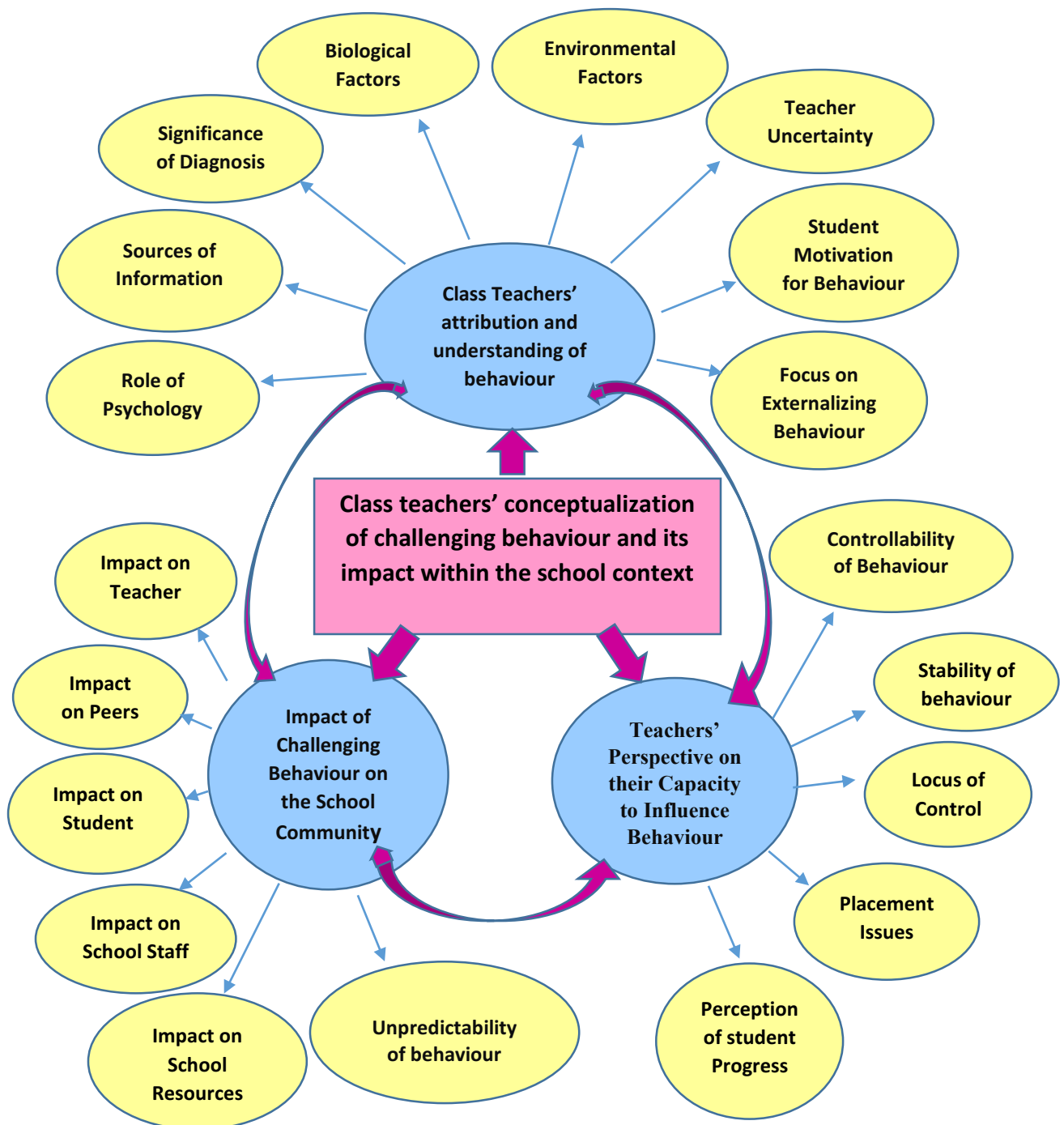
<b>Theme 3</b> <b>Teachers' perspective on factors that influence their self-efficacy and the challenges they have experienced.</b>	Contributors to the teachers' self-efficacy.
	Factors that sustain a teacher's self-efficacy.
	Perceived challenges to self-efficacy.
<b>Theme 4</b> <b>Class teachers' perception of their learning needs and the impact of training and professional development.</b>	Access to training and CPD
	Teachers' perspectives on training and CPD
	Engagement in reflective practice.
<b>Theme 5</b> <b>Class teachers' views on the support systems that are needed when working with students presenting with challenging behaviour.</b>	Nature of supports available to teachers
	Within school support systems
	Support from External Professionals

#### **4:3 Theme 1- Class Teachers' Conceptualization of Challenging Behaviour and its Impact Within the School Context**

The thematic map created for Theme 1 is outlined in Figure 3 and the list of codes and statements associated with Theme 1 are outlined in Appendix 15.

The main theme is represented within the pink rectangle, the subthemes are represented within the blue circles and the codes are represented within the yellow circles. Connections between main theme, subthemes and codes are represented using coloured arrows.

**Figure 3 Thematic Map of Theme 1**



#### **4.3.1 Class Teachers' Attribution and Understanding of Behaviour**

The attributions made by the class teachers regarding the students' behaviour can be divided into two broad categories which are biological factors such as neurological, genetic or physical

causes of behaviour or factors related to home environment including poor parenting and dysfunctional family structures. Consideration would also appear to have been given by the teachers to the possibility of cognitive and learning difficulties influencing behaviour. However, these were disregarded in relation to the majority of students within this study as, with the exception of one student, the teachers described the students as ‘*bright*’ ‘*intelligent*’ or ‘*well able*’. Some of the teachers’ statements also suggested that, because the student appeared ‘*intelligent*’, the school environment may be less likely to be an issue.

*because he’s very bright he should have no problem doing what the class are doing but he just won’t apply himself* (Int. 8, L 24-25).

*It’s such a pity because he’s such a bright boy, I mean really bright, and he doesn’t do the work he is well able for* (Int. 4, L 21).

From the perspective of the biopsychosocial model of understanding behaviour which was discussed in Chapter 2, the teachers appear to have given consideration to multifactorial influences on the student’s behaviour including biological, psychological, cognitive and home environment. While a number of the teachers acknowledged that aspects of the school environment such as engaging with the curriculum, following school rules and social interaction were challenging for the students, none of the teachers directly attributed the student’s behaviour to teacher or school-based factors. This is consistent with the opinions expressed by Slee (2012), who argued that the impact of contextual factors within the school environment appear to be minimized or overlooked. However, the research literature would indicate that the classroom environment can have a significant influence on student behaviour (Alberto & Troutman, 2006; Emmer et al, 2001; Sutherland et al, 2008). From the perspective of attribution theory, when behaviour is considered to be external an uncontrollable, the teachers may not consider the cause of behaviour within the context of the school environment (Johansen et al 2011; Grieve, 2009). It also raises the question of how a teacher may perceive

their role in influencing the student's behaviour (Cooper & Burger, 1980; Georgiou et al, 200; Lucas et al, 2009).

It is noteworthy that many of the attributions provided by the teachers were coded as 'vague' as the descriptors were deemed as non-specific by the researcher. These included terms such as '*I think he has some issues*', '*but there is more to it than that*', and '*there is something going on*'. This was also evident in the number of teachers who expressed uncertainty in regard to the genesis of the student's behaviour including comments such as '*there are no clear answers*' '*I am a bit confused*' and '*I don't know if you can really understand him*'.

This uncertainty is likely to be associated with the complexity of issues experienced by the teachers but it may also suggest that the teachers' focus has been on interventions to manage the behaviour rather than a reflection on the factors that may contribute to the behaviour (Fantuzzo et al, 1992; Skiba et al, 1997).

When the class teachers attributed behaviour to biological factors, they included deficits in attention, anger issues, sensory issues, anxiety, motor skill deficits and poor social skills. Some teachers also referred to the presence of an undiagnosed condition or disability which they felt might 'explain' the student's behaviour.

*he has no formal assessment yet but it's on the cards so we will know what's going on* (Int. 2, L 22-23).

*if he had a diagnosis we might better understand him* (Int. 7, L 85-86).

This perspective, which implies that biological factors or a diagnosis of a specific condition can define a student and offer a clear explanation of behaviour, reflects concern raised in the literature regarding the narrow lens through which behaviour is sometimes evaluated (Kohn, 2006; Sullivan et al, 2014; McInerney, 2009).



When asked to describe the students, all of the teachers focused on externalizing behaviours such as verbal and physical aggression, refusal to complete tasks, disruption of classroom activities and being a flight risk. The majority of the teachers provided a litany of behaviours rather than referring to any characteristics of the student themselves. For example Int 6's response outlined below

*'he can get aggressive with other students, he is very disruptive, he is always chatting he also has a lot of compulsions and obsessive behaviours and he can do the same things over and over again, he has a fixation with his hair, and he uses any excuse not to do his work, he also goes into the bathroom he could stay there for up to an hour, the main issue for him is the defiance, and he is looking for attention, so if he does something and I ignore it, it will escalate, if I don't deal with it he will keep escalating like talking to a child besides him, writing on the table, or shouting out, he escalates it to see how much attention he can get, sometimes if I try and remove him the classroom he will refuse to leave'* (Int. 6, L 79-89)

Orsati et al, (2013) highlighted the challenge of separating externalizing behaviours from how one perceives the student as a person and how this has implications for building a relationship with the student and the nature of the interventions selected.

There was also somewhat of a contradiction in the number of the teachers who appeared to assign intentional motivations and responsibility for behaviours to the students.

*I get the impression he's just not happy following the same rule as everyone else he wants it done his way* (Int. 9, L34)

*He escalates things just to see how much attention he can get* (Int. 5, L23)

These teachers implied intent on the part of the student at one point in an interview but may also have suggested in the same interview that the presenting behaviours are the result of biological and environmental factors outside the student's control. For example, in T 8's interview.

*He is very much boundary testing with me trying to see what he can get away with (Int. 8, L 241).*

*Its not that he is bold or deliberately behaving this way...I know he can't help it. (Int. 8, L 143).*

This implies that the teachers may not always connect their attribution of a student's behaviour to their perception and response to the behaviours on a day to day basis. This may call into question whether there is always a direct causal relationship between attribution and beliefs as suggested by Johansen et al (2011) or one could simply argue that, when in an emotionally charged and challenging situation in the classroom, it is difficult for teachers to maintain the view that there is no intent on behalf of the student, irrespective of their objective analysis of the factors that influence that behaviour.

The majority of teachers reported that the student's home environment was a possible contributor to their behaviour. When describing the home environment, some teachers cited chaotic family structures, poor parenting skills and a lack of engagement with school staff as their main concerns.

*His home environment might be an issue in that it is not structured as it should be he rules the roost (Int. 1, L 24-25).*

*I believe home is a big part in her behaviour so for example if she acts out she gets more and more rewards there are no repercussions for her behaviour her parents do not particularly address any of her behaviours (Int. 9, L 24-27).*

*she comes in with something new every day and it's like bribe, bribe, bribe (Int. 10, L 34-36).*

The teachers who reported that the home environment was a contributor to the student's behaviour suggested that there was a discrepancy between behavioural expectations at home and school.

*I'm wondering if some of it is learned from home I'm wondering if there are not the same structures and routine at home as we have set up in school and I think that really affects him (Int. 4, L 221-25).*

Despite these concerns, the teachers reported limited interaction and engagement between school staff and parents, with only one teacher reporting that they had regular meetings with the parents. This is consistent with issues raised in the literature (Hee, Park, Alber, Morgan & Fleming, 2011) and is supportive of the view that increased collaboration and training involving parents has the potential to improve outcomes for students. It can lead to a better understanding of the student (Fox et al, 2002), and result in a consistency of approaches and a generalization of skills between home and school (Kuhn et al, 2003).

The predominant reasons provided by the teachers for their understanding of the student's behaviour were their observation of the students, the opinions of other teachers, parental reports and comparing the students to their peers. They suggested that working with the same age group and recording of behaviours also contributed to their understanding. With the exception of one teacher, who reported recording behaviours, none of the other teachers reported engaging in any structured functional assessment with the student in their class. However, the literature would suggest that functional assessment is a significant contributor to understanding a student's behaviour and to developing an effective intervention plan (Gage et al, 2012; Ingram et al, 2005; Newcomer & Lewis, 2004).

Reports from the teachers imply that they may evaluate the students behaviour with reference to developmental norms/expectations.

*There's definitely something wrong with her something not normal (Int. 7, L 28).*

*I think you compare them with their peers and what is normal for that age group (Int. 4, L 34).*

*Other teachers come in and point out that there is something different, not right with him, he really stands out (Int. 5, L 39-40).*

*in that I be more aware that this child's behaviour is not normal and I need to keep an eye on it (Int. 3, L 59).*

Terms such as ‘*normal /abnormal, something not right*’ appear repeatedly in the interviews and the implications of such terminology on teacher practice has been discussed in the literature (Armstrong & Galloway, 1994; Grieve, 2009). Concerns have been expressed that students whose behaviour is not consistent with developmental norms may be considered as ‘abnormal’ rather than having individual learning needs as a result of complex circumstances that interact to create the difficulties the child is experiencing (Miller et al, 2000; Miller et al, 2002).

All of the class teachers had studied psychology as part of their undergraduate training. When asked if any of the psychological theory they had studied had contributed to their understanding of the student’s behaviour, the majority indicated that it had little value. Some of the reasons given were that time had elapsed and they had forgotten much of what they had learned.

*I think it was also long ago I think I'm very removed from it at this stage (Int. 5, L 56-58).*

*I really don't think that it's been of any significance at all (Int. 4, L 75-79).*

While all the teachers expressed reservations regarding the relevance of psychology, some possible benefits which were identified included exposure to a wider range of opinions, a better understanding of child development and helping them to reflect more on the student’s behaviour. Another benefit of studying psychology mentioned by the teachers was that it had helped them understand that there was more than one explanation of behaviour.

A number of the teachers suggested that developmental psychology may have led them to categorize and label students rather than giving them a framework to monitor progress and to identify individual needs and learning styles.

*I suppose the abnormal psychology course was helpful which explained what was normal and what wasn't, the most helpful was a module on education psychology which described all the different conditions and that was helpful so you get to understand that a child isn't developing normally (Int. 4, L 235)*

This emphasis on 'pathologizing' behaviour and its implications has been cited in the literature (Youdell, 1996; Wong, 2010). Orsati et al (2013) argue that labelling can lead to the identification of the students as 'the problem' rather than their presenting behaviours which can lead to exclusion or removal to alternative placements.

A number of the teachers also questioned whether psychological theory could ever support teachers in understanding behaviour.

*I don't know if psychology can help I don't know if you can really understand him (Int. 4, L 97).*

This perception by teachers of the lack of relevance of psychology was also reported in the literature (Hargreaves, 1996; Cain, 2015).

A number of the teachers also believed that it was not possible to reach an understanding of the student's behaviour due to the inconsistency of the student's presentation.

*His behaviour is very inconsistent So the things you learned in college will not apply to children like this so I don't see the benefit (Int. 2, L 103).*

*This boy is so different from day to day that there is no way of understanding him (Int. 8, L 110).*

It would appear somewhat incongruent that some of the teachers implied that the more complex a student's behaviour the less likely that psychology can provide insight and understanding.

*Psychology might help with the typical child but with a child like this to be honest I don't think it would help* (Int. 3, L 150).

*He is so different, there is no way of knowing what's going on* (Int. 6, L 107).

It is also interesting to note that on one hand the teachers reported that they had somewhat limited exposure to psychology - at a time when they may not have had sufficient insight to fully appreciate it - and yet they appear quite definitive in their view that it did not have much to offer in understanding behaviour.

*but for me and the way I studied psychology it is not having any relevance, maybe because it was taught in isolation that I can't apply it to my everyday work and everyday management of this boy* (Int. 2, L 97-98)

These findings would suggest that limited exposure to psychology could have a negative effect on teachers' perception of the discipline and those working in the field of psychology may need to overcome some negative preconceptions to convince teachers of the relevance of their knowledge and skills. These challenges have also been highlighted in the literature (Hargreaves, 1996; Cain, 2015).

#### **4.3.2 The Impact of Challenging Behaviour on the School Community**

##### **4.3.2.1 Impact on the class teacher**

The teachers' descriptions of the student's behaviours were often emotive and portrayed the behaviour in quite extreme terms

*He shouts out all the time* (Int. 4, L 8).

*He is very defiant every single lesson every single day* (Int. 3, L 10).

*He will always do the opposite to what you want him to* (Int. 2, L 12).

These statements could be viewed as reflective of the levels of emotion and stress generated in their current classroom environment. It would also suggest that the teachers may often feel overwhelmed and powerless to respond to the behaviour of the student in their class. All of the class teachers identified the challenges they encountered when supporting the student in their class. Most of the teachers reported that it had affected their physical and mental health and the impact has extended beyond their professional lives into their personal lives which is consistent with the research literature (Everaert et al, 2007; Lambert et al, 2007).

*it can be really draining and exhausting* (Int. 4, L 119).

*this has affected me so much this child is in my head morning noon and night I dream about this child I told my husband about this child I am constantly wondering what I can do to manage the situation I am thinking about him every minute of every day when he is in school* (Int. 10, L 143).

They described being in a ‘*constant state of alert*’ and ‘*walking on eggshells*’. A recurring theme was the lack of predictability and control and the challenge of not knowing how to respond when the student had an ‘incident’ or ‘meltdown’.

*you have to monitor him with other children as he can lash out verbally* (Int. 7, L 18-19).

*I have never had to watch any other child this much* ( Int. 2, L 45-49)

*You constantly have to supervise him and keep your eye on him as he may try to escape* (Int. 1, L 15-16).

One of the main concerns expressed by the majority of the class teachers was the impact on the learning and safety of the other students and how managing this student impacted on the quality of their teaching.

*his presence is affecting my performance as a teacher* (Int. 8, L 130).

*I know it's my job but it is not possible to give my best to this child and to the other children in my class too* (Int. 3, L 141).

This would appear to have generated frustration, guilt and additional stress for the class teacher. Similar findings have also been reported in the literature (Blankenship, 1988; Cains et al, 1996; Cartledge et al, 1996; Fields, 1999; Little et al, 1998; Martin et al, 1999).

Ironically, these descriptions of the challenges of addressing challenging behaviour did not appear to correlate with the teachers' relationship with the students, as the majority of the teachers expressed a genuine emotional connection and concern for the individual student in their class.

*You know I really like this boy and I feel I have developed a real connection with him in spite of his behaviour (Int. 2, L 24-26).*

*I suppose his reaction like he loves to see me and I've really grown to love him (Int 8 L 161-162)*

The teachers also raised practical concerns including demands on their time, the need to provide additional supervision and the disruption of classes. Some of the other concerns that were noted in a review of the interviews was the potential impact on their professional reputation among parents and school staff.

*I had a handover meeting for my class and I never felt so embarrassed about what I had covered (Int. 7, L 124).*

*You are also aware of how you are being perceived by other teachers (Int. 2, L 167).*

*When you have to go to senior management .. you feel like as a qualified teacher you should be able to manage this (Int. 9, L 176).*

The teachers used quite emotional language when describing the demand placed on them by the individual student. These included '*Impossible to get him to engage*', '*really affects everyone*', '*completely out of control*', '*he cannot be corrected*', '*I constantly have to supervise him*'.



The level of emotional distress and the challenge expressed by the class teachers was very evident and this was noted by the other readers of the interviews. This has significant implications for school management and professionals engaging with teachers which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

#### **4.3.2.2 Impact on the individual student**

A number of the teachers acknowledged how coping within a mainstream setting had impacted on the individual student. This included difficulty interacting with their peers, completing schoolwork, and managing the demands of the school day. They also recognized that the children experienced frustration and anxiety which was challenging for them.

*well I suppose he does try hard every day he comes in with what I call a good attitude (Int. 1, L 205).*

*he has found the transition to first-class very difficult (Int. 3, L 191).*

*It makes school a big effort for him (Int. 9, L 187).*

However, while a number of the students had a reduced school day and most were removed from class on a regular basis, only two teachers expressed concern as to how the students may not achieve their academic potential.

*he could fall behind if his behaviours continue (Int. 6, L 211).*

*he finds it difficult to engage in any learning (Int. 7, L 320).*

The impact of behavioural difficulties on a student's academic progress is documented in the literature (Baker et al, 2008).

Two of the teachers expressed concern that a negative reputation had developed within the school among students, parents and teachers regarding the individual student and suggested that this could result in a reluctance for staff to work with them in the future.

*I think there is a reputation built up around this child which hasn't helped (Int. 1, L 201).*

*and nobody would want to teach him next year, there will be big reluctance shown to the principal from everyone to working with this child and even the class (Int. 4, L 191).*

In one case the teacher reported that she felt there was a strong desire among staff to have the student removed from the school. The risk of exclusion for students presenting with challenging behaviour is consistent with findings reported in the literature (Farrell et al, 2003; Jull, 2008; Russell, 2008; O'Connor et al, 2011).

In general, the teachers reported a positive relationship with the student, they expressed genuine concern regarding the student's well-being and they had made efforts to include the students within the classroom environment. However, when reading the interviews as a whole, it is evident that the majority of these students are frequently removed from the classroom, they often work in one to one settings and measures have been put in place to limit their contact with peers due to health and safety concerns. These measures, however well intended, may result in the student experiencing levels of social marginalization and stigmatization which has also been reported in the literature (Corrigan et al, 2000; Barg et al 2010; Hastings et al 2002; Orsati et al 2012; Patterson et al, 1990). The impact of practices involving isolation and removal and how they may be replicated in the manner in which the student is treated by their peers is also a concern which has been raised in the research (Skinner et al, 2012).

#### **4.3.2.3 Impact on peers**

The impact of the individual student's behaviour on the other students in the class was a significant and recurring concern expressed throughout all the interviews with the class teachers. These included physical and verbal abuse and unpredictable behaviour.

*he will lash out at other children (Int. 8, L 137).*

*he has punched other children (Int. 7, L 241).*

*he gets aggressive with other students (Int. 2, L 165).*

Other concerns expressed by the teachers were reduced contact time particularly with SEN students, less attention from the teacher for all students and the disruption of classroom activities.

*absolutely it has so impacted on the other children they have lost out on so much contact time (Int. 3, L 287).*

*this child has affected the whole class (Int. 1, L 305).*

*one thing that worries me however is the other kids in the class and how this child behaviour is impacting on them sometimes I feel it's not fair (Int. 4, L 234).*

*there is always a balancing act and it's not always easy because you want to keep a culture of fairness in the class too (Int. 8, L 179).*

Some of the teachers also indicated that it has impacted on their teaching style and how they interacted with the other pupils.

When reading the interviews there is a sense that the teachers perceive their key role as teaching the class as a whole and the behaviour of the individual student is a challenge and impediment to that role. This raises the question to what extent addressing the needs of individual challenging students is viewed as an integral part of their role as class teachers.

#### **4.3.2.4 Impact on school resources**

The class teachers described how addressing the needs of the individual student is placing significant demands on school resources. The main demand reported by the teachers was accessing support from other school personnel and the allocation of time from Special Needs

Assistants and SEN teachers in particular. The high level of resourcing that can be provided to an individual student was highlighted by one teacher.

*there are up to 5 different adults working with this girl over the 2 hours she's in school and without this support she would not cope (Int. 10, L 326).*

The majority of the class teachers believed that the student in their class needed to be prioritized for SNA support given the severity of their behaviour.

*You really do need the extra support of an SNA (Int. 6, L 271).*

*I'd be very concerned for a teacher working this child without an SNA (Int. 5, L 191).*

*he couldn't stay here without the supports from the resource teacher and SNA (Int. 3, L 225).*

*a lot of resources that go into this child like learning support and resource teachers but it is really needed (Int. 9, L 189).*

However, these students are competing for resources with other children in the school both in terms of time from SEN teachers and SNA support. This may present a particular challenge for senior management with the introduction of the new model of resourcing where they have sole responsibility and autonomy for managing their allocated resources. It may also have implications for how they perceive the more challenging students in the school as these students could be viewed as placing disproportionate demands on resources which could impact on the supports for other students.

The class teachers also reported that their teaching colleagues needed to step in to supervise their class if they needed to leave with the student or they were required to take over the responsibility for monitoring the student during break times.

*if you need to step out of the classroom to deal with an issue with this boy another teacher needs to step in and mind your class (Int. 3, L 124).*

*another teacher came in and took the class so I could go to the staffroom (Int. 7, L 257).*

They described the additional demands placed on the school principal and vice principal. A number of the teachers reported that the principal needed to be available to assist the teacher in managing challenging situations, to support the teacher when they reported an incident or to remove the student so the teacher could continue teaching his/her class.

*and it's up to the office until he cools down he has often spent two hours in the office (Int. 3, L 187).*

*when you ask the vice principal for help she would come in and say leave this to me I'll deal with him and she takes him out of class (Int. 8, L 241).*

*I would ask to meet the principal for a convenient time to meet which was usually the end of the day things are really difficult I could go down to her in the middle of the day (Int. 1, L 179).*

One of the teachers noted that it was more demanding on resources in smaller rural schools where there were less supports/resources available.

*I don't have access to the same number of people as I would have had any previous school and this makes it difficult (Int. 10, L 219).*

When reading the interviews, it appears that the majority of the class teachers frequently experience a lack of control in the management of the student in their class and they rely heavily on other staff to be available to support them on a regular basis. This support is often sought and provided in an unstructured, unregulated manner which inevitably impacts on the day to day workload of a range of school personnel. There appears to be an ongoing tension between

supporting the individual student and meeting the needs of other students in the school. These issues may influence decisions regarding placement, school exclusion and the introduction of interventions such as a significantly reduced school day.

#### **4.3.3 Teachers' perspective on their capacity to influence behaviour**

When the teachers' attributions of the student's behaviour are analysed in further detail using Heider's (1958) and Weiner's (1992) attribution framework, a consistent picture emerges. In the majority of interviews, the student's behaviour was defined as external to the school (within-child or home environment), stable (unlikely to change) and uncontrollable (related to factors beyond the teacher's control). Examples of these dimensions are outlined below.

##### *Locus of Control*

*It's her make up there is definitely something wrong with her .. there are mental issues that we can't change (Int. 8, L 218).*

*It's down to something neurological within him the way he was born .. its inherent within him (Int. 7, L 241).*

##### *Stability*

*I think he will always have issues (Int. 3, L 79).*

*I don't think his underlying problems will ever go away (Int. 4, L 63).*

##### *Controllability*

*He will do what he wants to do so it really depends on him (Int. 10, L 92).*

*It's very difficult.. in all my years teaching this child is the most difficult to work with the hardest to make progress with (Int. 5, L 112).*

As already mentioned most of the teachers also implied a degree of intent on the part of the student which has implications for how the teacher may respond to the student's behaviour (Georgiou et al, 2002; Lucas et al, 2009).

*He seems to want his own way all the time (Int. 7, L 78).*

*He is very defiant and he is looking for attention (Int. 10, L 12).*

*He wants what he wants when he wants it (Int. 3, L 54).*

The class teachers expressed a variety of opinions on the extent to which they believed they could influence the individual student's behaviour. However, when reading the statements as a whole, it is evident that any confidence expressed by the teachers that the school can have an impact on the student's behaviour was, at best, tentative and cautious.

*you can improve things however we haven't solved the problem (Int. 5, L 41).*

*you could help him behave better but I think he will always have problems (Int. 8, L 58).*

Some reported that their interventions were not working to any significant extent.

*I have drawn everything I have learned at this child and it hasn't made a difference (Int. 1, L 90).*

*I think without the support of the SNA his behaviour would still be the same (Int. 4, L 105).*

*I'm not too sure we are making any progress particularly in this setting (Int. 9, L 125).*

while others felt they had made some limited progress.

*now with the work I have done with this child over the last few weeks I feel there has been change but you have to take it in very little steps and not expect too much (Int. 7, L 138).*

*yes I think we can put things in place that would help I don't think the anger will ever go away we just must try to manage it (Int. 3, L 179).*

All the teachers expressed some level of concern as to how effective their interventions were on the longer term.

*this child has been the most difficult to work with the hardest to make progress with it's five steps forwards and four steps back (Int. 7, L 198).*

*I feel sometimes I'm getting places but then like last week we had an incident and I felt that we had got nowhere we have made a little progress but it is very slow I think this child will continue to have problems (Int. 3, L 256).*

There were repeated references in the interviews to the '*management*' of the student's behaviour but not addressing the '*underlying issue*'. This is consistent with the evidence in the literature which suggested that the nature of interventions can frequently focus on '*managing*' a challenging situation (Landau, 2009; Maguire et al, 2010). The concern that teachers may focus on the short term reduction of the behaviour rather than the longer term needs of the student has also been discussed in the literature (Lerman et al, 2002; Main et al 2008). It should be noted that many of the teachers in this study were aware of this issue and expressed their concern that they may not be meeting the needs of the individual student.

*you can improve things we can try and manage his behaviour however we haven't solved the problem I don't think we are meeting his needs (Int. 1, L 36-38)*



Most of the teachers referred to the unpredictability of the student's behaviour and reported that they were often '*in survival mode*' where they were reacting to what occurred in their class on a day to day basis. The likelihood of implementing reactive strategies when responding to unexpected incidents in the absence clear structures and procedures is acknowledged in the literature (Clunies - Ross et al, 2008; Infantino et al, 2005).

#### **4.3.4 Placement issues**

The teachers provided mixed opinions on the student's continued placement in a mainstream setting, with some believing that the student was appropriately placed while others suggested that a specialist setting would be more appropriate.

*no it's not appropriate I say no the reason being we have big classes we are quite academic (Int. 9, L 176).*

*well I suppose you'd have to say yes because well how will I put it, you can't isolate these children either like having a unit for badly behaved kids I don't think that's the answer either they are only going to learn bad things from each other (Int. 8, L 218).*

However, the teachers who believed that a specialist placement was more appropriate for the student were more definitive in their responses,

*this particular child I don't think so without the support (Int. 3, L 231).*

*no I don't think he should be in a mainstream setting I think he should be in a special setting or unit (Int. 7, L 429).*

while those who supported a mainstream placement provided more qualified responses.

*well I don't know really.. his behaviour has improved in that we can manage it a little better.. I don't think he has benefited on the educational side of things (Int. 6, L 87-90)*

*I suppose if he continues to improve if we can get some work done well I think this might be the right setting but this might change I think for the moment he is in the right place (Int. 9, L 176).*

These findings are consistent with the literature which highlighted that this cohort of students are the most complex and difficult to include in a mainstream setting (Shevlin et al, 2008; Avramidis et al, 2002; Corbett, 2001; Hodgkinson, 2006; Croll et al, 2000). The reasons provided by the teachers for the student remaining in mainstream was the child's ability (in that they were seen as quite able), concern that there were not alternative placements available and one teacher expressing reservation about exclusion and placing a cohort of students with challenging behaviour together in an educational setting. Some of the teachers also reported that the student should remain in mainstream provided their behaviour improved or continued to be managed.

The reasons provided in favour of a special setting were more one to one support, a smaller setting and more expertise among the teaching staff.

*I would be thinking the unit where there are plenty more adults where she would get one-to-one and which would cater for her behaviour needs (Int. 9, L 176).*

*maybe a less academic school where he would get more attention (Int. 7, L 106).*

It would appear that the majority of the teachers' opinions regarding placement were based on the challenges presented by the student in their current situation rather than the needs of the student.

*as I said before I don't think a behaviour unit will work when you have a bad day you might think yes this will be an alternative you would think that he should be somewhere else but what can you do* (Int. 8, L 46-49)

The interviews also highlighted how the student's behaviour had implications for their placement with six of teachers implying that exclusion was being actively considered. High exclusion rates for students with challenging behaviour is widely reported in the literature (Farrell et al, 2003; Jull, 2008; Russell, 2008; O'Connor et al, 2011). Three of the teachers also reported that exclusion had not been progressed to date as it was considered to be a lengthy and difficult process.

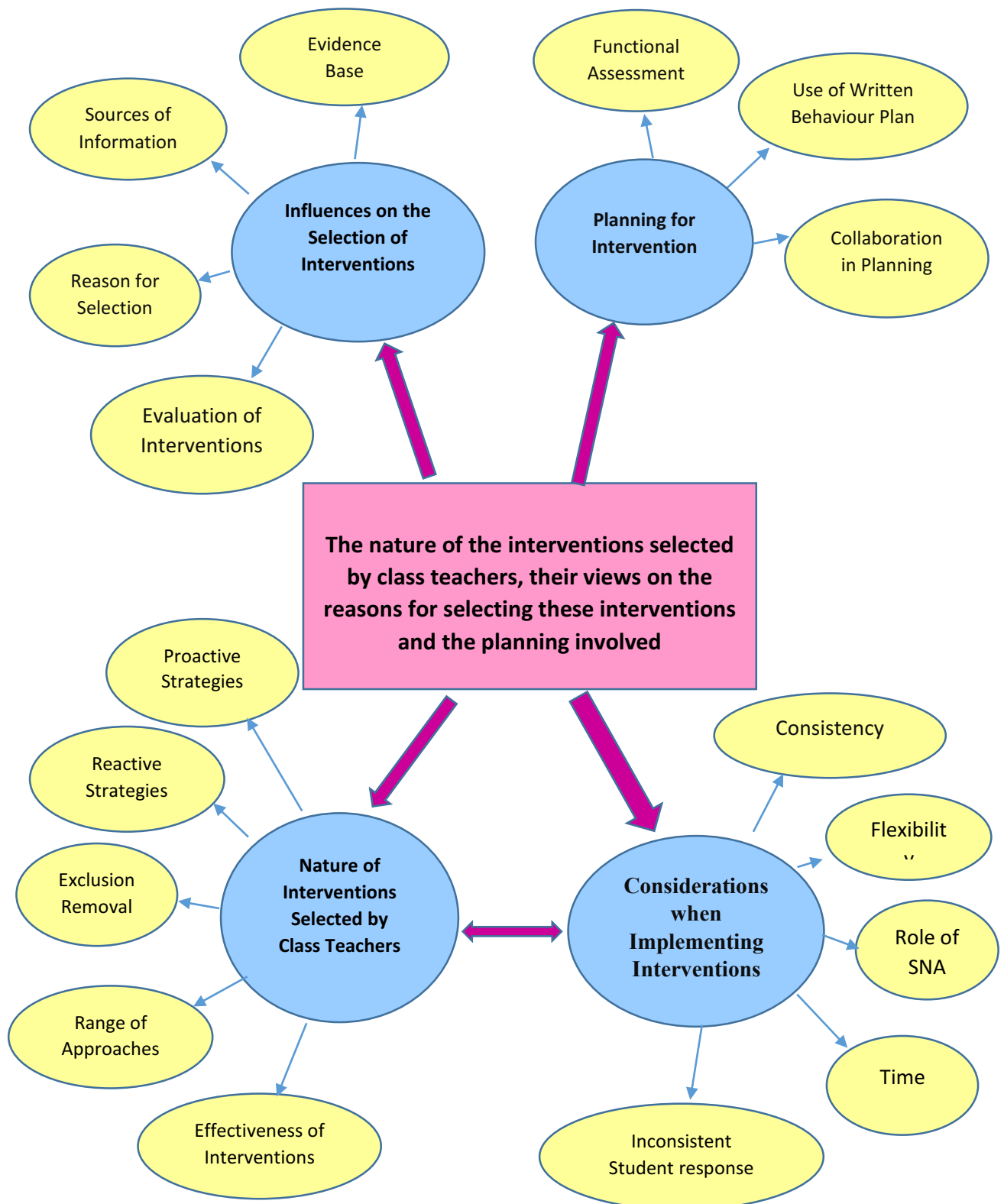
*The principal believes that it would be difficult to remove him so we'll have to keep on trying to manage the behaviour* (Int. 10, L 212).

It is evident from all the interviews that the student's placement is an ongoing topic of discussion within the school environment. However, the focus of the conversation would seem to be based on the removal of the student due to the level of disruption and challenge to the school environment rather than an evaluation of the student's needs. This could lead to the inappropriate placement of a student in an alternative setting.

#### **4.4 Theme 2 - The Nature of the Interventions Selected by Class Teachers, their Views on the Reasons for Selecting these Interventions and the Planning Involved**

The thematic map of Theme 2 is outlined in Figure 4 and a list of codes and relevant statements associated with Theme 2 and are outlined in Appendix 16.

**Figure 4 Thematic Map for Theme 2**



#### 4.4.1: Influences on the selection of interventions

One of predominant sources of information identified by the class teachers regarding the interventions they had selected was their teacher colleagues. This was consistent with findings by Spindler et al, (2000).

*other teachers may have made suggestions (Int. 2, L 239).*

*picking the brain of a teacher in the school (Int. 10, L 197).*

*from speaking to my colleagues (Int. 4, L 276).*

The reasons given for adopting interventions suggested by their colleagues were trust, accessibility and their colleague's experience.

*I have gone to other teachers sought advice I talked to so many people to his resource teacher we have brilliant experienced resource teachers in the school (Int. 3, L 120).*

*you trust people like other teachers who recommend strategies (Int. 6, L 204).*

Another influential factor, also identified by Murik et al (2005), was their personal experience of interventions they had used previously or had seen being used.

*I suppose the things I'm doing I would have seen done in other classes in my previous school (Int. 1, L 147).*

*and experience and things I have learned over the years I mean the school said a lot of chatter in children so we have developed a lot of expertise so colleagues are huge they have a lot of knowledge (Int. 5, L 197).*

Other significant sources of information mentioned by the teachers were the Internet and discussion boards. Regan et al (2011) highlighted the need to embrace web-based resources. However, they also emphasise the responsibility placed on practitioners to reflect on the empirical evidence and the needs of the student when selecting interventions. Reading and

information provided in professional reports were also mentioned, but appeared less significant.

All the teachers interviewed were unequivocal in their assertion that they were not aware of the research evidence behind any of the interventions they selected and it had not influenced their decision making.

*No not really I wouldn't be aware of any of the theory behind the interventions I am using (Int. 7, L 129).*

*not really no, what I focus on does it work or not, you don't have time to look into the research evidence (Int. 10, L 147).*

*like no, you wouldn't even sometimes have the terminology to explain what you are doing (Int. 4, L 236).*

The limited influence of research evidence on teacher practice has been well documented in the literature (Bryk et al, 2011; Taylor, 2013; Nelson et al, 2015). However, other research studies (Handscomb et al, 2003; Greany, 2015; Godfrey, 2016), found that teachers were influenced by the evidence base of the interventions they selected.

On reading the interview statements it would appear that teachers rely to a large extent on sources that are convenient and accessible such as colleagues in the school or information they can access on the internet. This is consistent with research findings (Maag, 2001; Lerman et al, 2002).

The main factors which influenced the class teachers' selection of individual interventions were their perceived convenience and practicality. These included the time required to implement the intervention, their ability to source materials and ensuring the minimum disruption of their classroom activities.

*We also had a visual timetable but that was too difficult to keep going (Int. 3, L 129).*

*keeping it simple works best for the child (Int. 6, L 289).*

*when you're on your own it's very difficult to implement this in the classroom and have all the pictures you need on standby (Int. 7, L 176).*

Another significant consideration for class teachers in selecting interventions was minimizing the impact of the student's behaviour on the other students in the class.

*what's important is that I can teach the other children and get on with my work (Int. 4, L 147).*

*you need to remove him from the class to get on with your work (Int. 2, L 218).*

*yes for the sake of other children and that I can get on my teaching (Int. 8, L 149).*

When asked how they decided on the specific interventions they were now using, the predominant responses were related to 'trial and error' and 'what works'.

*there was a lot of trial and error..try and see if it works (Int. 10, L 196).*

*you try things out if they don't work you shelve them (Int. 3, L 243).*

*a lot of this was trial and error guessing things that you thought might work (Int. 1, L 208).*

When reading the interviews, it would appear that the majority of class the teachers in the study implemented whatever strategies they were familiar with and which they perceived as convenient and practical rather than evaluating the student's needs before deciding on an intervention. They hoped these would result in an improvement in the student's behaviour and, if they were perceived as unsuccessful, they moved on to another intervention. Some of the class teachers described selecting the interventions from a list. This approach to selecting

behavioural interventions on an ad hoc, trial and error basis is also acknowledged in the literature (Landau, 2009; Maguire et al, 2010) and may not always be compatible with the implementation of the most appropriate interventions to address the needs of individual students.

#### **4.4.2 Nature of interventions selected by class teachers**

It was notable that, when asked to describe the strategies they were using, the majority of class teachers initially referred to the role of a Special Needs Assistant. This was identified, in most interviews, as the key approach in addressing the student's behaviour. This involved withdrawal of the student for structured breaks or intervention, in class support and supervision, or removing the student if there was an incident of challenging behaviour.

*We have access to an SNA and this is hugely significant in supporting the child (Int. 4, L 297).*

*most of all he has access to an SNA which is very important she helps him take turns and interact better with his peers (Int. 7, L 328).*

*so one of the SNAs stays in the room with her when she is in the class (Int. 5, L 218).*

While there is research supporting the positive role of classroom assistants in reducing inappropriate classroom behaviour and increasing academic engagement (Brock & Carter, 2013), there are also concerns raised in the literature regarding the establishment of unnecessary dependencies, limiting the development and use of a student's own capabilities and inhibiting student interaction with teachers and peers (Giangreco, Doyle & Suter, 2014; Sharma & Salend, 2016; Carter et al, 2016).



The other strategies identified by the teachers included the use of reward systems, an individualized timetable, visual timetables, choice boxes and reminders/warnings. However, it was notable that many of the teachers reported using quite a limited number of targeted interventions given the complexity of the student's behaviour. There also appeared to be a lack of clarity and consistency regarding the interventions there were using. Teachers reported 'abandoning' interventions after a period of time or not being consistent in their implementation. Some teachers referred to a strategy they were using during the interview which they had not referred to when asked directly about interventions. These tended to be less tangible approaches such as relationship building and ignoring. This may suggest that they are not using these strategies in a structured, consistent and targeted manner.

When the interventions identified in the interviews were analysed, the teachers were found to use both proactive and reactive strategies. However, the teachers appeared to adopt more reactive strategies when the student's behaviour escalated and this usually involved removal of the student. It has been suggested in the literature that the use of such strategies may be a default or short term measure in the absence of appropriate training and planning (Maag, 2001; Lerman et al, 2002).

Many of the strategies adopted by the teachers tended to be behaviourist in nature and the majority of the strategies involved structuring the student's environment. The predominance of behaviourist interventions is widely supported in the literature (Cooper et al 2011; Gable et al, 2009). There was very little reference to strategies involving emotional regulation, skill development or therapeutic intervention. This was similar to findings in the literature (Freiberg et al, 2009) and highlights the mismatch between interventions selected and the needs of the students. It is interesting that the majority of the teachers had reported that the students

experienced difficulties in relation to attention, anger management, social skills and emotional regulation but these were not directly addressed in the interventions selected.

When reading the intervention statements as a whole, it was evident that one of the most predominant strategies adopted when addressing challenging behaviour was the removal of the student from the classroom either for scheduled periods to engage in structured activities with the SEN teachers and SNAs or removal of the student when their behaviour escalated. All the teachers suggested that this was a key means of ‘managing’ the student.

*we’ve reached a point that if he kicks off his going to be removed and that’s basically it we are doing all the interventions we can be kicks off his going to be removed and it’s up to the office until he cools down he spent two hours in the office (Int. 4, L 89-93).*

*sometimes he just needs to be out of the room when he comes back he is a different child (Int. 6, L 41).*

When reading the transcripts, it would appear that the removal of the student is sometimes more about the teacher having structured time without the student rather than a targeted intervention.

*and forgive me for saying this but often it’s that he’s not there a lot of the time and he is removed from the class (Int. 7, L 169).*

This raises significant questions regarding the purpose and benefit of removing the student for the classroom. Four of the students were also on a reduced timetable where they came to school for two to three hours a day. This could also be viewed as a form of ‘removal’.

#### 4.4.3 Planning for intervention

The class teachers' description of planning regarding the student in their class was tentative and lacked coherence. There was very little evidence of structured, systematic planning which has also been reported in the literature (Main et al, 2008).

*I'm a bit confused because we are drawing on all these resources regarding his behaviour but we may not be treating the underlying issue (Int. 2, L 204).*

*there was a lot of confusion within me wondering what should I do as he does not have a formal diagnosis (Int. 6, L 196).*

*Like I would have these things in place like rules but I would forget about focusing on them and using them as I should (Int. 4, L 238).*

The majority of the teachers had attempted a written behaviour plan but they were unsure of its value and often described it in terms of recording what they had planned to do rather than a means of engaging in a problem solving process. The benefits of planning that were reported by the teachers were target setting, providing structure and a written acknowledgement of the strategies they were adopting.

*I suppose it highlighted the bits and pieces that I have been doing but maybe not giving them enough attention so gave me things to work on (Int. 1, L 102).*

*It helps you target the behaviours that you want to work on but I'm not too sure yet well it should be helpful (Int. 5, L 183).*

*why I found it helpful in that it focuses the mind, it condenses and clarifies what you're thinking (Int. 9, L 249).*

*Yes.. well I did to a certain extent it gave me some structure (Int. 10, L 301).*

The most significant limitation of behaviour plans reported by the majority of the class teachers was that the interventions selected did not work. One teacher described her plan as ‘redundant’.

*The way I didn't find it helpful is that I thought it would give me more to be honest a lot of stuff was doing already and then when things didn't work out I did know what to do and the plan didn't provide that because I felt I had tried everything that I knew so I felt I needed more ideas (Int. 1, L 142).*

*what it does have strategies but elements of it are null and void so some of the things just didn't work that we put down like ticks and Xs don't work for this child rewards don't work either (Int. 7, L 196).*

Some teachers reported that the plan was suitable for an ‘ideal world’ where you wrote down the interventions, implemented them and they worked. A couple of teachers reported that they had a written behaviour plan to meet official requirements and to support their application for additional resources.

*well I suppose as I said for anyone else to see what we are doing to write down the interventions also if we had an inspection they would be a record of what we are doing (Int. 2, L 190).*

While some of the teachers cited observation as a contributor to their understanding of the student, there was no evidence of any formal functional assessment of the student's behaviour which has been identified in the literature as an essential component of effective planning (Gage et al, 2012; Miller, 2003).

Another issue that was mentioned by some of the teachers was that the SEN team had developed a plan but they were not aware of it. Two of the teachers had not engaged in any formal planning. These findings are consistent with the findings of Devine et al (2013), who reported that, within the Irish context, planning involved preparation for classroom pedagogy

and accessing materials and not collaboration at a school level or consultation regarding individual students.

The class teachers' description of their approach to planning suggests there may be lack of awareness of what is involved in the development of a comprehensive behaviour plan and how systematic planning can support and inform the development of an effective intervention plan for an individual student as described in the literature (Didden et al, 1997; Robinson et al, 2001).

#### **4.4.4 Considerations when implementing interventions**

The teachers identified a number challenges in implementing interventions. These included maintaining consistency due to the demands of the classroom environment

*but I would forget about focusing on them and using them as I should (Int. 4, L 238).*

the unpredictability of student's behaviour

*You might have a plan in place but then he won't co-operate so it's back to the drawing board (Int. 5, L 178).*

and the need for flexibility when the strategies adopted were appropriate for the student.

*Initially we use pictures for this but the student found them too distracting so I had to change them (Int. 1, L 117-118)*

The issue of time and adequate supports were also identified.

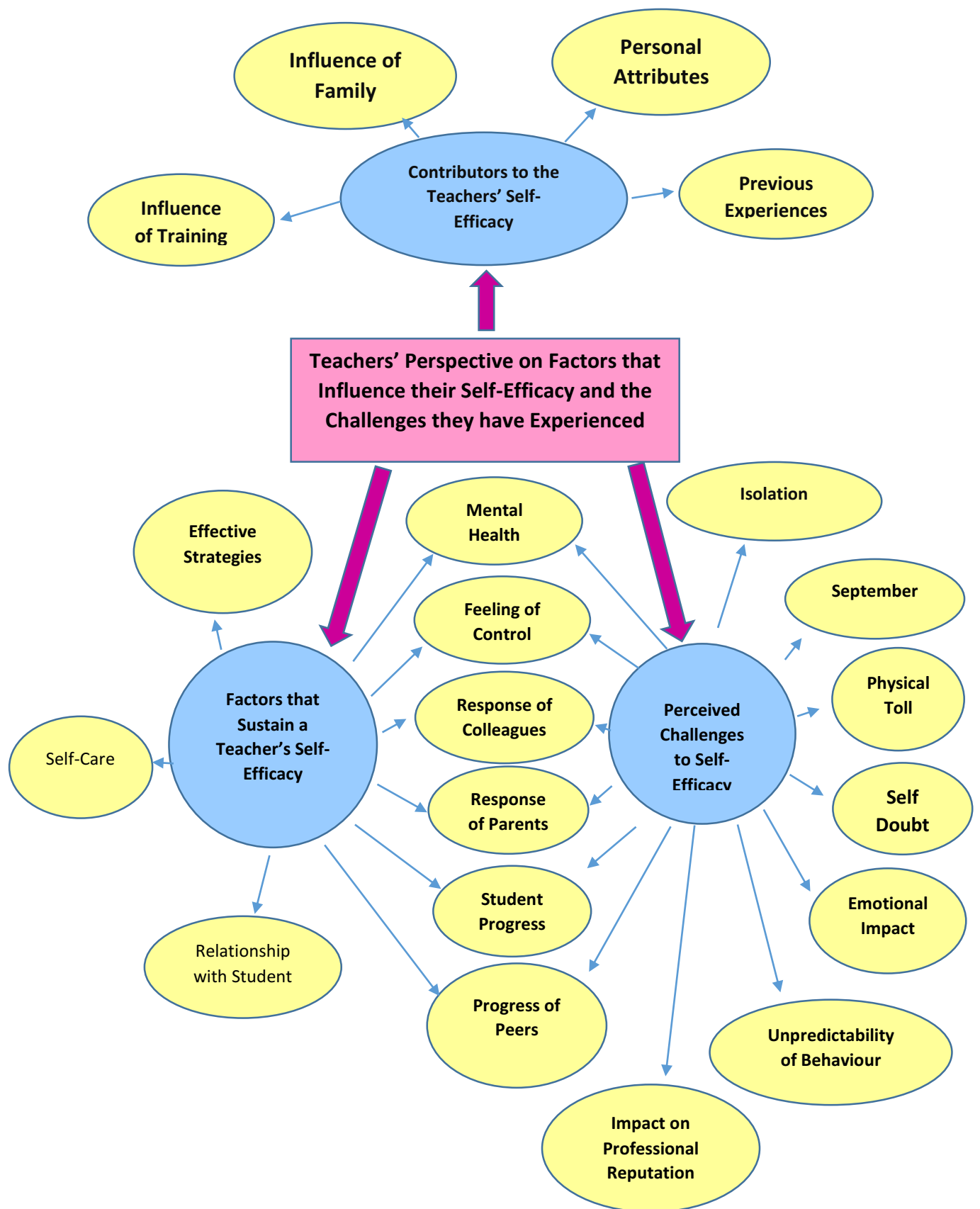
*when you're on your own it's very difficult to find time to implement this in the classroom and have all the pictures you need on standby (Int. 2, L168 -169)*

In summary, the selection of interventions by the teachers in the study appeared quite random. The reasons given for the selections of interventions appear to be focused on convenience and practicality rather than the assessed needs of the individual student. The removal of the individual student from the class appears to be a key component in the strategies adopted. In general, the interventions were perceived by the teachers to be working to some extent and in many cases allowed for the retention of the student within a mainstream classroom environment. With regard to planning there appears to be a lack of structure and consistency. The class teachers also appear to have a limited awareness of the value of a formal planning process in relation to addressing challenging behaviour.

#### **4.5 Theme 3 - Teachers' Perspective on Factors that Influence their Self-Efficacy and the Challenges they have Experienced**

Theme 3 and subthemes are outlined in Figure 5 and a list of codes and relevant statements associated with Theme 3 and are outlined in Appendix 17.

**Figure 5 Thematic Map Theme 3**



#### 4.5.1 Contributors to the teacher self-efficacy

When reading the interviews, it appears that the majority of the class teachers in this research study have a relatively high sense of self efficacy in relation to their professional skills as class teachers.

*and I know I am a good teacher, and I am usually well able to manage my class (Int. 1, L131-132)*

*I have always felt confident as a teacher (Int. 5, L 176)*

However, how they perceived their self-efficacy in relation to addressing the needs of the individual student in their class was less clear. While the majority of teachers reported feeling overwhelmed and having low confidence and low self-esteem at the beginning of the school year, all the teachers suggested that this had improved to a greater or lesser extent as the year had progressed.

*In September I would have said very low but now it is stronger (Int. 8, L 218)*

*The thoughts I was having at the beginning of the year about my ability were not good but I feel much better at this stage of the year (Int. 7, L 178-179)*

This description of their experience throughout the year supports the dynamic, reciprocal nature of self-efficacy as described in the literature where success leads to increased self-efficacy which in turn leads to increased confidence and motivation when addressing a challenging situation (Tschannen-Moran et al, 1998; LaMorte, 2016).

Despite the progress throughout the year, all the teachers implied a lower level of self-efficacy in how they are addressing the needs of the individual student than their self-efficacy as a class



teacher. This disparity is consistent with the findings of Scanlon et al (2013) in their research study within the Irish context.

All the class teachers identified their personal attributes as one of the most influential contributors to their sense of self-efficacy.

*I suppose it comes from myself ..... so it's my own determination (Int. 4, L 306).*

*I suppose I feel I am a strong person I have high standards and I always tried to do things to the best of my ability you can have all the training in the world but if you don't have the drive within you, it comes from inside yourself (Int. 9, L 279).*

*I have a strong character and that's what's most important (Int. 1, L 217).*

They identified their self-confidence, level of motivation, determination and persistence as some of the key attributes in determining their self-efficacy.

*you believe in yourself enough that you get around challenges (Int. 3, L 421).*

*mainly I think it is from myself and my own determination (Int. 7, L 367).*

*no matter what happens I come in every day and try my best (Int. 2, L 293).*

The majority of class teachers identified their family and upbringing as a significant factor in developing these qualities.

*I would say that was my parents and my family I am the youngest and they would have supported me and backed me from a young age (Int. 5, L 243).*

*my upbringing also had a huge part in this (Int. 7, L 352).*

*I suppose I came from a very supportive family I was always encouraged and supported (Int. 10, L 278).*

They also identified other factors such as being involved in sport as fostering important qualities such as coping with challenge and having determination.

*my background in sport I play sport at a high level you have to deal with challenges as they go hand-in-hand with life challenges I have done well in sport and I think that's where my confidence come from* (Int. 4, L 324).

*also have been involved in sport and you realise you're not always going to be successful this helps build your character* (Int. 5, L 389).

The majority of class teachers believed that it is these attributes which are influential in helping them to cope in their current situation. A number of teachers also suggested that their mental health and well-being needed to be managed to sustain self-efficacy and to that extent some of the teachers had included relaxation strategies into their everyday practice.

*I think at the end of the day I think it is my mental strength that is most important* (Int. 5, L 378).

*I would also like to say that your mental health is very important you need to mind it and be aware of it* (Int. 9, L 315).

The impact of working with students presenting with challenging behaviour on a teacher's mental health and well-being is also acknowledged in the literature (McLean et al, 2015; Zinsser et al, 2013; Scanlon et al, 2013).

Interestingly, only one teacher mentioned that either their professional skills or CPD they had attended as a contributor to their self-efficacy. This raises the question as to the nature and quality of the CPD received by the teachers as the evidence in the literature suggests that CPD supports self-efficacy, confidence, professional skills and motivation (LeBlanc et al, 2009).

#### 4.5.2 Factors that sustain a teacher's self-efficacy

One of the key factors which the majority of teachers identified as sustaining their sense of self efficacy was collegial support. This is consistent with research findings (Carroll, 1998; Weindling, 2005). The teachers reported that the reassurance and positive feedback they received from colleagues was very supportive.

*the support and reassurance from colleagues in the school I have been able to go to management and this has supported me more than it might have supported the child*  
(Int. 3, L 329).

*support from colleagues I suppose when someone comments that you were doing well*  
(Int. 6, L 387).

*it certainly helps chatting with colleagues and getting the support from colleagues you don't feel you are on your own* (Int. 1, L 267).

The majority of teachers also identified positive parental support as highly significant.

*maybe also when you meet parents and they make very positive remarks and how you are working with the child* (Int. 6, L 396).

*when her mother tells you that things are going well and that there is no upset in the morning before she comes to school all that helps, support from the parents really helps*  
(Int. 8, L 273).

The positive impact of parental support on teacher self-efficacy has also been addressed in the literature (Garcia, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey et al, 1987).

Another issue which recurred throughout all the interviews was the significance the teachers placed on their perceived success in addressing the student's behaviour. A number of the

teachers indicated that, irrespective of their efforts, their confidence and sense of self-efficacy would be challenged if they felt the student had not make progress.

*yes for me it certainly that (a sense of success). I feel if I tried everything and it hadn't worked then that would really knock my confidence it didn't benefit class didn't benefit the child and you didn't benefit and that's very difficult even though it has been very difficult he has made progress, other teachers might not feel the same (Int. 7, L 309).*

This correlation between a sense of success and positive self-efficacy is also widely documented in the literature (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al, 2001; Opdenakker et al, 2006).

A number of teachers reported that having a set of strategies and structures in place was reassuring and gave them a sense of confidence.

*it doesn't feel so bad now that we have procedures in place that are working better I feel more confident (Int. 2, L 329).*

*I suppose it's the strategies I put in place and they are starting to work (Int. 5, L 413).*

While the intervention plans the teachers had in place may not be comprehensive and targeted as already discussed, it is clear that the perception of a having a plan in place helps sustain the teacher's sense of self-efficacy. This highlights some of the concerns raised in the research regarding the lack of correlation between self-efficacy and effective practice which results in positive outcomes for students (Main et al, 2008).

Even though all the class teachers acknowledged the challenges they had encountered addressing the needs of the individual student in their class, two teachers reported how their

relationship with the student was a motivating factor for them and sustained their commitment to the student.

*I suppose his reaction like he loves to see me and I've really grown to love him (Int. 3, L 312).*

*one other thing is I really like this boy, I love working with children they love being in my class and that's important (Int. 9, L 378).*

Teachers also referred to their previous experiences of being competent teachers and suggested that having successful experiences of addressing challenging behaviour was reassuring and confidence building.

*working with children over the years who have a wide range of difficulties (Int. 3, L 327).*

*now at this stage of my career I can draw on my experience when I have found it really difficult (Int. 6, L 294).*

The factors identified by the teachers as sustaining their self-efficacy were broadly supported by research findings, (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al, 2001; Opdenakker et al, 2006; Pas et al, 2012; Soodak et al, 1998). However, the correlation made by the teachers between their self-efficacy and personal attributes and factors external to the school environment would appear more significant in this study than reported in the literature.

#### **4.5.3 Perceived challenges to self-efficacy**

All the class teachers reported how addressing the needs of the individual student has presented a number of challenges and they identified the factors which they believe have the potential to undermine their self-efficacy. All the teachers identified the month of September as particularly challenging as they attempted to understand and support the individual student.

*September was one of the hardest months I have ever worked (Int. 1, L 421).*

*if you asked me in September I would say it (self-efficacy) was very low (Int. 9, L 321).*

*in terms of comparing between where I am now and September I am far more confident now (Int. 3, L 412).*

*I certainly remember walking on egg shells in September afraid that something will trigger a meltdown (Int. 10, L 313).*

*if you had seen me in September I was tearing my hair out (Int. 7, L 217).*

Some teachers described how the current situation had impacted on their physical and mental health which was a challenge to their self-efficacy.

*from day to day I am on tender hooks and high alert all the time (Int. 5, L 342).*

*this has affected me so much this child is in my head morning noon and night I dream about this child I told my husband about this child I am constantly wondering what I can do to manage the situation I am thinking about him every minute of every day when he is in school (Int. 6, L 277).*

*you need to find a way to get rid of the dread of coming to school every day (Int. 8, L 326).*

*and taking a deep breath when the student came into class and the relief when he was absent was really hard (Int. 3, L 282).*

They also described feeling isolated, challenged and overwhelmed which led to a sense of a lack of control.

*Well for example one day I was on my own and he started acting out he was shouting at me spitting at me I was there with the children on my own I had no SNA I really*

*panicked I did know what to do my confidence was clearly not I didn't know how to react (Int. 7, L 348).*

*sometimes when there is nothing else you can do it's very difficult (Int. 4, L 294).*

As a result of the challenges they had experienced, a number of the class teachers reported how they began to doubt their competence and the majority made statements which indicated an element of self-blame.

*You might be thinking if another teacher had him he'd be better and you ask yourself what are you doing wrong (Int. 7, L 219).*

*if things aren't working you would feel a failure (Int. 4, L 192).*

*You feel like as a qualified teacher you should be able to manage this and that this behaviour is a reflection of you (Int. 2, L 273).*

These reports are supported in research findings which suggest that self-efficacy is subject to challenge and change (Tschannen-Moran et al, 1998).

*I suppose if nothing was working if his behaviour was bad every single day like if there were incidents serious incident five days in a row and nothing was working (Int. 4, L 319).*

*if nothing was working a matter of what you had set up nothing was working and you had gone down every path you can think of, that would erode your confidence (Int. 7, L 402).*

A number of the factors which the teachers had suggested were supportive of their self-efficacy were also identified from a different perspective as potential challenges to self-efficacy. Negative comments from colleagues and parents and a lack of progress with the student were seen as particularly challenging. A number of teachers also expressed concerns regarding how

they were perceived by their colleagues and parents which could impact negatively on their professional reputation.

*I suppose how other teachers respond is very important, so if they said gosh that class were fine last year that would make you feel bad, but if they say we couldn't manage this boy either then you wouldn't feel it was you (Int. 9, L 232).*

In summary, the class teachers described their personal attributes as important contributors to their self-efficacy. They did not mention their training or professional skills as significant. The teachers identified collegial and parental support as sustaining their self-efficacy. They also identified the student's progress and the implementation of effective strategies as key factors in their perception of themselves as effective teachers. Previous positive experiences in their teaching career were also deemed significant. All the class teachers identified September as particularly challenging and they reported that addressing this student's behaviour has impacted on their emotional and physical well-being. A number of the teachers also made reference to feelings of self-blame and reported instances of feeling isolated, challenged and overwhelmed.

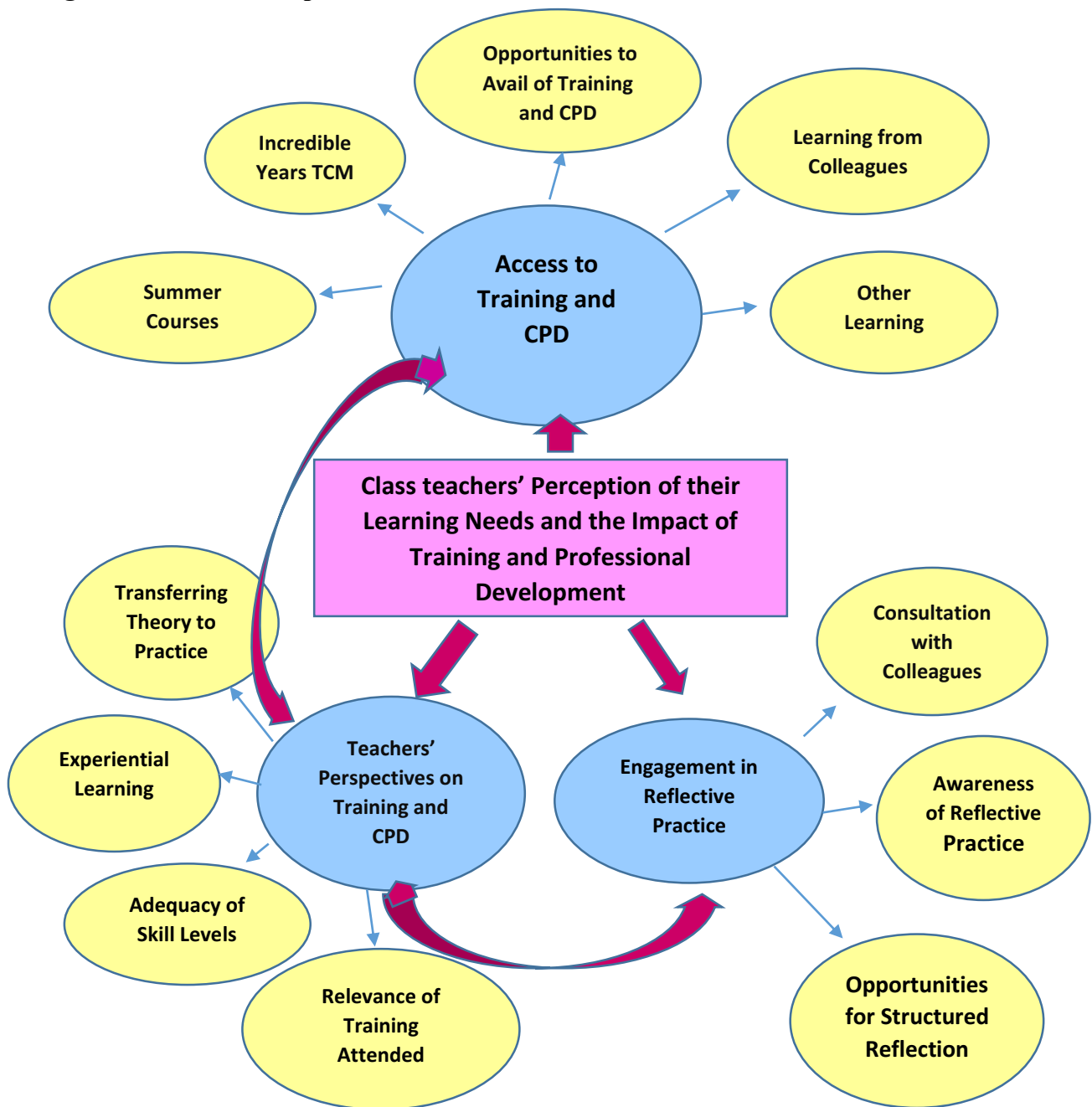
#### **4.6 Theme 4 - Class Teachers' Perception of their Learning Needs and the**

##### **Impact of Training and CPD**

Theme 4 and subthemes are outlined in Figure 6 and a list of codes and relevant statements associated with Theme 4 and are outlined in Appendix 18.



**Figure 6 Thematic Map of Theme 4**



#### **4.6.1 Access to training and CPD**

All the class teachers expressed the opinion that teachers are not adequately prepared to work with a student presenting with significant challenging behaviour in their class. This is also widely supported in the literature (Hastings et al, 2002; Begeny et al, 2006; Baker, 2005; Billingsley et al, 2006; Wagner et al, 2006). However, a number of the teachers were unsure when asked how they could be prepared. Some of the teachers also stated that they were not

sure if you could be prepared a situation like this their student was so different and had such complex needs.

*No I don't think so definitely not (Int. 7, L 127).*

*absolutely not even with seven years' experience where I have dealt with different situations before this was really very little help with this situation (Int. 9, L 178).*

*no not enough I've got to the point where I have used everything I could possibly think of, everything I could possibly use, I've come to the point of saying what more can I do so I think that answers your question (Int. 5, L 245).*

*I don't think teachers have the expertise to work with a child like this (Int. 8, L 274)*

The cohort of teachers in the study reported limited access to any form of professional development since they completed their pre-service training. With the exception of one teacher who is undertaking the Incredible Years TCM programme, the class teachers reported that they had not attended any substantial training or CPD in relation to behaviour management. The training they had attended involved summer courses either online or in an education centre and two teachers has also attended a two night behaviour management course. The predominant motivation provided by the teachers for completing summer courses was to get Extra Personal Vacation (EPV) days during the school year. The teachers were not aware of any specific training or professional development in the area of behaviour management and they had not actively sought such support or information.

*we really don't do any particular CPD unless EPV summer courses or Croke park hours (Int. 9, L 232). (Croke Park hours are based on DES Circular Number 0008/2011 which stipulates that school staff engage in 36 hours of whole school planning in addition to their contact time with students)*

*I did a course on behavioural management course in the education centre it was over two nights (Int. 10, L 252).*

*I have done CPD courses over the years but nothing specific to behaviour (Int. 4, L 346).*

*not really just a summer course for EPV days a couple of years ago (Int. 9, L 285).*

These findings were broadly consistent with the TALIS report (OECD, 2009) where the majority of Irish teachers had only attended brief training courses.

Only one of the teachers expressed a desire to access more training.

*I'm going to do more courses because I'm in the smaller school I will need to go and find out other courses to continue my learning (Int. 5, L 169).*

This finding is not consistent with the OECD report where 56% of the Irish teachers expressed an interest in additional CPD. It is not surprising that the teachers had not attended CPD as they had not identified training as a factor that would support them in their current setting. This lack of engagement with any specific training suggests that a culture of continued professional development may not exist among the teachers and within their schools which has been identified an influential factor in promoting engagement with CPD (Brown et al, 2017; Day et al, 2013). It may also reflect their experience of the quality of training and CPD they had already attended and its impact on their practice.

#### **4.6.2 Teachers' perspectives on training and CPD**

The majority of the class teachers did not believe that the training they had attended was of any significant benefit to their practice as they felt it was too generic to be meaningful and they struggled to relate theory to practice.

*well to be honest there is only so much they can tell you in training (Int. 3, L 132).*

*(online course) it was very general and it didn't focus on specific difficulties (Int. 7, L 345).*

*well not always sometimes I use it (what she learned) for a while and then it can fall away (Int. 5, L 372).*

Not only did they did not rate the CPD they had attended as beneficial but they suggested that in general training would not be of benefit.

*I don't think it's about training no training just common sense (Int. 6, L 231).*

Two of the teachers also suggested that the training would have been more beneficial for SEN teachers who work on an individual basis with the student.

*it was good but it would be better for a learning support teacher because they would be working one to one (Int. 1, L 165).*

*I suppose it would have been better for a learning support teacher resource teacher as it talked about things you could do on a one-to-one basis but I did take some ideas from it (Int. 7, L 276).*

Some of the teachers cited benefits from training.

*what I learned was I needed to develop a relationship with them and that's what I've been doing (Int. 10, L 332).*

*well I suppose having more ideas and strategies you might use I'm not sure how you would get that (Int. 8, L 198).*

The only teacher who reported positively on CPD was the teacher who completed the IY TCM programme.

*the structure of the Incredible Years has been very good and I have learned so much from this course (Int. 3, L 203).*

This teacher was very positive about this experience and felt the opportunity to engage with colleague and a EP on a regular basis was very helpful. She was also able to relate what she was learning to her individual student.

The majority of class teachers reported that learning had happened for them through their previous experiences. This involved both their practical experience of implementing individual strategies and also their learning from working through a challenging situation.

*I suppose as you go along you learn by experience the same things will not work for the same class because classes are different experiencing different classes and different children helps you learn (Int. 9, L 178).*

*I think the experiences I have had in previous classes before has helped (Int. 4, L 271).*

*I think it's learning through experience at this stage rather than from books (Int. 10, L 289).*

All the class teachers referred to the importance of 'learning by doing' and suggested that this was more important than any information they had gained through attending courses or study they has undertaken.

*Your best to learning is to be in the midst of it being thrown in like they can tell you this is what an autistic child will do this is what an ADHD child is like but surely each child is different and what might work for John might not work for Mary (Int. 2, L 291).*

*I think it's experience that helps you learn and when you are working hands-on you learn faster and quicker than you would reading stuff online or in books (Int. 7, L 312).*

All the teachers had completed a module on psychology as part of their pre service teacher training. However, the majority of teachers did not feel that this knowledge was of any particular relevance to their current situation. A recurring theme throughout the interviews was the challenge of relating psychological theory to a ‘real life’ setting.

*no I don't think any psychological theory was of any benefit to real-world situation and he is so inconsistent that it makes it difficult to apply any theory to the way he behaves (Int. 1, L 96).*

*very little really to be honest I think you are thrown in at the deep end with a child like this and it's difficult to see how that relates to what you learned in college (Int. 3, L 87).*

*I mean the theory I mean it was interesting at the time but I don't know how it helps you dealing with a real life situation (Int. 8, L 107).*

The difficulty of relating theory to practice was identified in the literature and the reports of the teachers in this study is an example of the research to practice gap described by Walker et al (1996).

Ironically, even though most of the teachers indicated that addressing the individual student's behaviour was one of the most challenging experiences of their career, the majority of teachers also mentioned that they had learned a lot from this experience and it had made them more confident in their professional skills.

*well first of all I am learning so much this year having to deal with this child (Int. 8, L 319).*

*I suppose you could say I spent years learning theory in college this year I'm learning the real thing (Int. 3, L 162).*

*I've also gained so much experience working with this boy which has given me confidence (Int. 2, L 173).*

*I've learned more in the past year working with this child than I did in any training (Int. 5, L 452).*

They also implied that working with this student has resulted in them reflecting more in their practice.

*Then I had time to think about what else I might have done so I felt a little better about it (Int. 4, L 325).*

Another key contributor to learning which was identified by the majority of class teachers was their interaction with teaching colleagues, particularly experienced teachers and teachers in special education. However, this interaction was unstructured and incidental.

*learning happens definitely to listening to all the other teachers particularly the older, I mean more senior teachers, who have more experience and also some of the newer teachers just out of training because they have loads of new ideas teamwork is great we have a Senior infant team that plan together and we help each other and we plan together (Int 3 L 345)*

When one considers Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1991) and models of effective CPD outlined in the literature (De Vries et al, 2013; Brown et al, 2017), it is not surprising that the teachers would view short training courses often delivered in isolation and remote from the school environment as ineffective and disconnected from their practice. The most effective CPD models outlined in the research describe an interactive process between theory and skills development, practical experience, collaboration and reflective practice. These models incorporate the positive practical learning experiences identified by the teachers with theoretical frameworks and reflection to inform and develop practice.

When listening back to the interviews, it was also notable that when the teachers were asked about their personal learning needs, there was some delay and uncertainty in the majority of their responses. This could suggest that their ongoing professional development is not an area they have been encouraged to reflect on.

#### **4.6.3 Engagement in reflective practice**

Reflection has been identified as a key component in teacher learning and practice (Emmer et al, 2001; Jones & Jones, 2007; Levin et al, 2010; Sullivan et al, 2014). The majority of teachers in this study reported that opportunities for reflection were limited both within their current situation and within the profession in general.

*Not really in teacher training the whole reflection piece has been ignored really when you start teaching it's all about your day-to-day lesson plans getting on with what you have to do, getting on with the urgent, you don't really get an opportunity to reflect in any systematic way, sometimes you might reflect if something worked really well it was rubbish but not as I say in a systematic way (Int. 4, L 214-218).*

All the teachers believed that reflection should be promoted and could be particularly helpful in their current situation. However, they also expressed concern as to where they would find time to engage in such reflection. Similar concerns have been addressed in the literature (Murik et al, 2005; Godfrey, 2014). Three of the teachers reported that they had spent more time reflecting on the current situation in their class than they ever had previously

*oh absolutely without a doubt take for example with this child if I hadn't take time for reflection I would be dreading every day I wouldn't be able to cope I think I had to reflect to get my head around what was happening (Int. 6, L 198-200)*



*no well I don't think so really I suppose when we... No I don't really think so, we don't have time— I know every class is different but in a case like this it would be important may be at the end of the year you might think how things work and changing something and introduce new things that worked (Int. 2, L 278-280).*

The teacher who completed the IY TCM programme reported that she had benefited from opportunities for reflection during the programme.

*(incredible years) it has been great to have an opportunity to speak with other professionals and to sit back and think about what I'm doing (Int. 3, L 246-247).*

It was also interesting that, when asked at the end of the interview how they had found the experience, the majority of the teachers commented that they had enjoyed the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the issues raised.

*I really enjoyed this (laugh).. like you were saying about reflection and how I learn, I wouldn't have thought those things through before, like you don't really have time in the day to think about things and maybe you should set aside time, yet it is only now talking things through with you, it has been really good and it even puts the whole thing in context for me ( Int. 1, L 258-261)*

Engagement in a research project was also referred to in the literature as an enabling process where new ideas could be developed and discussed (Comer, 2004).

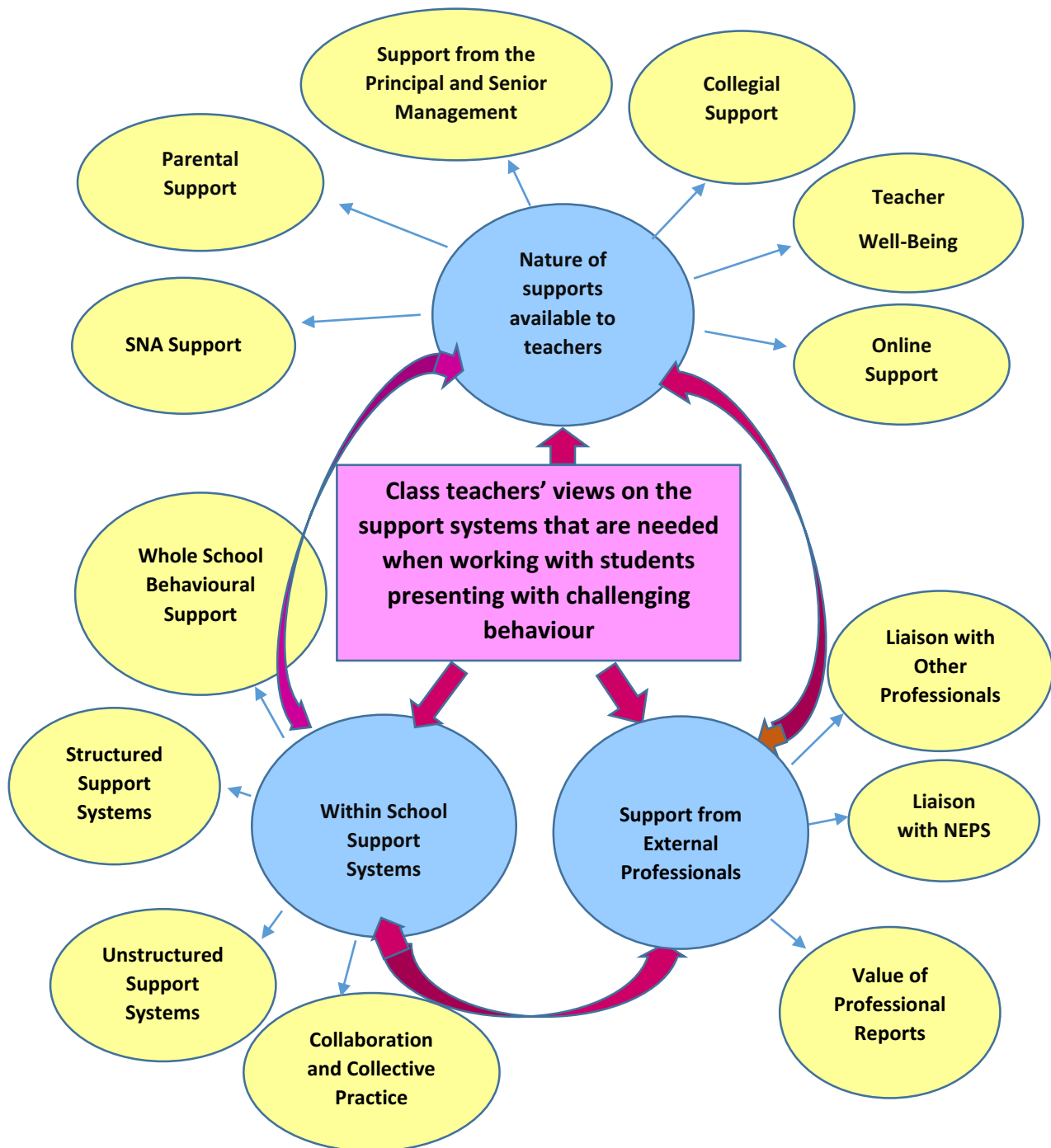
Reflection, as defined in the literature is not a unitary concept as outlined by McGarr et al, (2014) and can involve either a functional and practical approach to address issues to improve practice or it can be critical/emancipatory. Reflection as described by the teachers in this study could be defined as practical and technical. This is consistent with the findings of a study within the Irish context by Hartford et al (2008).

#### 4.7 Theme 5 - Class Teachers' Views on the Support Systems that are Needed

##### When Working with Students Presenting with Challenging Behaviour

The thematic map of Theme 5 is outlined in Figure 5 and a list of codes associated with Theme 5 and are outlined in Appendix 19.

**Figure 7 - Thematic Map of Theme 5**



#### 4.7.1 Nature of supports available to teachers

Teachers' mental health and well-being has been identified as significant in enhancing their capacity to support students presenting with challenging behaviour. (Jennings et al, 2009; McLean et al, 2015; Zinsser et al, 2013). The supports that the class teachers in this study found the most beneficial were assistance from school personnel, support from parents or online support through discussion boards. The predominant support identified by all the class teachers was access to an SNA with a number of the teachers reporting that the child's placement could not be sustained without this support. The SNA was reported to fulfil a range of roles including supervision, structured withdrawal, sensory breaks, unplanned removal from the class and also one to one support in the classroom. Apart from these activities, a number of the teachers also referred to the reassurance of having another adult in the room and how challenging they found it when the SNA was not in the classroom. One of the teachers reported that they did not feel comfortable without the presence of the SNA. There was also a sense from the interviews that the SNA has responsibility for maintaining 'control' of the student when they were in the room and this allowed the teacher to continue with the class

*You really do need an extra support of an SNA I'd be very concerned for a teacher working with this child without an SNA (Int. 8, L 289)*

*I've been very lucky because an SNA has been reallocated this child without this I would have had a much tougher time and I don't think the child would have made the same progress you are just not able to give as much time to the child when you're on your own (Int. 6, L 455)*

The majority of teachers also reported that collegial support was significant. The teachers reported that they relied on colleagues for advice, to step in when they needed support or to

‘have a chat’ after school and during break times. The support was generally provided in an unstructured manner and was initiated predominantly by the class teachers in the study.

*like a chat after school in the staff room particularly with teachers who have worked with this girl well sometimes we might discuss an issue as a staff meeting and how best to respond to it but that’s it (Int. 2, L342)*

However, some of the teachers also reported that their engagement with colleagues could be negative at times and they felt their colleagues believed they were not managing the student appropriately. Two of the teachers also implied that, in facilitating the student’s ongoing placement in the mainstream setting, they were perceived as endorsing the acceptance of challenging behaviour in the school and creating a challenge for other school staff.

*Sometimes you feel that other teachers aren’t too happy with you working with this child and they feel that teachers shouldn’t have to put up with behaviour like this (Int. 10, L 273).*

*and other colleagues do not understand him they might even say you need to talk to him about something that happened in the yard but you might have done that 10 times already so it’s not understanding where things are at (Int. 6, L 148).*

There were mixed views reported on the role of the school principal. Some teachers reporting that the principal and school management were always available to support them while others reported that they felt the principal did not necessarily want to be regularly involved with the issues related to the student or they felt being judged on their professional competence.

*I have been able to go to management and this has supported me more than it might have supported the child (Int. 4, L 171).*

*The principal’s door is always open you can always ask for help (Int. 8, L 132).*

*not really from the principal she just sees the child as being bold and her solution is to suspend him and I don't agree with this because when it is over he's back again and nothing has changed (Int. 9, L 162).*

*the principal probably feels that you are grumbling about it and I understand they have other things to do (Int. 3, L 239).*

There was a sense that the role of the principal was often to provide moral or practical support in the removal of the student. There was very little evidence that the principals provided instructional leadership or encouraged the teacher to access additional CPD.

In relation to their involvement with parents, the teachers identified the importance of positive parental support as a significant contributor to their self-efficacy and confidence. However, there was little evidence that parents were actively involved in a collaborative process with school staff. The benefits of such collaboration has been highlighted in the literature (Fox et al, 2002; Garcia, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey et al, 1987).

The teachers reported that there was a general awareness among the staff in their schools that working with the student in their class was generating stress and anxiety. However, there were no school based personal stress management or mental health initiatives available to the teachers in the study. Some of the teachers had engaged in relaxation and stress management techniques in their personal lives. It is also interesting that such initiatives were implemented for the students in some of the schools. The benefits of having structured supports systems and stress management for teachers has been identified in the literature (Scanlon et al, 2013; Bond et al, 2000). It is also noteworthy that the implementation of a school wide comprehensive social and emotional learning programme for students has been found to impact positively on teacher well-being (Zinsser et al, 2016).

#### 4.7.2 Whole school support systems

The benefits of having whole school behaviour support systems in place to support teachers when addressing challenging behaviour is widely acknowledged in the literature (Richter et al, 2012; Rogers, 2006; Shearer et al, 2005). The benefits of structured support systems on the self-efficacy of individual teachers has also been acknowledged (McIntosh et al, 2011; Ross et al, 2009). However, there was no evidence of the existence of a school wide behaviour support system reported by any the teachers in this study. Some of the teachers even sought clarity on what the term meant and the only whole school systems identified were the school rules and the school's discipline policy.

*Am.. I wouldn't say so, not that I know of, not anything that is of help to me in this situation, we have a code of discipline but that's about it, each teacher has to figure it out by themselves ( Int. 9, L 232)*

*it's not something I've been made aware of ( Int. 3, L 312)*

*Well if you mean is there a policy in place to help someone like me working with this child no, the school have a discipline policy but that is no help for a child like this ( Int. 4, L 421)*

This may explain the sense of isolation reported by the teachers even though the majority had suggested that the staff in their schools were supportive and helpful.

*so you feel are your own like in another school I could have opened the door and called out to somebody there to help with the student (Int. 5, L107-108).*

The supports available to the teachers in this study could be categorized as either structured and unstructured. The interviews with the teachers would suggest that the majority of supports provided to them are unstructured with the exception of their scheduled SEN teacher and SNA time. While some of the benefits from unstructured support were identified by the teachers

(relating to the management of an unexpected escalation of challenging behaviour), the teachers reported they would appreciate having allocated time in which to consult with colleagues. The lack of structured support generated uncertainty and confusion as some of the teachers were unsure when they could go for help or if they were being overly dependent and demanding on other staff.

*On a day-to-day basis there is no consistent support there (Int. 2, L 219)*

*yes definitely it's very hit and miss at the moment and you have to go looking for help or make a fuss (Int. 10, L 267)*

Carroll (1998) found that teachers could perceive that seeking help could make them appear weak and incompetent. It also highlights a lack of coherent planning. Some of the teachers reported having incidental conversations with the SEN team regarding the management of the student but none of the teachers reported engaging in any structured systematic consultation. One teacher also reported that working in a smaller school was particularly challenging as supports were not readily available as there was no permanent SEN teacher and the principal was teaching a class.

*maybe because it's such a small school with small staff I don't have access to the same number of people as I would have had in a previous school so you feel are your own like in another school I could have opened the door and called out to somebody there to help with the student (Int. 3, L 254)*

One of the teachers commented that a school wide behaviour support system would be helpful and could provide more clarity regarding how they could access support.

*I think it would be good though, I think that might be very helpful.....Well you wouldn't feel it was just your problem and you have somewhere to go (Int. 7, L 198)*

A structured school wide behaviour support system has been identified as enhancing a school's capacity to address challenging behaviour and reducing dependency on external support systems (MacNaughton et al, 2007; Kilgallon et al, 2003). De Grauwe (2000) also highlighted the importance of managing resources more effectively rather than increasing resources. It is evident from the interviews that the individual students are accessing significant resources within the schools but it is less clear what the impact of this level of resourcing and the manner in which it is deployed is having in the individual student.

#### **4.7.3 Supports from external professionals**

In general, the class teachers had limited experience of working with external professionals in relation to the student in their class. This, in itself, is concerning, as the teachers are working with students presenting with more complex needs and who should be supported within the third level of the tiered model of support (School Support Plus, DES 2010) where it is assumed that there are external professionals involved with the student. This is particularly relevant for NEPS as only two of the students had been referred to their allocated NEPS psychologist.

The teachers who had worked with an EP from NEPS with either this student or a previous student expressed mixed views on their experiences. In some instances, they referred to the 'expert' role of the psychologist where they felt their knowledge and experience of the student was minimized or disregarded. This power differential between professionals has also been addressed in the literature (Comer, 2004). One teacher referred to a *hierarchy of knowledge* where she felt her experience and knowledge of the student was perceived as less relevant than the opinions of other professionals. Other concerns that were identified related to '*textbook recommendations*' which were perceived as not relevant to the individual student. Another teacher felt she was asked for information and to fill out questionnaires but this did not help her as a teacher.



The teachers also had mixed views on the value of professional reports as they felt many of the recommendations were too generic or did not work.

When the NEPS consultation model was described by the researcher, the vast majority of the teachers were very positive about this approach citing the ongoing support, the opportunity to problem solve with another professional and the opportunity to reflect on how things were going were particularly useful. One teacher who was currently involved in a consultation process with NEPS was very positive about the experience and reported that the fact the EP was also struggling to come up with solutions was actually very reassuring.

*yes that does seem like a much better model because then you feel more supported and you can discuss what's working and what's not working how you may change things but I think as you said you would need it regularly and then all the pressure is not a new you don't feel so much on your own and having to find all these ideas out of your head ( Int. 10, L 267)*

*well I'm involved in that process now I just started on the process now I've never experienced it before and I think it's really good I wasn't even aware of that way of working I was delighted with the kind of support I think even from the first meeting I've had somebody else sitting down and talking things to me you begin to see things from a very different perspective and even the fact that the psychologist is kind of struggling to understand what's going on and asking questions that's very reassuring and it's great to have another listening ear someone else was helping to point you in the right direction it's just nice to have time to sit down and think about the situation and ask questions and have the support its great ( Int, 7, L 367)*

One teacher expressed a negative opinion on the NEPS consultation model.

*I've just got through the process it was a very detailed process I'm not sure the psychologist took on board some of the information I was giving her so I feel more collegial support it would be more effective if the psychologist realised that the teacher has a wealth of data on the child also they have experience and practical knowledge and we have to work together rather than they coming in as experts ( Int. 5, L 421)*

When questioned further this teacher agreed it was the approach of the psychologist rather than the process itself that that she found unhelpful. While the consultation model has been evaluated positively by psychologists, teachers and parents (Larney, 2003; Nugent et al, 2014; Bramlet, 2000), a number of issues relating to training, having a shared understanding of the consultation process and the relationship between participants have been identified as key to a successful outcome (Gutkin et al, 2008; Erchul et al, 2010; Gutkin et al, 1999; Wagner, 2000).

The majority of class teachers who had engaged with other external professionals reported that this did not significantly impact on their practice or effectiveness when working with the individual student. The teachers appeared to value practical supports and suggestions which were not always provided to them. Again some teachers referred to providing information to the professional with no concrete feedback.

*I find the system quite funny there's lots of filling out questionnaires it's like you are being interviewed but no one gives you any practical support ( Int. 2, L 435)*

*I've had involvement with someone from the HSE but this was not helpful and it didn't help this child there was a lot of contradiction you should try this you should try that like one day they were here and a meeting and the child began to kick off which was a*

*great opportunity for them to see him as he was in the classroom but they didn't go down they just stayed sitting at the table ( Int. 6, L 391)*

*it was good to talk to someone outside the school but I didn't get too many new ideas so I'm not sure how good it was ( Int. 10, L 478)*

Some of the teachers also described how they had not been included in meetings with external professionals

*I know the child has seen an HSE psychologists and they have carried out assessments but I haven't heard anything back I haven't been involved and I'd really like to have been involved so I haven't had a meeting with anyone and would like to have, absolutely I feel I should have been aware of what's going on and information about the child (Int. 7, L 459)*

In relation to professional reports, the majority of the class teachers reported that they had not found them helpful or informative. They cited issues such as generic recommendations, technical language, and a diagnosis that was not particularly helpful. This is linked to concern raised in the literature on how professionals relay information and make their recommendations relevant (Hargreaves, 1996; Cain, 2015).

*getting reports that's not helpful for the teacher it's just some general suggestions ( Int. 5, L 421)*

*some are okay but others just give back what you told a professional and the diagnosis which you probably know already ( Int. 3, L 489)*

*well I suppose some of the recommendations might help. The report has not really been of any help because I didn't understand some of the language in the report I think sometimes attested by psychologists are very technical and focus on different*

*parts of the brain and the child may not be able to do certain tasks you may not read the report again for six months and it no longer makes sense to you ( Int. 9, L 327)*

Some of the teachers also reported that verbal feedback would be more helpful than a written report.

*the ability to communicate meaningfully with the author can be an issue so it would be great to have an opportunity to talk about what's in the report and ask what does this mean should I do it this way or is there a way I can do it better, communication is the key I feel ( Int. 5, L 419)*

*conversation is more important than a written report ( Int. 1, L 496)*

As already mentioned, some of the class teachers reported that the support of parents was very helpful in addressing a student's behaviour. They felt that it was important that parents engaged with school staff and were on board with the strategies they were adopting.

*And also having the parents involved is really good ( Int. 3, L 365)*

*also the parents I feel there are my side the mum is very supportive ( Int. 8, L 254)*

However, the majority of the teachers reported that they had not engaged with parents in an ongoing collaborative process. The benefits of such collaboration has been widely reported in the literature (Ingersoll & Dvortsak, 2006; Kuhn et al, 2002; Fox et al, 2002).

#### **4.8 Summary**

This chapter outlined the researcher's approach to the implementation of thematic analysis. The main themes and subthemes which were developed from the data were presented and analysed. In Chapter 5, the researcher will discuss the research findings in the context of relevant literature and the research questions.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

## **5.1 Overview**

Chapter 4 presented an analysis and interpretation of the research data. This chapter will discuss this analysis in more detail with reference to the literature review and research questions. In Sections 5.2 to 5.7 each of the research questions is discussed in the context of the analysis of the research data and literature review. Section 5.8 summarizes the chapter.

## **5.2 Teachers' Understanding of Behaviour**

*How do class teachers conceptualize challenging behaviour and their role in addressing this behaviour?*

The class teachers in this research study presented a relatively homogenous perspective on their understanding of the students' behaviour. This is not necessarily consistent with other research studies where significant variation in the opinions and beliefs of teachers have been identified (Georgiou et al, 2002; Koth et al, 2008; Newberry et al, 2008; OECD, 2009). One possible explanation for this homogeneity is the selection of participants, where all the teachers were working with students presenting with persistent challenging behaviour. It is more likely that there could be greater variation in responses in settings where the students' behaviours were less challenging. The research would suggest a range of factors may influence a teacher's perspective and beliefs on student behaviour including culture, age and experience (Ashton et al, 1986; Cheng, 1996; Coladarci, 1992; Hoy et al, 1993; Ross, 1988). However, in the context of this research study and given the homogeneity of responses, it is likely that the shared contextual experiences including the severity and persistence of the student's behaviour, working in a mainstream classroom environment and operating within similar school systems were influential factors in the development of their perspectives.

The class teachers in this study described the student's behaviour in the context of biological, psychological, cognitive and environmental factors which suggest that they are aware of the

multifactorial influences on behaviour which are consistent with the biopsychosocial model. However, consistent with the issues raised by Slee, (2015), it appears that from the perspective of the class teachers, the school environment and the role of the teacher in influencing the behaviours are minimized and sometimes overlooked. A number of factors may be considered when interpreting this perspective. Given the complexity of the student's behaviour as identified by the teachers, it is likely that they may pathologize the behaviour and perceive it as 'abnormal' and therefore focus on biological explanations for the behaviour. In relation to their attribution of the behaviour to the student's home environment, it would appear that some of the students come from unstructured and challenging family circumstances and again this could provide an 'obvious' explanation for the behaviour. From the perspective of attribution theory, the teachers attributed the student's behaviour to factors which are uncontrollable, stable and external to themselves (Weiner,1992). These attributions may be shaped by the factors already identified above, but they could also be influenced by a perceived lack of progress and the challenges presented by the student. The literature would suggest that, in such circumstances, it more likely that an external locus of control is identified (Miller et al, 1975). In the context of working with class teachers in this situation, it is important to consider their understanding of the genesis of the student's behaviour and their causal attribution of that behaviour as it has significant implications on how they respond to the student, for the strategies they adopt, and the extent to which they may feel they can intervene to impact on the student's behaviour (Castelli et al, 2015; Georgiou et al, 2002; Lucas et al, 2009).

When reading the interview transcripts and evaluating the clarity of their responses on this aspect of the inquiry, it would appear that the class teachers' focus may not be on formulating an understanding of the student's behaviour but on developing a plan to manage and contain this behaviour. This is supported by evidence in the research literature (Osher et al, 2010; Sullivan et al, 2014). The views outlined by the teachers in relation to their perception of the

discipline of psychology, and its limited value in their understanding of behaviour, raises significant challenges for educational psychologists working in schools on how they can ensure that their knowledge and skills are perceived to have value and relevance to teachers they engage with in their everyday practice.

### **5.3 Impact of Challenging Behaviour on the School Community**

*What is the perceived impact of challenging behaviour on students, school staff and school resources?*

One of the most powerful issues to emerge from the research data was the impact of working with challenging students on class teachers. It was reported to impact on their emotional and physical well-being, job satisfaction, sense of professional efficacy and professional reputation. This was evident to a greater or lesser extent in all the interviews, irrespective of teaching experience. It would appear that younger teachers felt challenged because they had a lack of experience and were still establishing themselves as professionals, while more experienced teachers felt challenged because their experience and professional skills were not perceived to be sufficient to address the current situation. The teachers described a sense of isolation and a lack of support even in schools where they described their colleagues as very supportive. The month of September was identified by all the teachers as particularly challenging. Other key factors which were reported to impact on the teachers were feelings of guilt in relation to the other students in the class and also the possible negative perception of their professional reputation with management, parents and colleagues. These findings highlight the need for more structured support systems for teachers and the development of a shared responsibility within the staff for addressing the needs of students with more complex behavioural needs.

The impact of the individual student's behaviour on the other students in the class was one of the predominant concerns of the class teachers. Some disquiet was raised regarding the safety



of other students but the main concerns for the class teachers were related to the impact on the atmosphere in the classroom, reduced time to support other students with SEN and the need to adapt their usual teaching style and interaction with students.

The impact on school management and resources was also evident. The teachers described the high level of structured support allocated to this cohort of students and also the regular demand for unscheduled and impromptu support from management and colleagues when the student's behaviour escalated. The question arises whether a more structured, coordinated approach and an evaluation of how resources are deployed might result in a more coherent response (Didden et al, 1997).

There are a number of issues which arise regarding the needs of the individual students discussed in the research study which are implicit in the research data. Are the students' emotional and behavioural needs being met or are they being 'managed' on a day to day basis as was frequently mentioned in the research? What impact has the frequent removal or isolation of the student on their emotional well-being and sense of self efficacy and how has it impacted on their academic progress and access to educational opportunities? Similar concerns have also been highlighted in the literature (Baker et al, 2008). Any evaluation of a student's progress needs to address these concerns rather than focusing solely on the increase or reduction of challenging behaviours which was evident in the interviews.

It is apparent from the research data that school staff, and especially the class teachers, feel they are constantly balancing the conflicting demands of the needs of the individual student with those of the other students in the class. It is likely that factors such as the extent to which the teachers believe they can address the student's behaviour, their attribution of the behaviour and how they are supported within the school environment, all influence their perception of

their role and their approach to intervention. It may also influence their evaluation of the appropriateness of a mainstream placement for the individual student.

#### **5.4 The Process of Selecting Interventions**

*What factors do teachers believe influenced their selection of the strategies and interventions they have adopted for individual pupils and to what extent do they feel these interventions have been effective?*

The selection of interventions by the class teachers in the study appears quite arbitrary and influenced by other teachers, previous experience and online resources. The evidence base for the interventions selected did not influence practice which is also reported in the research literature (Bryk et al, 2011; Taylor, 2013; Nelson et al, 2015) and supports the ‘research to practice’ gap identified by Walker et al (1996). Possible explanations for this phenomenon may be found in the issues raised by Hargreaves (1996) and Cain (2015) where teachers have difficulty accessing information and are not aware of the relevance of empirical evidence to practice. There is an increased use of the internet and web based resources and, while this needs to be embraced as having benefits and advantages, there is also the potential for teachers to be overwhelmed and ‘bombarded’ by strategies and programmes. There is an increasing need therefore for teachers to exercise judgement and discretion in selecting the most appropriate interventions and referral to empirical evidence could assist in this process as outlined by Regan et al (2011).

The research data suggests that teachers in the study generally adopted positive approaches when addressing challenging behaviour. They rarely employed consequences or other punitive measures with the students. This is not necessarily consistent with other research findings (Poulou et al, 2000). It would appear that the majority of the teachers had formed the view from their experience of working with the students that they did not respond to punitive measures

and these appeared to escalate rather than mitigate the student's behaviour. The removal of the student due to an escalation in behaviour was also presented in a positive light to the student in terms of the student needing 'a break' or 'time to calm down'. However, the majority of the teachers indicated that the purpose of removing of the student for either scheduled or unscheduled periods was to allow them the opportunity to continue working with the other students in the class. As suggested by Orsati et al (2012) teachers often exclude children to preserve the classroom order rather than meeting the needs of the individual student. The strategies adopted by the teachers were both proactive and reactive but more often reactive when there was a challenging incident. This is possibly indicative of a lack of structured planning and an awareness of alternative options which has also been highlighted in the literature (Maag, 2001).

In general, the teachers adopted a flexible approach to their interventions and adapted their practice if they believed it was ineffective. The majority of the interventions selected by the teachers were behaviourist in nature and there was very little emphasis on skill development, emotional regulation, or therapeutic intervention. These approaches highlight the mismatch between the students' needs and the interventions adopted as the majority of teachers had identified issues in relation to attention, anger management, social skills deficits and emotional regulation which were not addressed in the strategies they selected. It is also notable that the teachers provided attributions and motivations for behaviour which were often internal to the student but the strategies they employed focused on external controls of the student's behaviour.

The role of educational psychologists when recommending interventions is also significant. The research suggests that, despite a broad based understanding of student behaviour, the majority of their recommendations are behaviourist in nature (Miller, 1989; Frederickson et al,

2002). Some of the explanations suggested for this are that EPs tend to be pragmatic in their outlook (Simon & Burnham, 2013) and behaviourist approaches can lead to quick fix solutions which are popular among teachers. However, an over emphasis on such approaches may restrict the range of interventions and supports that may be offered to individual students.

### **5.5 Contributors and Challenges to Self-efficacy**

*How do the class teachers describe their self-efficacy and what factors do they believe contribute, maintain and challenge their self-efficacy when working with a challenging student?*

Self-efficacy has been identified as a significant factor in understanding teacher motivation, confidence and behaviour (Gibson et al, 1984; Welch, 1995). The teachers in this study generally described themselves as confident in their role as class teachers. However, addressing the behaviours of the individual student in their class had presented all the teachers with challenges to their self-efficacy. Ironically, while the teachers reported that the current academic year had been particularly difficult and demanding, the majority of the interviewees suggested that coping with this experience had possibly enhanced their self-efficacy in the longer term. This fits with Bandura's assertion that self-efficacy helps one cope in challenging situations and that completing challenging tasks can lead to persistence and increased self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). However, research would also suggest that not all teachers would have the same positive outcome and more vulnerable teachers would have difficulty coping with stressful situations (Evans & Trimble, 1986; Parkay, Greenwood, Olejnik & Proller, 1988). High self-efficacy in one area of one's professional practice is not necessarily transferred to all areas of one's profession (Welch, 1995) and this was evident in this research study where the teachers appear to have less confidence in their capacity to address the needs of the individual student than their efficacy as class teachers. The participants in this study

reported how the same factors, in differing circumstances, could either sustain or challenge their self-efficacy. These included the nature of the response from parents and colleagues, the perceived impact on the other students in class and the progress of the individual student.

While the research suggests that high self-efficacy is generally perceived as a positive attribute among teachers which can sustain their motivation in challenging situations, some issues have been identified in the literature. High self-efficacy does not necessarily guarantee competence and Emmer et al (1991) suggested that unsubstantiated high self-efficacy may prevent teachers from acknowledging deficits in their professional competence. The direct causal relationship between high self-efficacy and student outcomes has not been clearly established (Main et al, 2008). This evidence suggests that other measures such as observation and assessment of student outcomes need to be undertaken to evaluate teacher effectiveness. It is interesting that in this research study that the majority of the teachers suggested that the student's progress was an influential factor on their sense of self efficacy. However, it was not clear how that progress is measured and it would appear from an analysis of the data that progress appears to be measured in a reduction of incidents of challenging behaviour and a reduction in the disruption of classroom activities.

## **5.6 The Role of Professional Development**

*What are the class teachers' perceptions of the value of any training or CPD they have attended regarding the management of challenging behaviour?*

The majority of the teachers in this study had attended limited training in the area of challenging behaviour. The training involved short term courses which were delivered in isolation from the school environment and did not include a practical component. The teachers reported that they had found this training of limited value and they struggled to relate what they had learned to their practice. The teachers who attended these courses also suggested that the content was not

focused on the role of class teacher and was more relevant for SEN teachers. One teacher who has just completed the IYTCM course reported that the new learning, engagement in reflection with other teachers, and opportunities to practice new strategies between sessions had been a significant support in her professional practice. It is also notable that all the teachers believed that the most significant learning for them happened during their everyday classroom experiences and this was particularly true in their current situation with the student in their class. Within the context of transformative learning theory, it is the integration of new learning, practical experience and reflection that generates optimum learning experiences. However, with the exception of the IYTCM programme, such comprehensive CPD in relation to challenging behaviour is not readily available for teachers.

A key factor in the promotion of a culture of professional development and learning in a school is the role of the principal (Day et al, 2013; Lindsay & Thompson, 1997). The TALIS international report suggests that principals in Irish primary schools are particularly focused on their administrative role rather than their role as instructional leaders (OECD, 2009). The evidence from the research data suggests that it was the SEN teachers who had the main responsibility for the promotion of instructional practice and intervention within the school.

Reflection has been identified as a key component of professional development which supports effective practice (Cheetham et al, 2001; Buehl et al, 2011). It is now also being promoted in Ireland as part of initial teacher training and during the induction of newly qualified teachers (McGarr et al, 2014). However, the findings of this research study indicates that the teachers had very little opportunity for structured reflection and any reflection that took place happened on an individual basis outside of school hours. All the teachers indicated that they would value opportunities to engage in more collaboration and reflective practice but it was not part of the

school culture. Some of the teachers also suggested that the NEPS consultation model would provide an opportunity for structured reflection.

### **5.7 Support Systems Available to Teachers**

*What supports are available to the class teachers within their schools and how do they perceive the role of external professional especially NEPS psychologists?*

The need for structured, coherent support systems for class teachers working with students presenting with challenging behaviour is highlighted by the challenges experienced by the teachers in this research study. In general, the teachers felt supported by their colleagues but this support was usually provided in an unstructured manner which did not give the teachers a sense of certainty and they often reported felt isolated, overwhelmed and unsure.

An effective school wide support system for behaviour would promote evidence based practice and professional development among staff and develop structured systems for collaboration, reflection and planning within the school (Richter et al, 2012; Rogers 2006; Shearer et al, 2005). Cooper et al (2011) noted the rapid developments within the Irish education systems both in models of resourcing and the emergence of support agencies available to schools. This has created a challenge for school management in embedding these structures within the school system and in developing practice in line with new policies and structures.

This research study also highlights the need to develop a culture of self-care and stress management for teachers through the inclusion of positive mental health initiatives and support systems. Such initiatives need to be promoted and embedded by school principals and senior management. A model of supervision for teachers similar to those available for EPs would also create opportunities for reflection and a support mechanism for teachers.

Increased collaboration with parents has been identified as a support for teachers in their role in working with individual students. However, the effective management of such collaboration can be challenging in certain situations and some teachers can be apprehensive about engaging in this process as mentioned by a number of the teachers in this research study. Class teachers will need support from colleagues and training in how to engage in effective consultation to ensure positive outcomes from such collaboration.

This research study suggests that, from the teachers' perspective, their engagement with external professionals did not always generate positive outcomes. The issues identified were the need for a more consultative approach to problem solving and information sharing, the development of an increased sense of parity in the professional relationships between all participants and the generation of more accessible and relevant professional reports. Given the lack of clarity expressed by the teachers in this study regarding their engagement with external agencies, there also needs to be more effective interagency communication to ensure that there is a mutual understanding of roles and systems of working that results in better outcomes for students.

The majority of the teachers in this study reported that they would value increased collaboration with NEPS using a consultative approach regarding the student in their class. It is evident that NEPS psychologists have a significant role to play in both supporting the class teachers and in working with schools in developing their professional skills and more effective school wide systems which will enhance their capacity to meet the needs of students presenting with challenging behaviour from within their own resources. There is also a need for external professionals to reflect on how they communicate with schools to establish how their involvement can generate the best outcomes for students.



## **5.8 Summary**

This chapter discussed the relevance of the research data in the context of the research questions and literature review. The concluding chapter will summarise the key findings of the research study and its implications for the discipline of educational psychology, the education system, NEPS and other professionals supporting students. The limitations of the study will be outlined and suggestions made for further research in this area.

## **Chapter 6**

## **Conclusion**

## **Chapter 6 Conclusion**

### **6.1 Overview**

This concluding chapter provides a brief summary of the research findings in Section 6.2. Section 6.3 outlines the relevance of the research findings to the disciplines of education and psychology while Section 6.4 explores the implications for the wider education system. The limitations of the current study are discussed in Section 6.5 while suggestions for further research are made in Section 6.6. Finally, section 6.7 offers some final thoughts on the research study.

### **6.2 Summary of Research Findings**

In general, the teachers in this study attributed the student's behaviour to factors emanating from within the child or their home environment. They implied that these difficulties were stable and unlikely to change significantly irrespective of any intervention from within the school system. The teachers' main focus was on managing the student's behaviour and its impact on other students in the class. This research study highlighted the significant impact of addressing challenging behaviour on the emotional well-being of class teachers and the demands placed on other school personnel in relation to use of time and the allocation of their resources. The research study also highlighted the implications for the social, emotional and academic needs of the individual student and the challenges they experience functioning within the mainstream school environment.

The teachers in this study reported relatively high self-efficacy in relation to their competence as teachers. However, their self-efficacy in relation to managing the student in their class was lower but had improved as the year had progressed. The teachers reported that their personal qualities were key to their self-efficacy and the support of colleagues, parents and feeling they had made some progress with the student were important to sustaining their self-efficacy. The

teachers reported that stress, a feeling of isolation, the unpredictability of the student's behaviour and a lack of control in the classroom all challenged their sense of self-efficacy and confidence.

The teachers selected interventions on the basis of convenience and practicality and they also relied on their colleagues, previous experience and online resources for information on strategies and interventions. The evidence base for the interventions and approaches adopted was not a consideration. The teachers employed a mixture of reactive and proactive strategies when addressing the student's behaviour and the removal of the student on a regular basis was deemed necessary by the majority of teachers. In general, the teachers reported adopting positive approaches when working with the students and rarely employed punitive strategies. The main purpose of the interventions was to manage the student's behaviour and to allow the teachers to continue working with their class. The majority of teachers in the study reported that they had engaged in some formal planning but it was described as tentative and did not necessarily support them in their work with the student.

All the teachers in this study reported that they were not adequately prepared to meet the challenges presented by the student in their classroom. The teachers in the study had limited access to professional development in the area of challenging behaviour and some of the teachers were not sure if access to CPD could support them in their current situation. One teacher who had completed IYTCM reported that it was of significant benefit. The teachers reported that they had limited opportunity for reflection and collaboration and systems were not in place in their schools to facilitate such practices.

The majority of teachers felt supported by colleagues in their school though this support was often unstructured and incidental. None of the teachers reported that there was a whole school behaviour support system within their school. The teachers had limited contact with external

professionals including NEPS but some issues were identified regarding parity among professionals, limited access to opportunities for consultation and the accessibility and relevance of information in professional reports. The majority of the teachers were very positive about the NEPS consultation model and the majority of teachers who had engaged in this process had found it beneficial. The research also highlighted the need for increased collaboration and involvement of parents in the support of individual students.

### **6.3 Relevance of Research Findings to Educational Psychology**

The research has significant implications for the discipline of education psychology. It highlighted the different perspective and priorities of class teachers and psychologists and the need for greater awareness among psychologists of how their role is perceived by the teachers they engage with on a regular basis. It also highlighted the impact of working with a challenging student on individual teachers and other staff members. Educational psychologists are ideally placed to promote systems within schools which provide greater support to school staff – particularly those who are struggling to cope with a challenging situation.

Educational psychologists have a broad based understanding of student behaviour, yet this study suggests that the interventions they recommend are often behaviourist in nature. Recommendations should draw on a range of approaches that reflect the needs of the students and may involve additional training and input with staff on the relevance and value of these approaches (Begeny et al, 2006).

One of the key issues to emerge from this research study is the need for a whole school approach to the management of behaviour. Educational psychologists can have a key role in working at a whole school level to promote:

- instructional leadership,
- a culture of learning and professional development,

- structured systems for collaboration and reflection
- the promotion of effective planning and a review of targeted intervention for individual students.

Working at a whole school level within this context should enhance the school's capacity to address the needs of individual student presenting with challenging behaviour.

A number of other issues emerged regarding the role of education psychologists. These included the need for a greater awareness among psychologists of how they engage with school staff and parents and the need for parity of esteem and an acknowledgement of the unique knowledge, skills and perspective of all those engaged in working with the students. The value of professional reports also needs to be considered and how information and recommendations may be communicated more effectively to school staff and parents. Educational psychologists also need to reflect on how they provide training and CPD to school staff as once-off inputs – however interesting and well evaluated by the attendees - have little impact on practice and do not represent an effective means of promoting adult learning as outlined in the literature review and the experiences of the teachers in this research study.

## **6.4 Further Implications of the Research Study**

The research study has significant implications for all professionals and agencies supporting student presenting with challenging behaviour.

### **6.4.1 Implications for schools**

The following implications have been identified in relation to the school context. There is a need to

- develop whole school systems for responding to challenging behaviour

- consider the impact on the emotional well-being of individual staff and to provide structured support systems within the school environment
- promote a culture of professional development and reflective practice and opportunities for collaboration and consultation between staff, parents and other professionals.
- increase collaboration and involvement with parents
- promote the awareness of evidence based practice and more structured planning for individual students
- review the implementation of role of the SNA in the context of their impact on outcomes for the individual student
- have a greater integration of support services and collaboration between professionals to meet the needs of individual students.

#### **6.4.2 Implications for teacher training and CPD**

This research study highlights the need for teachers to have comprehensive inputs in the areas of challenging behaviour, evidence based practice and effective planning in their pre-service training. Experienced teachers – particularly those working with a student presenting with challenging behaviour – also need access to training that incorporates new learning, practical experience and reflective practice. There needs to be ongoing promotion of evidence based practice and opportunities provided for teachers to access this information with ease through professional websites or access to research journals. Teachers would benefit from access to increased opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and innovative practices such as team teaching and joint projects which could reduce their sense of isolation.

### **6.4.3 Implications for NEPS**

There are significant implications for NEPS following this research study. These include

- Ongoing promotion of the implementation of the NEPS consultation model in schools
- Ongoing roll out of the IY TCM training programme to schools and other CPD in the area of behaviour management
- More involvement at a whole school level in supporting schools with the development of school wide systems for addressing behavioural difficulties
- The need to be available to support teachers in developing comprehensive intervention plans at the beginning of the school year for students presenting with complex behavioural needs
- Promotion of more streamlined multidisciplinary working with other external agencies involved with the student.
- Promotion of the development of within school systems to address the well-being of school staff – especially for those addressing challenging behaviour

### **6.5 Limitations of the Study**

This research study sought the perspectives of class teachers working with students presenting with complex challenging behaviour which was the purpose of the enquiry. However, it would also be interesting to contrast their perceptions and practice with those of teachers working with students presenting with less challenging ‘low level’ disruptive behaviour.

This study did not include the perspectives of school principals, other class teachers, SEN staff and ancillary staff. It also did not reflect the opinions of the individual pupils, their peers or parents. It would be informative to analyse a wider range of perspectives and incorporate the findings with those of the class teachers in this study.



The research did not include observations of the teachers or an evaluation of the effectiveness of their practice which could provide further insight into the effectiveness of their interventions and the nature of their interactions with the students. It would also have been interesting to evaluate the possible impact of a structured intervention such as a consultation process with a NEPS EP or the development of a school wide behaviour support system.

## **6.6 Opportunities for Further Research**

There are a number of opportunities for further research to consolidate and enhance the information gathered in this research project.

- Analysis and reflection on the perspectives of other school staff including principals, SEN staff and SNAs.
- Analysis and reflection on the perspectives and experiences of the individual pupil presenting with challenging behaviour.
- Evaluation of the impact of the implementation of the NEPS consultation model with class teachers.
- Implementation and evaluation of the impact of a school wide behaviour support system on the perspectives and practice of class teachers.

## **6.7 Final Thoughts**

This research study provided the researcher with a unique and informative insight into the beliefs, experiences and perceptions of class teachers who are working with students presenting with significant challenging behaviour. It provided an original insight into the factors that inform and motivate teachers when selecting behavioural interventions and the perceived effectiveness of the strategies adopted. It addressed issues that frequently arise in EP practice but are not always fully understood from the perspective of the class teachers. It

underlined the complexity of addressing challenging behaviour and the challenges experienced by class teachers in meeting the needs of individual students while providing a quality education to the other students in their class. The study provided a greater insight into these challenges and the supports and structures that are needed at the individual, class and whole school level to support both teachers and students. The commitment and motivation of the teachers to support the students in their class in challenging circumstances was evident in the interviews with the class teachers. This research study has significant implications for how the whole school system operates in relation to developing its capacity to meet the needs of these individual students while also continuing to provide support to the wider school population. This research study identified how a wide range of measures including whole school support systems, evidence based practice, comprehensive targeted CPD, structured and systematic planning and supports for individual teachers need to be developed to facilitate this process. The research also identified significant challenges and opportunities for NEPS as a service designated to supporting school staff in this process. With an increase in the reported prevalence of challenging behaviour within mainstream schools, there is a greater necessity for all organisations to work in a more co-ordinated, informed and systematic manner in their endeavours to meet this challenge.

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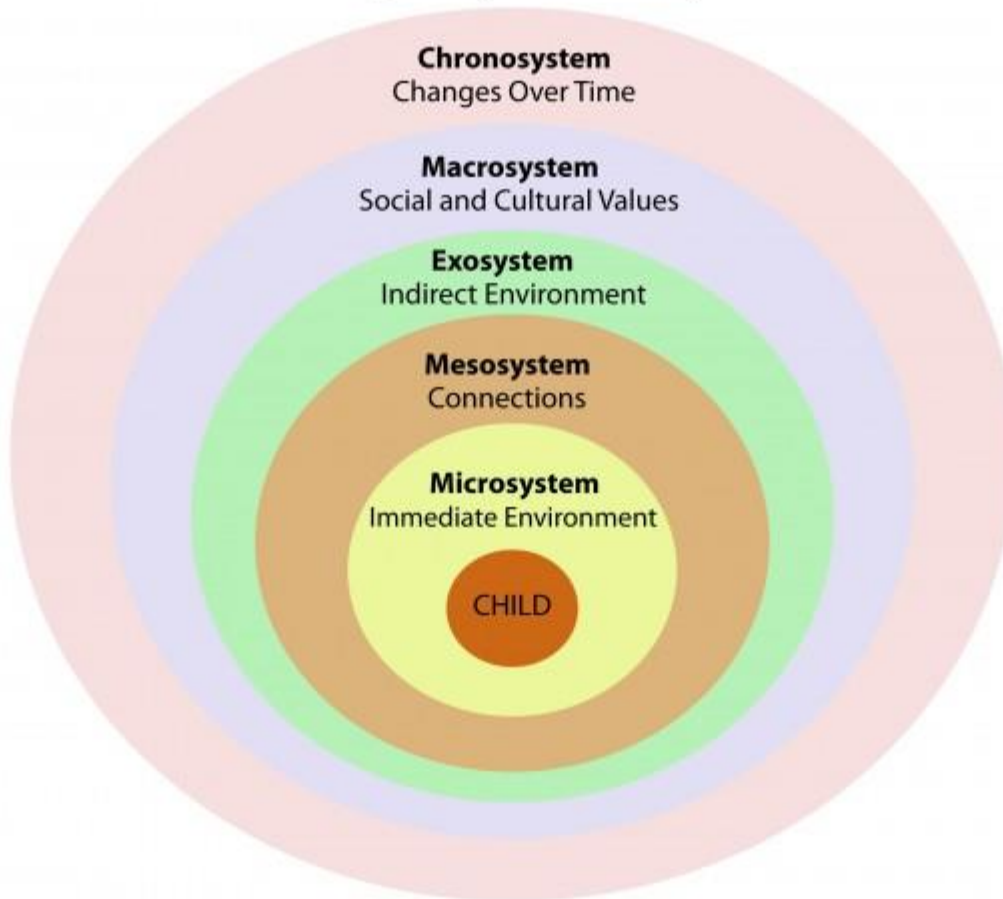
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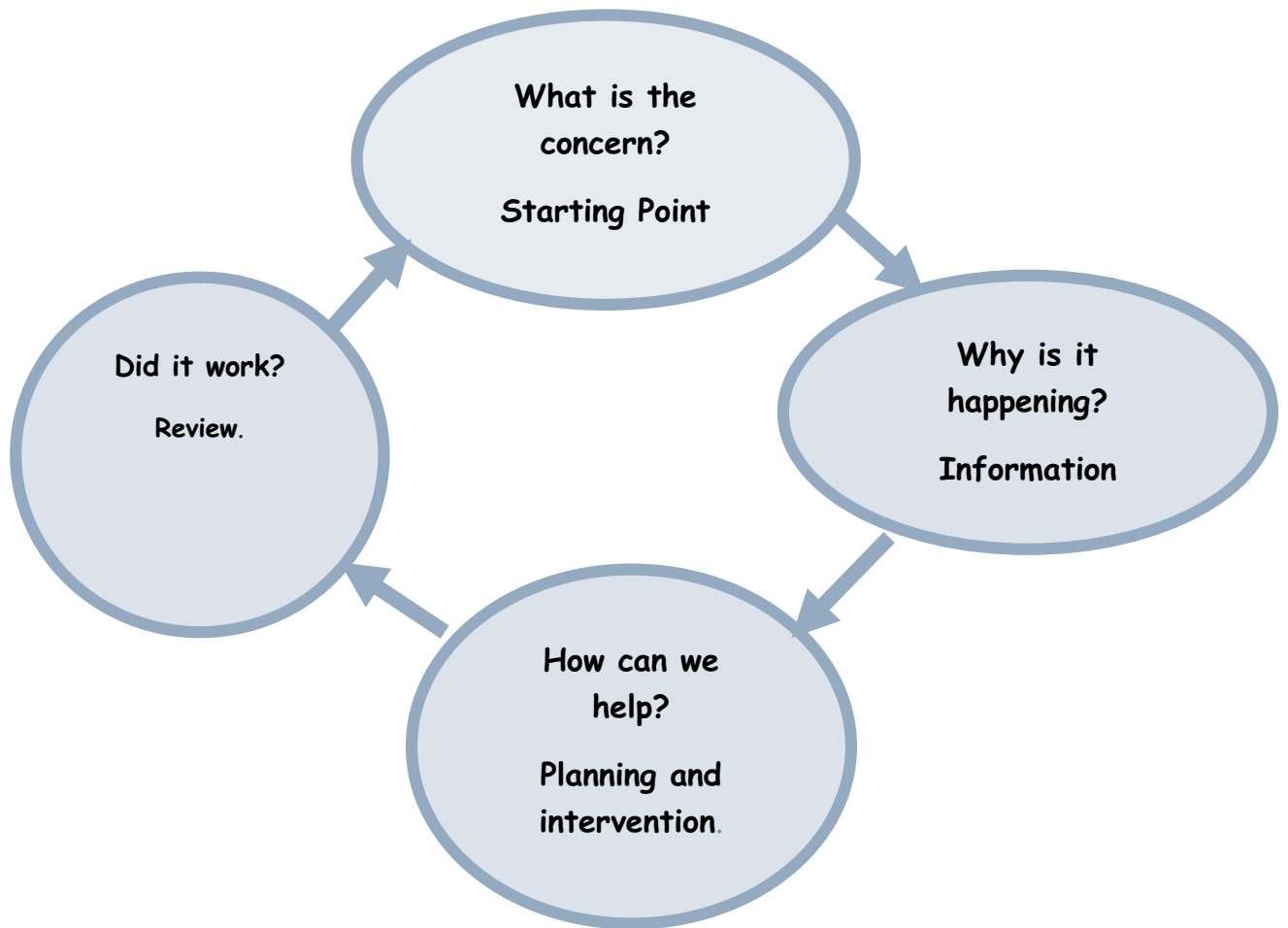
# **APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model

### Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



## Appendix 2 NEPS Problem Solving Model





### APPENDIX 3 - Letter Sent to Principals

NEPS,  
Gratton House,  
Dublin Road,  
Portlaoise,  
Co. Laois  
Date

Dear Principal,

My name is Anne O’Leary. I am an Educational Psychologist with NEPS working in the ..... area and I am currently pursuing a Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology with the University of East London. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in a study which I am currently undertaking.

My research project is entitled ‘*An exploration of teachers’ conceptualization of emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and what factors influence the strategies and interventions they adopt when working with individual pupils diagnosed with EBD*’. The aims of this research project are

- a) To establish what interventions are being adopted by teachers when working with students allocated resource teaching hours following a diagnosis of EBD
- b) To explore teachers’ understanding of behavioural difficulties
- c) To explore their awareness of psychological theories in relation to behaviour
- d) To investigate the link between their practice and theory
- e) To identify the teachers’ perceived training needs in relation to EBD

You have been contacted as your school was randomly selected as your school has been allocated individual resource teaching hours on the basis of having a student with EBD and it is in the geographical area that I have selected for this research study.

Participation in this research project will involve an interview with a class teacher working with a student assessed with EBD in their class. It is envisioned that the interview will take place in your school during the coming month at a time convenient to the teacher. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. It will be taped to ensure that I record all the information provided. There will be no personal details included on the tape of either the student, the teacher or the school. The tapes and transcriptions of these interviews will be stored securely for the duration of the research and destroyed following completion of the project.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and at the discretion of each teacher who is approached to participate. Teachers may decide to withdraw from the interview at any time without any obligation to give a reason for this decision. All the information gathered will be stored anonymously, treated confidentially and the findings will be reported in a manner which will not allow any of the students, teachers or the schools involved in the study to be identified.

Should you decide to participate in this study, I will visit the school to discuss participation in the research in more detail with the class teacher to provide additional information, answer any questions and request their consent.

I will ring you during the coming week to clarify if there is a teacher in your school that meets my inclusion criteria, to answer any questions and to discuss your views on participating in the research.

If you have any queries regarding this research you may contact me personally at ..... or at the above address. Alternatively you may contact the Secretary of the University Research Ethics Committee, Ms Debbie Dada, Admissions and Ethics Officer, Graduate School, University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD (Tel 020 8223 2976, Email: d.dada@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you

Yours sincerely

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Anne O'Leary

## APPENDIX 4 - Information Note for Class Teachers

NEPS,  
The Maudlins,  
Naas,  
Co. Kildare  
Date

Dear Teacher,

My name is Anne O'Leary. I am an Educational Psychologist with NEPS working in the ..... area and I am currently pursuing a Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology with the University of East London. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in a study which I am currently undertaking.

My research project is entitled '*An exploration of teachers' conceptualization of emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and what factors influence the strategies and interventions they adopt when working with individual pupils diagnosed with EBD*'. The aims of this research project are

- a) To establish what interventions are being adopted by teachers when working with students allocated resource teaching hours following a diagnosis of EBD
- b) To explore teachers' understanding of behavioural difficulties
- c) To explore their awareness of psychological theories in relation to behaviour
- d) To investigate the link between their practice and theory
- e) To identify the teachers' perceived training needs in relation to EBD

You have been contacted as your school was randomly selected as your school has been allocated individual resource teaching hours on the basis of having a student with EBD and it is in the geographical area that I have selected for this research study.

Participation in this research project will involve a one to one interview with me which will take approximately 45 minutes. It will be taped to ensure that I record all the information provided. There will be no personal details included on the tape of either the student, the teacher

or the school. The tapes and transcriptions of these interviews will be stored securely for the duration of the research and destroyed following completion of the project.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and at your discretion. You may decide to withdraw from the interview at any time without any obligation to give a reason for this decision. All the information gathered will be stored anonymously, treated confidentially and the findings will be reported in a manner which will not allow any of the students, teachers or the schools involved in the study to be identified. Should you decide to participate in the study, the interview will take place at a time and date convenient for me and I may withdraw from this interview at any time without obligation. I will visit the school in the coming weeks to discuss participation in the research in more detail, to answer any questions you may have and to request your consent.

If you have any queries regarding this research you may contact me personally at (087) 4158855 or at the above address. Alternatively you may contact the Secretary of the University Research Ethics Committee, Ms Debbie Dada, Admissions and Ethics Officer, Graduate School, University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD (Tel 020 8223 2976, Email: [d.dada@uel.ac.uk](mailto:d.dada@uel.ac.uk))

Thank you

Yours sincerely

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Anne O’Leary (Educational Psychologist)

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## **APPENDIX 5 - Teacher Consent Form**

### **CONSENT FORM**

**I am interested in participating in an individual interview as part of your research project. I understand that the interview will be recorded and that all the information gathered will be stored anonymously, treated confidentially and the findings will be reported in a manner which will not allow any of the students, teachers or the schools involved in the study to be identified. I understand that the interview will take place at a time and date convenient for me and I may withdraw from this interview at any time without obligation.**

**Name \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_**

## **APPENDIX 6 Pilot Interview Schedule**

### **Pilot Interview Schedule**

#### **Introduction**

How long have you been working in this school?

What class are you teaching?

#### **Section 1 Understanding of behaviour**

Can you describe the student's behaviour in your class?

What is your understanding of why these behaviours have occurred?

What do you think led you to that understanding?

Did you study psychology as part of your undergraduate degree?

Has any psychological theory influenced your understanding of the students behaviour?

Did you find this beneficial?

What do you think of the role of psychology working with students with challenging behaviour?

Do you feel the students behaviours can be changed?

How much can the student influence their behaviour?

How much can teachers/school influence the student's behaviour?

Is a mainstream class an appropriate placement for children like your student?

#### **Question 2 - Self-efficacy**

I am interested in self-efficacy

I am wondering how you feel about your self-efficacy in relation to this student?

where do you think your self-efficacy comes from?

How could it be developed?

What do you think might challenge your self-efficacy?

### **Question 3 Selection of interventions**

Could you tell me some of the strategies interventions you are using with this student?

What do you think influenced you to select these interventions?

How do you feel about the current interventions you are using?

Would you be aware of the psychological underpinnings of these interventions?

What might influence you to change your interventions?

How did you plan for working with this student?

Do you have a written behaviour plan?

How was it developed?

Who was involved in developing the plan?

Did you find this helpful?

### **Section 4 Learning**

I'm interested in how you think learning happens for you at this stage of your career?

do you think time you have to stop and reflect on your practice?

would this be helpful?

Are teachers generally encouraged to reflect on their practice?

Have you done any additional training since you qualified?

was this helpful?

is there any training you feel would be helpful in this situation?

do you think teachers are prepared to work with children like the student in your class?

can they be prepared?

### **Section 5 - Support Systems**

Can I ask what supports have you found most helpful this year?

Is there any other supports you would like to be available to you?

Is there a whole school approach to managing challenging behaviour in this school?

Have you any experience of working with a NEPS Psychologist?

Did you find this helpful?

Have you experience of engaging in the NEPS consultation model?

Do you think this approach is (would be) helpful?

Have you worked with any other professionals in relation to this student or any other student?

### **Conclusion**

Is there any other issues you would like to raise on you experience of working with this student?

Thank you very much for your time



## **APPENDIX 7 – Final Interview Schedule**

### **Final Interview Schedule**

#### **Introduction**

How long have you been working as a class teacher?

#### **Section 1 Conceptualization of behaviour**

Can you describe the student in your class?

What is your understanding of why he is behaving this way?

What do you think led you to that understanding?

Did you study psychology as part of your undergraduate degree?

Has this been helpful in understanding this student?

Has psychology any relevance when you are working with students with challenging behaviour?

Do you feel it's possible to change this student's behaviour?

Is a mainstream setting appropriate for this student?

#### **Section 2 Selection of interventions**

Could you tell about the strategies/interventions you are using with this student?

Where did you get the ideas for these interventions?

I am interested to hear how you decided on the interventions that you use and what led you to these decisions?

Do you feel your current interventions are working?

Would you be aware of the evidence base behind the approaches you are using?

### **Question 3 Self-efficacy**

I am interested in self-efficacy which is how confident and competent you feel in your ability to carry out your role as a teacher

I am wondering how you feel about your self-efficacy in relation to this student?

how do you feel about your self-efficacy as a teacher in general?

where do you think your self-efficacy comes from?

What do you think might challenge your self-efficacy

### **Section 3 Planning**

How did you plan for working with this student?

Do you have a written behaviour plan?

How was it developed?

Who was involved in developing the plan?

Did you find this helpful?

### **Section 4 Learning**

I'm interested in how you think learning happens for you at this stage of your career?

do you think time you have to stop and reflect on your practice?

would this be helpful?

Are teachers generally encouraged to reflect on their practice?

Have you done any additional training since you qualified?

was this helpful?

is there any training you feel would be helpful in this situation?

do you think teachers are prepared to work with children like the student in your class?

can they be prepared?

### **Section 5 - Support Systems**

can I ask what supports have you found most helpful this year?

is there any other supports you would like to be available to you?

Is there a whole school approach to managing challenging behaviour in this school?

### **Section 6 - External professionals**

Have you any experience of working with a NEPS Psychologist?

Did you find this helpful?

NEPS have a consultation model that involves the psychologist observing the student and meeting with the relevant teachers and parents at regular intervals to problem solve around the student's behaviour

Do you think this approach is (would be) helpful?

Have you worked with any other professionals in relation to this student or any other student?

How did you find this experience?

Have you read professional reports in relation to a student in you class?

Did you find these helpful?

## **Conclusion**

Is there any other issues you would like to raise on you experience of working with this student?

Finally, I'd just like to ask you about your experience of doing this interview?

Thank you very much for your time

## **APPENDIX 8    Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)**

### **Phase Description of the process**

1. Familiarising yourself with your data: Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes: Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report: The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

## **APPENDIX 9 : Sample Interview**

### **Interview LN**

**How long have you been working as a teacher?**

This is my fifth year teaching

**Can you describe the child in your class?**

He gets very easily frustrated if things don't go his way or if he is questioned

He can be very aggressive and stubborn,

he will always do the opposite of what you want him to do

he's very temperamental, he gets very angry very quickly

he is also very anxious.

He will hit other children, the SNA or myself.

He shouts out in class all the time, and he calls out names

**Okay and what is your understanding of why he is behaving like this?**

I haven't come to a proper conclusion,

he's very inconsistent,

at the moment it looks like it's what he wants and he wants it now,

I suppose it's putting two and two together and understanding that if he doesn't get his own way he will get upset,

Am .. like if you think he is going to get upset if he doesn't want to do something tell him he will get a reward after

if he doesn't want to do something he won't do it, things have to be on his terms, if they're not on his terms he gets very angry

**and have you any thoughts on why he behaves like this?**

I don't know really... we didn't get to any understanding why he is like this,

I have had meetings with his mam to try and figure out what is going on at home,

I suppose things are a bit chaotic at home,

he lives with his mother for part of the week, and his dad for another part of the week, and to be honest, we feel they both have a lot of issues, so their parenting ability wouldn't really be the best, I think there are a lot of inconsistencies at home

we thought it was because he wasn't getting his own way, but there is more going on than that because he is getting really upset, so there is more going on with him,

and we have noticed that he has problems with his balance, and his gross motor skills aren't great he is very.. kind of clumsy

**Okay.. and do you feel that it is possible to change this child's behaviour?**

at the start of the year I was all guns blazing and I thought definitely yes, but now I feel no, it's very difficult

I'm getting much better at knowing how to deal with him, and knowing what works, so I know now that you can't push things on him, that you have to give him time to do what you ask, and he has to feel like he's winning some of the time so I'm managing him better

I've learned that if I challenge him this takes time from the other children, so I ignore some behaviour so I can get on with the work

I let him get away with things in order to benefit the whole class, but that is only so that I can get on with my class but no, I'd say we haven't been able to change the behaviour

**so am I right in saying that you feel you are getting better at managing his behaviour rather than his behaviour changing?**

That's it exactly

**And do you think a mainstream setting is appropriate for this student?**

Yes.. well... I'm not certain, like I think he is he's very bright.. and he can participate in things when he is in good form, there maybe things every day that he doesn't do but overall I think he is learning a little bit

I suppose sometimes as well because his behaviour is not so good and the others know this and can take advantage of this it might not always be fair on him in the current placement

**So do you feel he is aware that his behaviour is different?**

Yes, I think he feels that the other children see him differently, and that is hard on him because they might make comments about his behaviour

**Right – and would you have studied psychology as part of your undergraduate training?**

Yes, we did, we had a module on psychology as part of our training

**And I am wondering if you feel this has any relevance for you when working with this student?**

mmm... I don't know, you see I don't know if you can really understand him

the best way with him is very much trial and error

he's one way one day and a different way another day so you can't really plan for that

**and do you think that any psychological theory would help in understanding this child?**

no .. I don't think any psychological theory we did is of any benefit to the real-world situation, and anyway he is so inconsistent that it makes it difficult to apply any theory to the way he behaves

**and I'm wondering if anything you studied in psychology has helped you when planning how to work with this student?**

Well... to be honest.. not really, see the thing with psychology and college, well it's not until you're in the class that you can put it into practice, each child is different so the things you learned in college will not work with all children, you are given strategies but they are not enough because they don't always work

**could you tell me about the interventions you are using at the moment?**

Okay.. first of all he has access to an SNA, which is very important, she helps him take turns and interact better with his peers, she also takes him out to give me a break

**Okay and are you using any other strategies you are using?**

mm.. we're using a signal in the yard.. he gets a five-minute warning that he has to line up

and also a warning that something he likes is coming to an end

also ignoring some behaviour

and removing him from the class when he is getting agitated

**And how do you feel that these interventions are working?,**

Well that's hard to say.., it differs from day to day, I feel they are working to some extent, but some days nothing seems to work with him, and you need to remove him from the class just to get on with your work

**I'm interested to hear how you have decided on the interventions that you use and what might have led you to these decisions?**

Mmm... I suppose by a process of elimination, like trying something and then if that doesn't work trying something different, like we tried things like timers and stickers but these didn't work so I stopped using them and then you have to look for something else

**and where did you get the ideas for these interventions?**

mmm... I'm not sure.. the Twinkl website, other teachers giving me advice that's been helpful I don't know where else really

**and would you have considered the research evidence behind the approaches you use?**

probably not.. no definitely not consciously.. ,so it's just about what works

**and what do you think would influence you to change your interventions?**

if his behaviour became more consistent and predictable then we might change our approach but we'll keep going with what we have as long as they work

I also might ignore less if I felt his behaviour had improved then I would follow up on more behaviours that I ignore now



or I would stop using something if I felt his behaviour was improving

**I am interested in self-efficacy which is how confident and competent you feel in your ability to carry out your role as a teacher**

**I am wondering how you feel about your self-efficacy in relation to this student?**

Well for example, one day I was on my own and he started acting out, he was shouting at me and spitting at me,

I was there with the children on my own, I had no SNA, I really panicked, I didn't know what to do, my confidence was totally knocked, I had to send two children for the principal because it hadn't happened before I didn't know how to react

but after this happened, then I had time to think about what else I might have done, so I probably felt a little better about it

you just have to say that it's not a personal attack on me, this is the child, then it doesn't feel so bad, and now, that we have procedures in place that are working better, so I feel more confident but September was really difficult I felt really overwhelmed

**so you feel having procedures in place helps your confidence?**

certainly

**and how do you feel about your self-efficacy as a teacher**

I'd say pretty good I think I am a good teacher and I'm well able to manage a class and I have a good relationship with the children

**and where do you think your self-efficacy comes from?**

well I suppose.. (laugh) that's a hard one mm.. I suppose you would have to have a certain amount of confidence, I suppose because I didn't start my career as a teacher I had some life experience, so I was a more confident person anyway, and that's important, maybe also when you meet parents and they make very positive remarks on how you are working with the child

From success I think.. yeah I definitely think so, and even working through the failures, like I had a reward chart that didn't work because it was on a weekly basis, but then I changed it to a daily basis, and it was much better, and I felt confident that I had been able to change it to a system that worked better

**so the fact that you had learned from a failure was important?**

exactly

**anything else that impacts on your self-efficacy?**

well .. as I said, I suppose I am a pretty confident person, and I know I am a good teacher, and usually I am well able to manage my class

**what do you think might challenge your self-efficacy?**

I suppose if nothing was working, if his behaviour was bad every single day, like if there were incidents. serious incidents, five days in a row, and nothing was working, and the other children were being disrupted, and no learning was happening, and they were being affected, that would be very difficult,

like now I feel they are kind of getting used to him, and they ignore a lot of what goes on, and so definitely, if it was affecting their work, that would affect my confidence really badly, if nothing was working, no matter what you had set up, nothing was working and you had gone down every path you could think of,

that would erode your confidence, or if you are working with difficult parents , if things weren't working you would feel a failure,

you need to be confident, so that when things do go wrong it doesn't have that major effect on you, I think experience is good as well, so for example now at the end of the year I can see all they have learnt so you hope that will happen again next year

Also well.. if somebody told you you were not doing well, and you thought things were going fine, like the principal might say you're not dealing with this child well enough - now that wouldn't happen here- but it could happen in another school

### **Anything else?**

Not really, just if I felt nothing was working, and I didn't have strategies in place

### **Can you tell me a little of how you plan for working with this student?**

Well, I work with the resource teacher, and we talk about strategies, and what is working, and what new things we might try

### **Do you find this helpful?**

Yes, definitely, its great to have that support, like other teachers also know what this boy is like, and they will help out if they can, and they understand, like one day at the beginning of the year, he kicked me and hurt me and I was really upset, another teacher came in and took the class so I could go up to the staff room

### **Do you have a set time to meet with the resource teacher?**

No, not really, we just chat at break time and after school, it depends on how things are going with him, we talk more if things are not going too well

### **Do you think it would be helpful if you had more structured times to meet?**

Yes, yes I think it would, because then you are just not waiting for things to go wrong

### **And do you have a behaviour plan in place for this student?**

No, we don't have a specific plan.. no.. we have a yard book and an incident book, I know what I'm doing but maybe it should be written down if I'm not around and somebody else has to take over

### **do you think there would be any benefit in having a formal written plan?**

Well, I suppose as I said, for anyone else to see what we were doing, to write down the strategies

**have you ever written such a plan for another student?**

No, I've never had to do one

**Is there a whole school approach to managing challenging behaviour in this school?**

Am..no, I wouldn't say so..like no.. well we have school rules but that's it, each teacher works with their own class. They talk to the principal if they have a problem, and she tries to help them, and senior teachers will try to help and give advice

**I'm interested in how you think learning happens for you at this stage of your career?**

mmm... hadn't thought about that .. learning happens definitely through listening to all the other teachers particularly older.. I mean more senior teachers who have more experience

and also some of the newer teachers just out of training because they have loads of new ideas teamwork is great, we have a Senior Infant team that plan together and we help each other and we plan together

we don't really do any particular CPD unless summer courses or Croke Park hours

I use the Twinkl website a lot, you get a lot of ideas and suggestions on that

and we also observed teachers in another class when they were using a particular technique, that was really good

but I think that's the biggest thing is learning from other teachers

**do you think you have time to stop and reflect about how you learn?**

no.. don't think so really, I suppose when we ... no I don't really think so

**and would this be helpful?**

yes I think so

to have time to do that would be great, I know every class is different but in a case like this it would be important because there is a lot to think about

maybe at the end of the year you might think of how things worked and changing something or introducing new things that worked

I suppose as you go along you learn by experience, like the same things will not work for the same class level 'cause classes are different experiencing different classes and different children helps you learn

**Are teachers generally encouraged to reflect on their practice?**

No, not really, you just get on with it

**Have you done any additional training since you qualified?**

Am.. No.., not really, I haven't done any training

in the school some teachers have done training and shared ideas with us

we also had afternoons like Croke Park hour when someone might come in and talk about something for an hour, a bit like college where they would suggest some strategies

**was this helpful?**

mm.. I'm not sure, at the time you think I know all that, then when you get to the classroom you are not really sure what to do

**is there any training you feel would be helpful in this situation?**

well I suppose having on more ideas on strategies you might use but I am not sure how you would get that

**do you think teachers are prepared to work with children like the student in your class?**

no definitely not

**can they be prepared?**

Well.. I suppose that's difficult as each child is so different, but I think if you knew about all the different strategies then you could try different ones and see if they worked

**Okay.. can I ask what supports have you found most helpful?**

a behavioural therapist came in last year to help the teacher work with this boy and that was really helpful, and we are still using some of the strategies she suggested, like so I think a behaviour therapist could come into me now and explain how some strategies could be used that would be great

**what else have you found supportive?**

the SNA definitely. she works very well. she does everything she is asked, so if he am.. needs time out, and I can't leave the classroom, it's important that she is there to give him time out, and I find it most difficult the hour that she is not there, and it's just for one hour that she is not there and I'm on my own with him

and I think he must know that she is not there and he can be very difficult at that time

senior members of staff have been very good, they take him out sometimes

sometimes he just needs to be out of the room, and when he comes back in he is a different child

**is there any other supports you would like to be available to you?**

Am ..he gets play therapy, and only very few children have access to that and a special accommodation has been made for him, so that'd be something that would not normally be available, I think it should be available to any child like this boy

**so you think children should have access to therapies in the school?**

Yes, I think children like this boy, they should have access to therapy

**Any other supports**

Just that there is someone there for you

**Have you contact with any other professionals in relation to this student?**

No, not me this year

**Have you had any experience of working with a NEPS psychologist**

No.. not up to now

**NEPS have a consultation model that involves the psychologist observing the student and meeting with the relevant teachers and parents at regular intervals to problem solve around the student's behaviour**

**Do you think this approach would be helpful?**

that would be a great help, even just reassurance that you're doing it the right way

like even for yourself because you're not sure what you're doing here, so somebody to offer reassurance that you're on the right track would be great

and to make suggestions that might be tried

and then if things don't work out and you have to go back to the drawing board you don't feel so bad, because it's just not you that's not doing the right thing

it's just because the situation is so difficult then you don't feel that you are failing, and you feel that somebody is there with you and coming up with ideas

**Finally, I'd just like to ask you how you felt about the interview**

I really enjoyed this (laugh).. like you were saying about reflection and how I learn, I wouldn't have thought those things through before, like you don't really have time in the day to think about things and maybe you should set aside time, yet it is only now talking things through with you, it has been really good and it even puts the whole thing in context for me

**Thank you so much for your time**

## **APPENDIX 10 - Ethics Application and Approval**

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

### **APPLICATION FOR THE APPROVAL OF A RESEARCH PROGRAMME INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS**

Please read the Notes for Guidance before completing this form. If necessary, please continue your answers on a separate sheet of paper: indicate clearly which question the continuation sheet relates to and ensure that it is securely fastened to the report form.

**1. Title of the programme: Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology**

**Title of research project (if different from above):**

**An exploration of teachers' conceptualization of emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and what**

**factors influence the strategies and interventions they adopt when working with individual pupils**

**diagnosed with EBD.**

**Name of researcher : Ms Anne O'Leary**

**Nature of researcher : student**

**If "others" please give full details:**

**Student number: u0517296**

**Email: anne\_oleary@neps.gov.ie**

**2. Name of person responsible for the programme: Anne O'Leary**

**Status: Student**

**Name of supervisor: Dr Sharon Cahill**

**Status: Course Tutor**

**3. School: School of Psychology Department/Unit:**

**University of East London**

**4. Level of the programme:**

**Postgraduate (Professional Doctorate)**

**5. Number of:**

**(a) researchers (approximately): One**

**(b) participants (approximately): 99**

**6. Nature of participants (general characteristics, e.g University students, primary school children, etc):**

**Primary school principal teachers Primary school class teachers Primary school resource teachers**

**7. Probable duration of the research:**

**from (starting date): April 2011 to (finishing date): June 2011**

**8. Aims of the research including any hypothesis to be tested:**

**The aims of the research is a) To establish what interventions are being adopted by the participants when working with students allocated resources following a diagnosis of EBD b) To explore the participants understanding of behavioural difficulties c) To explore their awareness of psychological theories in relation to behaviour d) To investigate the link between their practice and theory e) To identify the teachers' perceived training needs in relation to EBD**

**The proposed research questions are**

**1) What is the current practice in supporting pupils who have been allocated individual resource teaching hours following a diagnosis of EBD? 2) What factors do teachers believe influenced the selection of the strategies and intervention they have adopted for individual pupils?. 3) What is the teachers' awareness of the most prevalent psychological theories in relation to understanding behaviour and have these impacted on the selection of the interventions they have adopted?**

**9. Description of the procedures to be used (give sufficient detail for the Committee to be clear about what is involved in the research). Please append to the application form copies of any instructional leaflets, letters, questionnaires, forms or other documents which will be issued to participants:**

The proposed target group to be selected for phase one of the research are the range of teachers who have responsibility for supporting pupils assigned hours on the basis of a diagnosis of EBD in their schools.

Class teachers, resource teachers and principal teachers will be included in the research as each of these have their own unique and distinctive role in supporting these pupils in relation to both policy and practice.

The schools targeted for this research project are based in the geographical area of North Kildare, Ireland and include a mix of schools in relation to pupil gender (boys/girls/co-ed), school size and schools designated as urban, rural and disadvantaged. There are 51 primary schools in this area and 33 of these schools have been allocated additional resources for individual pupils under the category of 'emotional and behavioural difficulties'. All of these 33 schools will invited to participate in this research project. It is hoped the project will involve a minimum of three participants from each school (one class teacher, one resource teacher and one school principal)

A self designed questionnaire will be used in phase one of the research. The questionnaire will be developed by the researcher as there was no suitable instrument available which would address the research questions. The questions asked will require a variety of responses including agreement/disagreement, multiple choice, Likert scales, placing items in rank order of importance and answering direct questions (see Appendix 1). There will also be an opportunity for respondents to provide additional information or comments for a number of the questions. The postal questionnaire will be accompanied by a letter outlining the nature and purpose of the research. It will inform participants that data will not have any personal identifiers and it will include information on how data will be stored and destroyed Having designed the questionnaire a pilot study will be undertaken with a sample of 5 respondents including a principal teacher, 2 class teachers and 2 resource teachers working in schools in the researcher's own geographical area. Verbal consent will be sought for these participants and the nature and purpose of the pilot study will be explained The data collected will be analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social sciences (SPSS).

The second phase of the research will involve open structured interviews. Five class teachers, five resource teachers and five school principals will be randomly selected from phase one of the research and verbal consent will be sought to participate in an interview and have the content recorded for research purposes. The researcher will design an interview schedule involving the key areas to be addressed and use a set of primer questions to generate conversation (see Appendix 2).

The interviews will be transcribed and analysed using inductive thematic analysis. This involves reviewing the data collected and identifying the recurring themes which occur in the text. The researcher will also reflect on the language used by the respondents identifying emotively loaded words which may give important clues to attitudes and beliefs of the respondents



**10. Are there potential hazards to the participant(s) in these procedures? NO**

**If yes: (a) what is the nature of the hazard(s)?**

**(b) what precautions will be taken?**

**11. Is medical care or after care necessary? NO**

**If yes, what provision has been made for this?**

**12. May these procedures cause discomfort or distress? NO**

**If yes, give details including likely duration:**

**13. (a) Will there be administration of drugs (including alcohol)? NO**

**If yes, give details:**

**(b) Where the procedures involve potential hazards and/or discomfort or distress, please state what previous experience you have had in conducting this type of research:**

**14. (a) How will the participants' consent be obtained? During phase one of the research a letter will be issued to targeted participants along with the research questionnaire. This letter will describe the nature of the research and how the data collected will be used, stored and destroyed. It will also assure participants that their identity will remain confidential. During phase two of the research verbal consent will be sought for participants to participate in a recorded interview. They will be assured that their identity will remain confidential to the researcher and that all records of the interview will be destroyed following successful submission of the thesis. They will be assured that they can cease the interview at any time.**

**(b) What will the participants be told as to the nature of the research?**

**The participants for phase one will be informed that the research is being carried out to fulfil the requirements for the Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational and child Psychology at the University of East London. The purpose of the research is to describe current practice in Irish schools in supporting pupils diagnosed with EBD. The research project also intends to report on teachers' level of satisfaction with their current practice and to elicit their perceived training needs in this area.**

**Participants in phase two of the research will be told that they have been randomly selected from phase one participants to engage in an interview with the researcher. The purpose of the interview is to get a more detailed account from teachers on the issues raised in the questionnaire and to provide them with an opportunity to raise related issues that were not addressed in phase one of the research.**

**15. (a) Will the participants be paid? NO**

(b) If yes, please give the amount: £ (c) If yes, please give full details of the reason for the payment and how the amount given in 16 (b) above has been calculated (i.e. what expenses and time lost is it intended to cover):

16. Are the services of the University Health Service likely to be required during or after the research? NO

If yes, give details:

17. (a) Where will the research take place? Phase one of the research involves a postal questionnaire and will not involve direct contact with participants Phase two will take place in the school where the participants work

(b) What equipment (if any) will be used? A Dictaphone to record interviews

(c) If equipment is being used is there any risk of accident or injury? NO

If yes, what precautions are being taken to ensure that should any untoward event happen adequate aid can be given:

18. Are personal data to be obtained from any of the participants? YES

If yes, (a) give details: The following issues will be raised in the postal questionnaire. The age range of participants, their teaching experience and qualifications, and if working with students with EBD has had a personal impact on these teachers.

(b) state what steps will be taken to protect the confidentiality of the data?

Questionnaires will be coded and will not have any personal identifiers All data, notes and recordings will be stored in a secure locked cabinet for the duration of the project. Any information stored on computer will not contain personal or school identifiers and will be protected by the researcher's password

(c) state what will happen to the data once the research has been completed and the results written-up. If the data is to be destroyed how will this be done? How will you ensure that the data will be disposed of in such a way that there is no risk of its confidentiality being compromised?

All paper trails will be shredded, information on computer will be deleted and Dictaphone tapes will be manually destroyed

19. Will any part of the research take place in premises outside the University? YES

Will any members of the research team be external to the University? NO

If yes, to either of the questions above please give full details of the extent to which the participating institution will indemnify the researchers against the consequences of any untoward event:

As an invited visitor to the school I will be indemnified under the terms of the school's insurance policy.

20. Are there any other matters or details which you consider relevant to the consideration of this proposal? If so, please elaborate below:

21. If your programme involves contact with children or vulnerable adults, either direct or indirect (including observational), please confirm that you have the relevant clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau prior to the commencement of the study.  
N/A

## 22. DECLARATION

I undertake to abide by accepted ethical principles and appropriate code(s) of practice in carrying out this programme.

Personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and not passed on to others without the written consent of the subject.

The nature of the investigation and any possible risks will be fully explained to intending participants, and they will be informed that:

- (a) they are in no way obliged to volunteer if there is any personal reason (which they are under no obligation to divulge) why they should not participate in the programme; and
- (b) they may withdraw from the programme at any time, without disadvantage to themselves and without being obliged to give any reason.

NAME OF APPLICANT: Signed: Anne O'Leary (Person responsible)

Anne O'Leary Date: 10/06/11

NAME OF DEAN OF SCHOOL: Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ETHICAL PRACTICE CHECKLIST

**SUPERVISOR:** Sharon Cahill **ASSESSOR:** Mark Finn

**STUDENT:** Anne O'Leary **DATE (sent to assessor):** 10/06/2011

**Proposed research topic:** An exploration of teachers' conceptualization of emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and what factors influence the strategies and interventions they adopt when working with individual pupils diagnosed with EBD.

**Course:** Prof Doc in Applied Educational and Child Psychology

1. Will free and informed consent of participants be obtained? YES
2. If there's any deception, is it justified? N/A
3. Will information obtained remain confidential? YES
4. Will participants be made aware of their right to withdraw at any time? YES
5. Will participants be adequately debriefed? YES
6. If this study involves observation, does it respect participants' privacy? N/A
7. If the proposal involves participants whose free and informed consent may be in question (e.g. for reasons of age, mental or emotional incapacity), are they treated ethically? N/A

8. If there is any procedure that might cause distress to participants is this ethical? N/A

9. If there are inducements to take part in the project, is this ethical? N/A

10. If there are any other ethical issues involved, are they a problem? N/A

**APPROVED? YES**

**MINOR CONDITIONS:**

Suggest rewording on invitation letter for Phase 2, changing 'you have been chosen to' to 'you are being invited to'. A very minor point but the word 'chosen' is at odds with the random selection .

Initials: MF Date: 14/06/11

Please return the completed form by email as well as the original hard copy application to the Helpdesk within 1 week.

Page Break

## **RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

**SUPERVISOR:** Sharon Cahill **ASSESSOR:** Mark Finn

**STUDENT:** Anne O'Leary **DATE (sent to assessor):** 10/06/2011

**Proposed research topic:** An exploration of teachers' conceptualization of emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and what factors influence the strategies and interventions they adopt when working with individual pupils diagnosed with EBD.

**Course:** Prof Doc in Applied Educational and Child Psychology

Would the proposed project expose the researcher to any of the following kinds of hazard?

1 Emotional NO

2. Physical NO

3. Other NO

If you've answered 'Yes' to any of the above, please estimate the chance of the researcher being harmed as: HIGH MED LOW

**APPROVED?** YES

**MINOR CONDITIONS:**

**IF NO, WHY?**

Initials: **MF** Date: 14/06/11

Please return the completed checklist by e-mail as well as the original hard copy application to the Helpdesk within 1 week.

## Appendix 11 Additional Information on the Length of Interviews and the Gender and Teaching Experience of Interviewees

Teacher	Gender	Teaching Experience (in years)	Length of Interview (in minutes)
T.1	Female	5	47
T.2	Female	9	38
T.3	Female	2	51
T.4	Female	14	42
T.5	Female	29	56
T.6	Male	12	50
T.7	Male	18	44
T.8	Female	9	52
T.9	Female	7	49
T.10	Male	6	53

## Appendix 12- Initial Categories, Clusters and Codes

Initial Categories	Codes
<b>Attribution of Behaviour</b>	<b>AB</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within child</li> <li>• Home background</li> <li>• Intentional</li> <li>• Diagnosed Condition</li> <li>• Capacity for change</li> <li>• Placement</li> <li>• Impact on Peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ABWC</li> <li>• ABHB</li> <li>• ABI</li> <li>• ABDC</li> <li>• ABCC</li> <li>• ABP</li> <li>• ABI</li> </ul>
<b>Role of Psychology</b>	<b>RP</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence based practice</li> <li>• Awareness of theories of behaviour</li> <li>• Access to research</li> <li>• Role of assessment</li> <li>• Professional reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RPEBP</li> <li>• RPT</li> <li>• RPR</li> <li>• RPA</li> <li>• RPPR</li> </ul>
<b>Behaviour Plans</b>	<b>BP</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Written behaviour plan</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Effectiveness</li> <li>• Functional assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BP</li> <li>• BPWP</li> <li>• BPC</li> <li>• BPE</li> <li>• BPFA</li> </ul>
<b>Role of SNA</b>	<b>SNA</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature of Involvement with student</li> <li>• Student's response</li> <li>• Impact on engagement with peers</li> <li>• Training/skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNAI</li> <li>• SNASR</li> <li>• SNAEP</li> <li>• SNAT</li> </ul>



<b>Interventions</b>	<b>I</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection process</li> <li>• Types of Interventions</li> <li>• Effectiveness</li> <li>• Structured /unstructured</li> <li>• Training / CPD attended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISP</li> <li>• IT</li> <li>• IE</li> <li>• IS</li> <li>• ICPD</li> </ul>
<b>Support Systems for Class Teacher</b>	<b>SS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional Impact</li> <li>• Structured supports</li> <li>• Involvement of the principal</li> <li>• Collaboration with colleagues</li> <li>• Involvement of parents</li> <li>• Involvement of external professionals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SSEI</li> <li>• SSS</li> <li>• SSIP</li> <li>• SSC</li> <li>• SSP</li> <li>• SSEP</li> </ul>
<b>Role of NEPS</b>	<b>RN</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of working with NEPS</li> <li>• Access to consultation</li> <li>• Access to whole school support and development</li> <li>• Access to training (IY)</li> <li>• Teacher's perception of how NEPS could support them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RNE</li> <li>• RNC</li> <li>• RNSD</li> <li>• RNT</li> <li>• RNS</li> </ul>

## **Appendix 13 Excerpt from Reflective Log**

### **Excerpt from Reflective Log 12.6.2017**

Today I attempted to code my first interview. I read Braun and Clarke's guide yesterday to remind myself of the pitfalls they mentioned. I read through the interview a couple of times just to get a sense of the issues raised and made notes on the side. I had to make a conscious effort to focus on what the interviewee had said and not to allow my preconceptions direct my attention to certain data in the interview for example the apparent lack of structured planning which is a particular issue with me.

I also found there was issues arising from what I had read in the research literature which again I didn't want to distract my attention. Well there I was with my coloured markers ready to identify codes but a segment of text was raising another snippet of information. I had used seven colours in the first paragraph so I abandoned that approach and just tried to identify each segment of relevant information in the text. I was also jumping two steps ahead and trying to make connections between pieces of data before I had attempted to code more of the interviews to get a broader picture of what was emerging. I also could interpret a segment of data in two different ways. For example 'I suppose I am a pretty confident person' Is the interviewee stating that she is confident or is there an element of uncertainty there? It was a struggle to reach a balance between focusing on the surface semantic meaning with a degree of depth and objectivity without over interpreting the intentions and beliefs of the interviewee. I was very conscious of the insider/outsider analogy in how I approached the data analysis as I was in the position of 'power' as I attempted to reflect the meaning and intent of the participants.

I attempted to code two interviews today and I found it a challenging and complex task

## Appendix 14 Initial Comments Made on Sample Interview

Interview LN	<u>Initial comments on Interview</u>
<p><b>How long have you been working as a teacher?</b> This is my fifth year teaching</p> <p><b>Can you describe the child in your class?</b> He gets very easily frustrated if things don't go his way or if he is questioned He can be very aggressive and stubborn, he will do the opposite of what you want him to do he's very temperamental, he gets very angry very quickly he is also very anxious. He will hit other children, the SNA or myself. He shouts out in class all the time, and he calls out names</p> <p><b>Okay and what is your understanding of why he is behaving like this?</b> I haven't come to a proper conclusion, he's very inconsistent, at the moment it looks like it's what he wants and he wants it now, I suppose it's putting two and two together and understanding that if he doesn't get his own way he will get upset, Am .. like if you think he is going to get upset if he doesn't want to do something tell him he will get a reward after if he doesn't want to do something he won't do it, things have to be on his terms, if they're not on his terms he gets very angry</p> <p><b>and have you any thoughts on why he behaves like this?</b> I don't know really... we didn't get to any understanding why he is like this, I have had meetings with his mam to try and figure out what is going on at home, I suppose things are a bit chaotic at home, he lives with his mother for part of the week, and his dad for another part of the week, and to be honest, we feel they both have a lot of issues, so their parenting ability wouldn't really be the best, I think there are a lot of inconsistencies at home we thought it was because he wasn't getting his own way, but there is more going on than that because he is getting really upset, so there is more going on with him, and we have noticed that he has problems with his balance, and his gross motor skills aren't great he is very.. kind of clumsy</p> <p><b>Okay.. and do you feel that it is possible to change this child's behaviour?</b> at the start of the year I was all guns blazing and I thought definitely yes, but now I feel no, it's very difficult</p>	<p>Early in career experience?</p> <p>A lot of externalizing behaviours</p> <p>ALL THE TIME quite extreme</p> <p>Unsure</p> <p>The focus is very much within-child</p> <p>Learning by experience?</p> <p>Intentional on the part of the student</p> <p>Again unsure</p> <p>Home significant</p> <p>Learning by experience</p>

<p>I'm getting much better at knowing how to deal with him, and knowing what works, so I know now that you can't push things on him, that you have to give him time to do what you ask, and he has to feel like he's winning some of the time so I'm managing him better</p> <p>I've learned that if I challenge him this takes time from the other children, so I ignore some behaviour so I can get on with the work</p> <p>I let him get away with things in order to benefit the whole class, but</p> <p>that is only so that I can get on with my class but no, I'd say we haven't been able to change the behaviour</p> <p><b>so am I right in saying that you feel you are getting better at managing his behaviour rather than his behaviour changing?</b></p> <p>That's it exactly</p> <p><b>And do you think a mainstream setting is appropriate for this student?</b></p> <p>Yes.. well... I'm not certain, like I think he is he's very bright.. and he can participate in things when he is in good form, there maybe things every day that he doesn't do but overall I think he is learning a little bit</p> <p>I suppose sometimes as well because his behaviour is not so good and the others know this and can take advantage of this it might not always be fair on him in the current placement</p> <p><b>So do you feel he is aware that his behaviour is different?</b></p> <p>Yes, I think he feels that the other children see him differently, and that is hard on him because they might make comments about his behaviour</p> <p><b>Right – and would you have studied psychology as part of your undergraduate training?</b></p> <p>Yes, we did, we had a module on psychology as part of our training</p> <p><b>And I am wondering if you feel this has any relevance for you when working with this student?</b></p> <p>mmm... I don't know, you see I don't know if you can really understand him</p> <p>the best way with him is very much trial and error</p> <p>he's one way one day and a different way another day so you can't really plan for that</p> <p><b>and do you think that any psychological theory would help in understanding this child?</b></p> <p>no .. I don't think any psychological theory we did is of any benefit to the real-world situation, and anyway he is so inconsistent that it makes it difficult to apply any theory to the way he behaves</p>	<p>Adapting her practice</p> <p>Positive approach</p> <p>Progress of</p> <p>Other students a big issue</p> <p>Limited progress</p> <p>Child's perspective</p> <p>Very unsure about psy</p> <p>Hesitant response</p> <p>Inconsistent lack of structure</p> <p>Very definitive about psy</p> <p>Theory to practice issues?</p> <p>Very frank and honest response</p>
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<p><b>and I'm wondering if anything you studied in psychology has helped you when planning how to work with this student?</b></p> <p>Well... to be honest.. not really, see the thing with psychology and college, well it's not until you're in the class that you can put it into practice, each child is different so the things you learned in college will not work with all children, you are given strategies but they are not enough because they don't always work</p> <p><b>could you tell me about the interventions you are using at the moment?</b></p> <p>Okay.. first of all he has access to an SNA, which is very important, she helps him take turns and interact better with his peers, she also takes him out to give me a break</p> <p><b>Okay and are you using any other strategies you are using?</b></p> <p>mm.. we're using a signal in the yard.. he gets a five-minute warning that he has to line up</p> <p>and also a warning that something he likes is coming to an end also ignoring some behaviour</p> <p>and removing him from the class when he is getting agitated</p> <p><b>And how do you feel that these interventions are working?,</b></p> <p>Well that's hard to say.., it differs from day to day, I feel they are working to some extent, but some days nothing seems to work with him, and you need to remove him from the class just to get on with you work</p> <p><b>I'm interested to hear how you have decided on the interventions that you use and what might have led you to these decisions?</b></p> <p>Mmm... I suppose by a process of elimination, like trying something and then if that doesn't work trying something different, like we tried things like timers and stickers but these didn't work so I stopped using them and then you have to look for something else</p> <p><b>and where did you get the ideas for these interventions?</b></p> <p>mmm... I'm not sure.. the Twinkl website, other teachers giving me advice that's been helpful I don't know where else really</p> <p><b>and would you have considered the research evidence behind the approaches you use?</b></p> <p>probably not.. no definitely not consciously.. ,so it's just about what works</p> <p><b>and what do you think would influence you to change your interventions?</b></p> <p>if his behaviour became more consistent and predictable then we might change our approach but we'll keep going with what we have as long as they work</p> <p>I also might ignore less if I felt his behaviour had improved then I would follow up on more behaviours that I ignore now</p>	<p>Strategies NB for CT All about what works</p> <p>Had to think about this Not sure about coherent plan?</p> <p>Very few strategies</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> time mentioned removal</p> <p>Powerless?</p> <p>Removal again!</p> <p>Very much trial and error</p> <p>Seems to be unsure where to get support</p>
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<p>or I would stop using something if I felt his behaviour was improving</p> <p><b>I am interested in self-efficacy which is how confident and competent you feel in your ability to carry out your role as a teacher</b></p> <p><b>I am wondering how you feel about your self-efficacy in relation to this student?</b></p> <p>Well for example, one day I was on my own and he started acting out, he was shouting at me and spitting at me, I was there with the children on my own, I had no SNA, I really panicked, I didn't know what to do, my confidence was totally knocked, I had to send two children for the principal because it hadn't happened before I didn't know how to react but after this happened, then I had time to think about what else I might have done, so I probably felt a little better about it you just have to say that it's not a personal attack on me, this is the child, then it doesn't feel so bad, and now, that we have procedures in place that are working better, so I feel more confident</p> <p><b>so you feel having procedures in place helps your confidence?</b></p> <p>certainly</p> <p><b>and how do you feel about your self-efficacy as a teacher</b></p> <p>I'd say pretty good I think I am a good teacher and I'm well able to manage a class and I have a good relationship with the children</p> <p><b>and where do you think your self-efficacy comes from?</b></p> <p>well I suppose.. (laugh) that's a hard one mm.. I suppose you would have to have a certain amount of confidence, I suppose because I didn't start my career as a teacher I had some life experience, so I was a more confident person anyway, and that's important, maybe also when you meet parents and they make very positive remarks on how you are working with the child</p> <p>From success I think.. yeah I definitely think so, and even working through the failures, like I had a reward chart that didn't work because it was on a weekly basis, but then I changed it to a daily basis, and it was much better, and I felt confident that I had been able to change it to a system that worked better</p> <p><b>so the fact that you had learned from a failure was important?</b></p> <p>exactly</p> <p><b>anything else that impacts on your self-efficacy?</b></p> <p>well .. as I said, I suppose I am a pretty confident person, and I know I am a good teacher, and I am usually well able to manage my class</p> <p><b>what do you think might challenge your self-efficacy?</b></p>	<p>Lack of control very emotional here</p> <p>Strategies help confidence</p> <p>Good SE as a teacher</p> <p>No mention of her training as a teacher</p> <p>Perceived success NB</p> <p>She's confident doesn't take failure personally</p>
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<p>I suppose if nothing was working, if his behaviour was bad every single day, like if there were incidents. serious incidents, five days in a row, and nothing was working, and the other children were being disrupted, and no learning was happening, and they were being affected, that would be very difficult, like now I feel they are kind of getting used to him, and they ignore a lot of what goes on, and so definitely, if it was affecting their work, that would affect my confidence really badly, if nothing was working, no matter what you had set up, nothing was working and you had gone down every path you could think of,</p> <p>that would erode your confidence, or if you are working with difficult parents , if things weren't working you would feel a failure,</p> <p>you need to be confident, so that when things do go wrong it doesn't have that major effect on you, I think experience is good as well, so for example now at the end of the year I can see all they have learnt so you hope that will happen again next year</p> <p>Also well.. if somebody told you you were not doing well, and you thought things were going fine, like the principal might say you're not dealing with this child well enough - now that wouldn't happen here- but it could happen in another school</p> <p><b>Anything else?</b></p> <p>Not really, just if I felt nothing was working, and I didn't have strategies in place</p> <p><b>Can you tell me a little of how you plan for working with this student?</b></p> <p>Well, I work with the resource teacher, and we talk about strategies, and what is working, and what new things we might try</p> <p><b>Do you find this helpful?</b></p> <p>Yes, definitely, its great to have that support, like other teachers also know what this boy is like, and they will help out if they can, and they understand, like one day at the beginning of the year, he kicked me and hurt me and I was really upset, another teacher came in and took the class so I could go up to the staff room</p> <p><b>Do you have a set time to meet with the resource teacher?</b></p> <p>No, not really, we just chat at break time and after school, it depends on how things are going with him, we talk more if things are not going too well</p> <p><b>Do you think it would be helpful if you had more structured times to meet?</b></p> <p>Yes, yes I think it would, because then you are just not waiting for things to go wrong</p>	<p>Other children NB</p> <p>Is this because she sees herself Judged as a class teacher</p> <p>Learning a lot from this experience Bandura?</p> <p>Professional reputation</p> <p>Needs support for colleagues</p> <p>No structured collaboration</p> <p>Reactive rather than proactive</p>
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<p><b>And do you have a behaviour plan in place for this student?</b>  No, we don't have a specific plan.. no.. we have a yard book and an incident book, I know what I'm doing but maybe it should be written down if I'm not around and somebody else has to take over</p> <p><b>do you think there would be any benefit in having a formal written plan?</b>  Well, I suppose as I said, for anyone else to see what we were doing, to write down the strategies</p> <p><b>have you ever written such a plan for another student?</b>  No, I've never had to do one</p> <p><b>I'm interested in how you think learning happens for you at this stage of your career?</b>  mmm... hadn't thought about that .. learning happens definitely through listening to all the other teachers particularly older.. I mean more senior teachers who have more experience and also some of the newer teachers just out of training because they have loads of new ideas  teamwork is great, we have a Senior Infant team that plan together and we help each other and we plan together  we don't really do any particular CPD unless summer courses or Croke Park hours  I use the Twinkl website a lot, you get a lot of ideas and suggestions on that  and we also observed teachers in another class when they were using a particular technique, that was really good  but I think that's the biggest thing is learning from other teachers</p> <p><b>do you think you have time to stop and reflect on your practice?</b>  no.. don't think so really, I suppose when we ... no I don't really think so</p> <p><b>and would this be helpful?</b>  yes I think so  to have time to do that would be great, I know every class is different but in a case like this it would be important because there is a lot to think about  maybe at the end of the year you might think of how things worked and changing something or introducing new things that worked  I suppose as you go along you learn by experience, like the same things will not work for the same class level 'cause classes are different experiencing different classes and different children helps you learn</p> <p><b>Are teachers generally encouraged to reflect on their practice?</b>  No, not really, you just get on with it</p>	<p>Missing the point re behaviour plan  Not about just recording Strategies</p> <p>Taken aback by this question</p> <p>Planning is about pedagogy only?</p> <p>It seems its just about the Strategies</p> <p>Again taken aback by the question  Not something that's been given much thought</p> <p>different perspective on reflection</p> <p>Doesn't seem to see the need for</p>
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<p><b>Have you done any additional training since you qualified?</b>  Am.. No.., not really, I haven't done any training in the school some teachers have done training and shared ideas with us  we also had afternoons like Croke Park hour when someone might come in and talk about something for an hour, a bit like college where they would suggest some strategies  <b>was this helpful?</b>  mm.. I'm not sure, at the time you think I know all that, then when you get to the classroom you are not really sure what to do  <b>is there any training you feel would be helpful in this situation?</b>  well I suppose having on more ideas on strategies you might use but I am not sure how you would get that  <b>do you think teachers are prepared to work with children like the student in your class?</b>  no definitely not  <b>can they be prepared?</b>  Well.. I suppose that's difficult as each child is so different, but I think if you knew about all the different strategies then you could try different ones and see if they worked  <b>Okay.. can I ask what supports have you found most helpful this year?</b>  a behavioural therapist came in last year to help the teacher work with this boy and that was really helpful, and we are still using some of the strategies she suggested, like so I think a behaviour therapist could come into me now and explain how some strategies could be used that would be great  <b>what else have you found supportive?</b>  the SNA definitely. she works very well. she does everything she is asked, so if he am.. needs time out, and I can't leave the classroom, it's important that she is there to give him time out, and I find it most difficult the hour that she is not there, and it's just for one hour that she is not there and I'm on my own with him  and I think he must know that she is not there and he can be very difficult at that time  senior members of staff have been very good, they take him out sometimes  sometimes he just needs to be out of the room, and when he comes back in he is a different child  <b>is there any other supports you would like to be available to you?</b>  Am ..he gets play therapy, and only very few children have access to that and a special accommodation has been made for</p>	<p>CPD</p> <p>Strategies bag of tricks?</p> <p>Very sure about this</p> <p>Is the student being handed over To the SNA what are her skill levels?</p> <p>Child seems to be out of class a lot</p> <p>Again removed from class is he missing out on learning opportunities?</p>
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<p>him, so that'd be something that would not normally be available, I think it should be available to any child like this boy  <b>so you think children should have access to therapies in the school?</b>  Yes, I think children like this boy, they should have access to therapy  <b>Any other supports</b>  Just that there is someone there for you  <b>Is there a whole school approach to managing challenging behaviour in this school?</b>  Am..no, I wouldn't say so..like no.. well we have school rules but that's it, each teacher works with their own class. They talk to the principal if they have a problem, and she tries to help them, and senior teachers will try to help and give advice  <b>Have you contact with any other professionals in relation to this student?</b>  No, not me this year  <b>Have you had any experience of working with a NEPS psychologist</b>  No.. not up to now  <b>NEPS have a consultation model that involves the psychologist observing the student and meeting with the relevant teachers and parents at regular intervals to problem solve around the student's behaviour</b>  <b>Do you think this approach would be helpful?</b>  that would be a great help, even just reassurance that you're doing it the right way  like even for yourself because you're not sure what you're doing here, so somebody to offer reassurance that you're on the right track would be great  and to make suggestions that might be tried  and then if things don't work out and you have to go back to the drawing board you don't feel so bad, because it's just not you that's not doing the right thing  it's just because the situation is so difficult then you don't feel that you are failing, and you feel that somebody is there with you and coming up with ideas  <b>Finally, I'd just like to ask you how you felt about the interview</b>  I really enjoyed this (laugh).. like you were saying about reflection and how I learn, I wouldn't have thought those things through before, like you don't really have time in the day to think about things and maybe you should set aside time, yet it is only now talking things through with you, it has been really good and it even puts the whole thing in context for me  <b>Thank you very much for your time</b></p>	<p>Very reliant on the availability of other staff</p> <p>Why has he not been referred to NEPS a Student with these difficulties Should have external support</p> <p>Strategies again trial and error again!</p> <p>Really appreciates emotional support</p> <p>Really not sure about this question</p> <p>Was the interview a form of reflection?</p> <p>She really seemed to enjoy the Interview experience</p>
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## APPENDIX 15 – Theme 1 Main Theme, Subthemes, Codes and Relevant Statements

### Theme 1

Class teachers' conceptualization of challenging behaviour and its impact within the school context		
Subtheme	Codes	Relevant statements
Class Teachers' attribution and understanding of behaviour	Biological factors  <b>ABBF</b>	<p>Well I suppose the main thing with the child is a question of attention he has very poor attention Int 1 L 6-7</p> <p>he has sensory issues he makes a lot of high-pitched noises Int 1 L 11-12</p> <p>I think a lot of it is neurological, within him Int 1 L 21-22</p> <p>he presents with huge sensory issues Int 2 L 15</p> <p>there is a huge lack of attention Int 2 L 17-18</p> <p>yes huge attention issues.. Int 2 L 21-23</p> <p>he is very anxious Int 3 L 10</p> <p>he seems to be a very bright boy Int 3 L 43</p> <p>he has problems with his balance and his gross motor skills aren't great he's kind of clumsy Int 3 L 36-37</p> <p>he also has a lot of compulsions and obsessive behaviours Int 5 L 8-10</p>

		<p>he has very poor concentration Int 6 L 50</p> <p>I think he has a huge anger coming from somewhere inside him Int 7 L 6</p> <p>he has very poor concentration Int 7 L 27-28</p> <p>his co-ordination is poor Int 8 L 23</p>
	<p>Environmental Factors</p> <p><b>ABEF</b></p>	<p>His home environment might be an issue in that it is not structured as it should be he rules the roost Int 1 L 24-25</p> <p>I have had a lot of meetings with his mam to try and figure out what is going on at home I suppose things are a bit chaotic at home he lives with his mother for part of the week and his dad for another part of the week and to be honest we feel they both have a lot of issues so their parenting ability wouldn't really be the best I think there are a lot of inconsistencies at home Int 3 L 26-31</p> <p>I'm wondering if some of it is learned from home I'm wondering if there are not the same structures and routine at home as we have set up in school and I think that really affects him Int 4 L 21-25</p>

		<p>his background is also a huge issue its very difficult to get anyone belonging to him on board to answer the phone it even difficult to find out what the home situation is Int 5 L 29-31</p> <p>I suppose first of all he comes from a difficult background Int 6 L 5-6</p> <p>he comes from a difficult background which doesn't help Int 6 L 51-52</p> <p>I've tried to work with his parents but they will never follow through with what they say Int 7 L 23-24</p> <p>I believe home is a big part in a behaviour so for example if she acts out she gets more and more rewards there are no repercussions for her behaviour her parents do not particularly address any of her behaviours she also has difficulties as well socially Int 9 L 32-34</p> <p>she comes in with something new every day it's like bribe bribe bribe Int 10 L 24-27</p> <p>his background is good his mother is very well read and she understands him Int 10 L 34-36</p>
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		<p>well it's not anything to do with the way he was brought up that there are good family and they have always been very positive about him and taught him to behave properly Int 2 L 19</p> <p>his mother is incredibly supportive she has been crying out for help Int 8 L 18-20</p>
	<p>Teacher Uncertainty</p> <p><b>ABTU</b></p>	<p>There are no clear answers Int 1 L 73</p> <p>we suspect that there is more going on than EBD but we are not sure Int 2 L 10</p> <p>I am a bit confused Int 2 L 30</p> <p>I don't know I don't know if you can really understand him Int 3 L 75-84</p> <p>well I'm not sure what's going on Int 8 L 27</p> <p>I think he has some issues Int 4 L 42</p> <p>There is something going on with him bur we are not sure Int 2 L 67</p> <p>There are more to it than that Int 9 L 34</p>
	<p>Diagnosis</p> <p><b>ABD</b></p>	<p>We suspect that it is EBD Int 2 L 10</p> <p>she wonders if it's autism Int 2 L 20</p> <p>he has no formal assessment yet but it's on the cards so we will know what's going on Int 2 L 22-23</p>

		<p>if he had a diagnosis we might better understand him Int 7 L 85-86</p> <p>I think he has issues some undiagnosed difficulty Int 4 L 18-19</p> <p>he might have an underlying undiagnosed disability Int 8 L 27-28</p>
	<p>Sources of Information</p> <p><b>ABSI</b></p>	<p>I think from my own experience Int 1 L 21</p> <p>it takes a long time you begin by comparing him with his peers and what is the norm for that age group and you can see how at this stage of the year that he really stands out Int 4 L 28-33</p> <p>while I haven't taught junior infants before the other teachers come in and point out how he is different from his peers I find that very helpful well I do a lot of recording of behaviours and I think that's helpful because I have everything together and I can see differently Int 4 L 34-36</p> <p>I suppose it comes to meeting with the parents and I suppose observing the parents Int 4 L 37-39</p> <p>His behaviour is very inconsistent So the things you learned in college will not apply to children like this so I don't see the benefit (Int. 2, L 103).</p>

		<p>This boy is so different from day to day that there is no way of understanding him (Int. 8, L 110).</p> <p>He is so different, there is no way of knowing what's going on (Int. 6, L 107).</p> <p>There's definitely something wrong with her something not normal (Int. 7, L 28).</p> <p>I think you compare them with their peers and what is normal for that age group (Int. 4, L 34).</p> <p>Other teachers come in and point out that there is something different, not right with him, he really stands out (Int. 5, L 39-40).</p> <p>in that I be more aware that this child's behaviour is not normal and I need to keep an eye on it (Int. 3, L 59).</p>
	<p>Role of psychology</p> <p><b>ABRP</b></p>	<p>but I'm not sure if the psychology I studied was of any real help Int 1 L 55-61</p> <p>(psychological theory) not specifically no Int 4 L 75-79</p> <p>no I don't think any psychological theory was of any benefit to real-world situation and he is so inconsistent that it makes it difficult to apply any theory to the way he behaves Int 5 L 56-58</p>



		<p>I suppose it might have but for me the way I studied psychology is not having any relevance maybe because it was taught in isolation that I can't apply it to my everyday work and everyday management of this boy Int 2 L 121</p> <p>but I think in a practical sense and in the real world that is not what you need Int 3 L 69-70</p> <p>I mean the theory I mean it was interesting at the time but I don't know how it helps you dealing with a real life situation Int 4 L 67-68</p> <p>very little really to be honest I think you are thrown in at the deep end with a child like this and it's difficult to see how that relates to what you learned in college Int 4 L 75-79</p> <p>I don't really think so not in this case Int 8 L 59-61</p> <p>however how it manifests itself in a practical way I'm not sure Int 5 L 58</p> <p>I suppose the abnormal psychology course was helpful which explained what was normal and what wasn't, the most helpful was a module on education psychology which described all the different conditions and that was helpful so you get to understand that a child isn't developing normally (Int 4 L 235)</p> <p>I think it was also long ago I think I'm very removed from it at this stage (Int. 5, L 56-58).</p>
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		<p>I really don't think that it's been of any significance at all (Int. 4, L 75-79).</p> <p>I don't know if psychology can help I don't know if you can really understand him (Int. 4, L 97).</p> <p>.</p> <p>His behaviour is very inconsistent So the things you learned in college will not apply to children like this so I don't see the benefit (Int. 2, L 103).</p> <p>Psychology might help with the typical child but with a child like this to be honest I don't think it would help (Int. 3, L 150).</p>
	<p>Student Motivation for Behaviour</p> <p><b>ABSM</b></p>	<p>because he's very bright he should have no problem doing what the class are doing but he just won't apply himself (Int. 8, L 24-25).</p> <p>It's such a pity because he's such a bright boy, I mean a really bright, and he doesn't do the work he is well able for (Int. 4, L 21).</p> <p>I get the impression he's just not happy following the same rules as everyone else he wants it done his way (Int 9 L34)</p> <p>He escalates things just to see how much attention he can get Int 5 L23</p>

		<p>He is very much boundary testing with me trying to see what he can get away with Int. 8, L 241</p> <p>Its not that he is bold or deliberately behaving this way...I know he can't help it. (Int. 8, L 143</p> <p>He seems to want his own way all the time (Int. 7, L 78).</p> <p>He is very defiant and he is looking for attention (Int. 10, L 12).</p> <p>He wants what he wants when he wants it (Int. 3, L 54).</p> <p>I don't think it's on purpose Int. 1, L 205</p> <p>I treat him differently because I know he can't help it Int 10 L 30-31</p>
	<p>Focus on Externalizing Behaviours</p> <p><b>ABEB</b></p>	<p>he can get aggressive with other students, he is very disruptive, he is always chatting he also has a lot of compulsions and obsessive behaviours and he can do the same things over and over again, he has a fixation with his hair, and he uses any excuse not to do his work, he also goes into the bathroom he could stay there for up to an hour, the main issue for him is the defiance, and he is looking for attention, so if he does something and I ignore it, it will escalate, if I don't deal with it he will keep escalating like talking to a child besides him, writing on the table, or shouting out, he</p>

		<p>escalates it to see how much attention he can get, sometimes if I try and remove him the classroom he will refuse to leave (Int. 6 Ls 79-89)</p> <p>He shouts out all the time (Int. 4 L 8).</p> <p>He is very defiant every single lesson every single day (Int. 3 L 10).</p> <p>He will always do the opposite to what you want him to (Int. 2 L 12)</p>
Impact of challenging behaviour on school community	<p>Impact on class teacher</p> <p><b>IBCT</b></p>	<p>You constantly have to supervise him and keep your eye on him as he may try to escape Int 1 L 15-16</p> <p>it's difficult to get him to complete any task Int 1 L 8-9</p> <p>he cannot be corrected Int 1 L 31-32</p> <p>but it takes a lot of time Int 2 L 6</p> <p>his presence is affecting my performance as a teacher because you want to do your job Int. 8, L 130</p> <p>when he comes back in I am able for him as I know how long I have to deal with it Int 2 L 183-184</p> <p>you have to sit down with him if you want to get him to complete tasks it is not always possible to have time for him Int 2 L 209-210</p> <p>he will not do what is asked he has to be asked at least 15 times and he still won't do it Int 4 L 11</p>

		<p>he is very disruptive Int 4 L 8</p> <p>from the point of view of the teacher and the time and resources takes to keep on track you know you do the best Int 5 L 6-7</p> <p>you have to monitor him with other children as he can lash out verbally I have never had to watch any other child this much the other issue this year is there is another child who has issues which makes things worse because you are managing the two of them Int 5 L 8</p> <p>we have had to call in the mother I have never seen anything like it was completely out of control Int 6 L 95-99</p> <p>it can be really draining and exhausting (Int. 4, L 119).</p> <p>this has affected me so much this child is in my head morning noon and night I dream about this child I told my husband about this child I am constantly wondering what I can do to manage the situation I am thinking about him every minute of every day when he is in school (Int. 10, L 143).</p> <p>you have to monitor him with other children as he can lash out verbally (Int 7 L 18-19)</p> <p>I have never had to watch any other child this much ( Int 2 L 45-49)</p>
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		<p>I had a handover meeting for my class and I never felt so embarrassed about what I had covered (Int. 7, L 124).</p> <p>I suppose his reaction like he loves to see me and I've really grown to love him (Int 8 L 161-162)</p> <p>You are also aware of how you are being perceived by other teachers (Int. 2, L 167).</p> <p>When you have to go to senior management .. you feel like as a qualified teacher you should be able to manage this (Int. 9, L 176).</p> <p>You constantly have to supervise him and keep your eye on him as he may try to escape Int 1 L 15-16</p> <p>his presence is affecting my performance as a teacher (Int. 8, L 130).</p> <p>I know it's my job but it is not possible to give my best to this child and to the other children in my class too (Int. 3, L 141).</p>
	<p>Impact on Peers</p> <p><b>IP</b></p>	<p>he will hit other children the SNA and myself Int 2 L 10</p> <p>his behaviour really affects everyone Int 2 L 183</p> <p>one thing that worries me however is the other kids in the class and how this child behaviour is impacting on them sometimes I feel it's not fair</p> <p>I think so like the more well-behaved kids do suffer Int 6 L 82-84</p>

		<p>there is always a balancing act and it's not always easy because you want to keep a culture of fairness in the class too Int 6 L 94-99</p> <p>he can throw things that could hit someone or he would shout in other children's faces Int 6 L 113-117</p> <p>he grabs them and he can hurt them Int 7 L 12-13</p> <p>he is very strong it was very hard on the other children and he hurt a lot of children but not deliberately Int 8 L 12</p> <p>he will lash out at other children (Int. 8, L 137).</p> <p>he has punched other children (Int. 7, L 241).</p> <p>he gets aggressive with other students (Int. 2, L 165).</p> <p>absolutely it has so impacted on the other children they have lost out on so much contact time (Int. 3, L 287).</p> <p>this child has affected the whole class (Int. 1, L 305).</p> <p>one thing that worries me however is the other kids in the class and how this child behaviour is impacting on them sometimes I feel it's not fair (Int. 4, L 234).</p>
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		<p>there is always a balancing act and it's not always easy because you want to keep a culture of fairness in the class too (Int. 8, L 179).</p> <p>a lot of resources that go into this child like learning support resource teacher and special needs assistants that other children can benefit from Int 9 L 121-122</p>
	<p>Impact on student</p> <p><b>IBS</b></p>	<p>he finds it difficult to engage in any learning Int 2 L 16</p> <p>he gets easily frustrated Int 2 L 376-379</p> <p>he could fall behind if his behaviours continue Int 3 L 5</p> <p>I have had to loosen up on what I expect from the child he doesn't have the same levels of concentration that other children have Int 4 L 12-13</p> <p>I was expecting him to do some of the work which was probably too tricky for him at this stage Int 6 L 28-29</p> <p>he gets frustrated very easily Int 9 L 7</p> <p>well I suppose he does try hard every day he comes in with what I call a good attitude (Int. 1, L 205).</p> <p>he has found the transition to first-class very difficult (Int. 3, L 191).</p> <p>It makes school a big effort for him (Int. 9, L 187).</p> <p>he could fall behind if his behaviours continue (Int. 6, L 211).</p> <p>he finds it difficult to engage in any learning (Int. 7, L 320).</p>



		<p>I think there is a reputation built up around this child which hasn't helped (Int. 1, L 201).</p> <p>and nobody would want to teach him next year, there will be big reluctance shown to the principal from everyone to working with this child and even the class (Int. 4, L 191).</p> <p>he struggles with competition PE is a big challenge for him he can't play with other children Int 9 L 8</p> <p>she has difficulties as well socially Int 9 L 11-12</p> <p>she has difficulties understanding social situations</p> <p>he's just had enough he doesn't have enough strength or mental capacity whatever you call it to keep doing what he's supposed to be doing Int 10 L 28</p>
	<p>Impact on other school staff</p> <p><b>IBSS</b></p>	<p>You really do need the extra support of an SNA I'd be very concerned for a teacher working this child without an SNA Int 1 L 46-48</p> <p>well the other teachers .... for example in the yard the gates need to be closed if this boy acts out he needs to be supported Int 1 L 157-159</p> <p>well they need support particularly an SNA they also they need support from other teachers Int 1 L 247-248</p>

		<p>and it disrupts the principal and the SNA Int 2 L 115-116</p> <p>another teacher came in and took the class so I could go to the staffroom Int 3 L 197-199</p> <p>senior members of staff have been very good they take him out</p> <p>sometimes Int 3 L 291-292</p> <p>I don't have access to the same number of people as I would have had any previous school Int 4 L 271-272</p> <p>it's very difficult and I wasn't able to get help Int 4 L 282</p> <p>when I was in the larger school you had a lot more opportunities to do CPD and to get involved in projects Int 4 L 184-186</p> <p>I have had to get the principal or vice principal involved to remove him</p> <p>they also check in with me and him to see how things are going Int 5 L 69-70</p> <p>if there was someone else could link in with the child for 10 minutes Int 5 L 201-202</p> <p>the door is always open you can always ask for help Int 6 L 97-99</p> <p>and it's up to the office until he cools down he has often spent two hours in the office (Int. 3, L 187).</p>
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		<p>when you ask the vice principal for help she would come in and say leave this to me I'll deal with him and she takes him out of class (Int. 8, L 241).</p> <p>I would ask to meet the principal for a convenient time to meet which was usually the end of the day things are really difficult I could go down to her in the middle of the day (Int. 1, L 179).</p> <p>I can go to the teacher in the yard and ask them to keep a special eye on my student Int 7 L 80-83</p> <p>so you really need people on standby for you Int 7 L 87-88</p> <p>what can they do, can they always be taking somebody out of the classroom Int 8 L 128</p> <p>in the previous class he had a special needs assistant for most of the day now it wasn't official but the school freed up someone to work with him</p> <p>I have gone to the principal but he is not always there Int 8 L 138-139</p> <p>when you ask the vice principal for help she would come in and say leave this to me I'll deal with him and she takes him out of class Int 9 L 135-136</p>
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	<p>Impact on School Resources</p> <p><b>IBSS</b></p>	<p>So if he kicks off in the yard we have to have one person to deal with him Int 2 L 42-43</p> <p>there are up to 5 different adults working with this girl over the 2 hours she's in school and without this support she would not cope (Int. 10, L 326).</p> <p>You really do need the extra support of an SNA (Int. 6, L 271).</p> <p>I'd be very concerned for a teacher working this child without an SNA (Int. 5, L 191).</p> <p>he couldn't stay here without the supports from the resource teacher and SNA (Int. 3, L 225).</p> <p>a lot of resources that go into this child like learning support and resource teachers but it is really needed (Int. 9, L 189).</p> <p>if you need to step out of the classroom to deal with an issue with this boy another teacher needs to step in and mind your class (Int. 3, L 124).</p> <p>another teacher came in and took the class so I could go to the staffroom (Int. 7, L 257).</p> <p>I don't have access to the same number of people as I would have had any previous school and this makes it difficult (Int. 10, L 219).</p>
	<p>Unpredictability of Behaviour</p> <p><b>IBUB</b></p>	<p>he is one way one day and a different way another day Int 3 L 72</p> <p>its very difficult to know how he is going to react in a given day Int 4 L 89</p> <p>Hes never the same two days running Int 10 L 107</p>

<p>Teachers' perspective on their capacity to influence behaviour</p>	<p>Perception of student progress</p> <p><b>TPSP</b></p>	<p>you can improve things however we haven't solved the problem (Int. 5, L 41).</p> <p>you could help him behave better but I think he will always have problems (Int. 8, L 58).</p> <p>I have drawn everything I have learned at this child and it hasn't made a difference (Int. 1, L 90).</p> <p>I think without the support of the SNA his behaviour would still be the same (Int. 4, L 105).</p> <p>I'm not too sure we are making any progress particularly in this setting (Int. 9, L 125).</p> <p>now with the work I have done with this child over the last few weeks I feel there has been change but you have to take it in very little steps and not expect too much (Int. 7, L 138).</p> <p>yes I think we can put things in place that would help I don't think the anger will ever go away we just must try to manage it (Int. 3, L 179).</p> <p>.</p> <p>this child has been the most difficult to work with the hardest to make progress with it's five steps forwards and four steps back (Int. 7, L 198).</p> <p>I feel sometimes I'm getting places but then like last week we had an incident and I felt that we had got nowhere we have made a little progress but it is very slow I think this child will continue to have problems (Int. 3, L 256).</p>
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		<p>you can improve things we can try and manage his behaviour however we haven't solved the problem I don't think we are meeting his needs Int 1 L 36-38</p>
	<p>Placement Issues</p> <p><b>TPPC</b></p>	<p>as I said before I don't think a behaviour unit will work when you have a bad day you might think yes this will be an alternative you would think that he should be somewhere else but what can you do (Int 8 L 46-49)</p> <p>The principal believes that it would be difficult to remove him so we'll have to keep on trying to manage the behaviour (Int. 10, L 212).</p> <p>well I don't know really his behaviour has improved in that we can manage it a little better.. I don't think he has benefited on the educational side of things Int 6 L 87-90</p> <p>no it's not appropriate I say no the reason being we have big classes we are quite academic (Int. 9, L 176).</p> <p>well I suppose you'd have to say yes because well how will I put it, you can't isolate these children either like having a unit for badly behaved kids I don't think that's the answer either they are only going to learn bad things from each other (Int. 8, L 218).</p> <p>this particular child I don't think so without the support (Int. 3, L 231).</p>

		no I don't think he should be in a mainstream setting I think he should be in a special setting or unit (Int. 7, L 429).
	Controllability of Behaviour <b>TPCB</b>	it is near impossible to get him to engage with any of the curriculum Int 2 L 55-56 He will do what he wants to do so it really depends on him (Int. 10, L 92). It's very difficult in all my years teaching this child is the most difficult to work with the hardest to make progress with (Int. 5, L 112).
	Stability of Behaviour <b>TPSB</b>	but I think he will always have problems Int 2 L 345 I think he will always have issues (Int. 3, L 79). I don't think his underlying problems will ever go away (Int. 4, L 63).
	Locus of Control <b>TPLC</b>	I don't think he has the capacity to stay focused for any length of time Int 9 L 10 It's her make up there is definitely something wrong with her .. there are mental issues that we can't change (Int. 8, L 218). It's down to something neurological within him the way he was born .. its inherent within him (Int. 7, L 241).

## Appendix 16 - Theme 2 Main Theme, Subthemes, Codes and Relevant Statements

### Theme 2

The nature of the interventions selected by class teachers and their views on the reasons for selecting these interventions		
Subtheme	Codes	Relevant statements
Influences on the Selection of Interventions	<b>Sources of Information SESI</b>	<p>other teachers may have made suggestions (Int. 2, L 239).</p> <p>picking the brain of a teacher in the school (Int. 10, L 197).</p> <p>I have gone to other teachers sought advice I talked to so many people to his resource teacher we have brilliant experienced resource teachers in the school (Int. 3, L 120).</p> <p>you trust people like other teachers who recommend strategies (Int. 6, L 204).</p> <p>from speaking to my colleagues (Int. 4, L 276).</p> <p>I suppose the things I'm doing I would have seen done in other classes in my previous school (Int. 1, L 147).</p> <p>and experience and things I have learned over the years I mean the school said a lot of chatter in children so we have developed a lot of expertise so colleagues are huge they have a lot of knowledge (Int. 5, L 197).</p>



	Evidence Base <b>SEB</b>	<p>No not really I wouldn't be aware of any of the theory behind the interventions I am using (Int. 7, L 129).</p> <p>not really no, what I focus on does it work or not, you don't have time to look into the research evidence (Int. 10, L 147).</p> <p>like no, you wouldn't even sometimes have the terminology to explain what you are doing (Int. 4, L 236).</p>
	Reason for Selection <b>SR</b>	<p>We also had a visual timetable but that was too difficult to keep going (Int. 3, L 129).</p> <p>keeping it simple works best for the child (Int. 6, L 289).</p> <p>when you're on your own it's very difficult to implement this in the classroom and have all the pictures you need on standby (Int. 7, L 176).</p> <p>what's important is that I can teach the other children and get on with my work (Int. 4, L 147).</p> <p>you need to remove him from the class to get on with your work (Int. 2, L 218).</p> <p>yes for the sake of other children and that I can get on my teaching (Int. 8, L 149).</p> <p>there was a lot of trial and error..try and see if it works (Int. 10, L 196).</p> <p>you try things out if they don't work you shelve them (Int. 3, L 243).</p> <p>a lot of this was trial and error guessing things that you thought might work (Int. 6, L 149).</p>

	<p>Evaluation of Interventions <b>SEI</b></p>	<p>I'm a bit confused because we are drawing on all these resources regarding his behaviour but we may not be treating the underlying issue (Int. 2, L 204).</p> <p>there was a lot of confusion within me wondering what should I do as he does not have a formal diagnosis (Int. 6, L 196).</p> <p>Initially we use pictures for this but the student found them too distracting so I had to change them1/5/117-118</p> <p>this is what I tried first but it wasn't working so I understood that he needed rewards more often to keep him motivated 1/5/121-122</p> <p>there was a lot of trial and error..try and see if it works2/5/157-158</p> <p>if something isn't working it is shelved2/6/169-171</p> <p>you try things out if they don't work you shelve them2/10/276-277</p> <p>a lot of this was trial and error guessing things that you thought might work2/7/332-333</p>
<p>Nature of Interventions selected by class teacher</p>	<p>Proactive Strategies <b>NIPS</b></p>	<p>Like I would have these things in place like rules ( Int. 4, L 238).</p> <p>We have reward plan that we set up with his mother sensory breaks and timeout that's about it 1/4/95-97</p> <p>he likes to know what's happening 1/2/31</p> <p>I use first-in charts at the beginning of the year 1/4/103</p>

		<p>backward chaining reducing the number of personnel2/2/38-41</p> <p>I've done a lot of ignoring2/4/112-114</p> <p>ignoring, back chaining, choice box2/4/124-125</p> <p>using signals, giving him a five-minute warning that he has to line up3/3/91-94</p> <p>ignoring4/3/82-83</p>
	Reactive Strategies NIRS	<p>When he has a meltdown the SNA takes him out to the until he has calmed down ( Int. 4, L 28).</p> <p>Sometimes he just gets so aggressive I take the class down to the hall and the SNA stays in the class</p> <p>it's just not safe to stay there ( Int. 8, L 98).</p>
	Exclusion/Removal NIR	<p>we've reached a point that if he kicks off his going to be removed and that's basically it we are doing</p> <p>all the interventions we can be kicks off his going to be removed and it's up to the office until he cools</p> <p>down he spent two hours in the office (Int. 4, L 89-93).</p> <p>sometimes he just needs to be out of the room when he comes back he is a different child (Int. 6, L 41).</p> <p>and forgive me for saying this but often it's that he's not there a lot of the time and he is removed from</p> <p>the class (Int. 7, L 169).</p>

	Range of Approaches NIRA	<p>We have reward plan that we set up with his mother sensory breaks and timeout that's about it1/4/95-97</p> <p>/he likes to know what's happening 1/2/31</p> <p>/I use first-in charts at the beginning of the year 1/4/103</p> <p>/backward chaining reducing the number of personnel 2/2/38-41</p> <p>/I've done a lot of ignoring 2/4/112-114</p> <p>/ignoring, back chaining, choice box ( Int. 7, L 128).</p> <p>/using signals, giving him a five-minute warning that he has to line up3/3/91-94</p> <p>He has sensory breaks 3 times a day 2/4/124-125</p> <p>/ignoring4/3/82-83</p> <p>/a specific timetable and visual timetable8/3/73-80</p> <p>/specific timetable and reward system, helping the teacher10/3/74-79</p> <p>visual strategies, visual timetable, sitting him near me giving him extra attention7/2/59-60</p>
	Effectiveness of Interventions NIPE	<p>child's behaviour has improved since September with the structures we have put in place1/2/29-31</p> <p>/with the right structures things can improve yes1/2/36</p> <p>/I don't think you have made the improvements he has without this help1/2/40-41</p>

		<p>/I suppose I have seen progress in areas like how we can manage being in the line so little things like that have shown progress1/7/195-196</p> <p>/the back chaining is working2/2/59-60</p> <p>/Last week was a positive week is not bothering me as much anymore2/6/177-179</p> <p>/it's hard to say it differs someday today it's working to some extent3/4/97-99</p> <p>/we've got into some routine and I think routine is crucial and it's good6/2/34</p> <p>/I think you just have to try which you think is best and go from there5/3/90-91</p> <p>/yes there's been progress ...you feel you might not have achieved as much as you wanted to7/4/108-113</p> <p>/we thought a timetable for him would help and it has8/4/94-97</p>
Considerations when Implementing Interventions	<p>Role of SNA <b>IMSNA</b></p>	<p>We have access to an SNA and this is hugely significant in supporting the child (Int. 4, L 297).</p> <p>most of all he has access to an SNA which is very important she helps him take turns and interact better with his peers (Int. 7, L 328).</p> <p>so one of the SNAs stays in the room with her when she is in the class (Int. 5, L 218</p>
	<p>Inconsistent Student response <b>IMSR</b></p>	<p>You might have a plan in place but then he won't co-operate so its back to the drawing board (Int. 5, L 178).</p>
	<p>Consistency <b>IMC</b></p>	<p>but I would forget about focusing on them and using them as I should (Int. 4, L 238).</p>

	Flexibility <b>IMF</b>	Initially we use pictures for this but the student found them too distracting so I had to change them (Int 1 L 117-118)
	Time IMT	when you're on your own it's very difficult to find time to implement this in the classroom and have all the pictures you need on standby (Int 2 L168)
	Functional Assessment PIFA	<p>I've been recording his behaviours and I have found this helpful because I can see when the behaviour is happening and for hom it's usually before break (Int 3 L 568)</p> <p>No to be honest I haven't done any proper assessment of the behaviour just what I see each day (Int. 6, L 247).</p>
	Behaviour Plan <b>PIBP</b>	<p>I suppose it highlighted the bits and pieces that I have been doing but maybe not giving them enough attention so gave me things to work on (Int. 1, L 102).</p> <p>It helps you target the behaviours that you want to work on but I'm not too sure yet well it should be helpful (Int. 5, L 183).</p> <p>why I found it helpful in that it focuses the mind, it condenses and clarifies what you're thinking (Int. 9, L 249).</p> <p>Yes.. well I did to a certain extent it gave me some structure (Int. 10, L 301</p>

		<p>The way I didn't find it helpful is that I thought it would give me more to be honest a lot of stuff was doing already and then when things didn't work out I did know what to do and the plan didn't provide that because I felt I had tried everything that I knew so I felt I needed more ideas (Int. 1, L 142).</p> <p>what it does have strategies but elements of it are null and void so some of the things just didn't work that we put down like ticks and Xs don't work for this child rewards don't work either (Int. 7, L 196).</p> <p>well I suppose as I said for anyone else to see what we are doing to write down the interventions also if we had an inspection they would be a record of what we are doing (Int. 2, L 190).</p>
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## APPENDIX 17 – Theme 3 Main Theme, Subthemes, Codes and Relevant Statements

### Theme 3

Teachers' perspective on factors that influence their self-efficacy and the challenges they have experienced		
Subtheme	Codes	Relevant statements
Contributors to the teachers' self-efficacy	<p>Personal Attributes</p> <p><b>CSEPA</b></p>	<p><i>I suppose it comes from myself ..... so it's my own determination (Int. 4, L 306).</i></p> <p><i>I suppose I feel I am a strong person I have high standards and I always tried to do things to the best of my ability you can have all the training in the world but if you don't have the drive within you, it comes from inside yourself (Int. 9, L 279).</i></p> <p><i>I have a strong character and that's what's most important (Int. 1, L 217).</i></p> <p><i>you believe in yourself enough that you get around challenges (Int. 3, L 421).</i></p> <p><i>mainly I think it is from myself and my own determination (Int. 7, L 367).</i></p> <p><i>no matter what happens I come in every day and try my best (Int. 2, L 293).</i></p>



	<p>Influence of family <b>CSEF</b></p>	<p><i>I would say that was my parents and my family I am the youngest and they would have supported me and backed me from a young age (Int. 5, L 243).</i></p> <p><i>my upbringing also had a huge part in this (Int. 7, L 352).</i></p> <p><i>I suppose I came from a very supportive family I was always encouraged and supported (Int. 10, L 278).</i></p>
	<p>Previous experiences <b>CSPE</b></p>	<p><i>and I know I am a good teacher, and I am usually well able to manage my class (Int 1 L131-132)</i></p> <p><i>I have always felt confident as a teacher (Int 5 L 176)</i></p> <p><i>my background in sport I play sport at a high level you have to deal with challenges as they go hand-in-hand with life challenges I have done well in sport and I think that's where my confidence come from (Int. 4, L 324).</i></p> <p><i>also have been involved in sport and you realise you're not always going to be successful this helps build your character (Int. 5, L 389).</i></p> <p><i>working with children over the years who have a wide range of difficulties (Int. 3, L 327).</i></p> <p><i>now at this stage of my career I can draw on my experience when I have found it really difficult (Int. 6, L 294).</i></p>

	Influence of Training <b>CSPE</b>	And I suppose the training I've had (Int. 6, L 176).
Factors that sustain a teacher's self-efficacy when working with a challenging student	Effective Strategies <b>SSES</b>	<i>it doesn't feel so bad now that we have procedures in place that are working better I feel more confident</i> (Int. 2, L 329).  <i>I suppose it's the strategies I put in place and they are starting to work</i> (Int. 5, L 413).
	Positive Response of Colleagues <b>SSC</b>	<i>I think at the end of the day I think it is my mental strength that is most important</i> (Int. 5, L 378).  <i>I would also like to say that your mental health is very important you need to mind it and be aware of it</i> (Int. 9, L 315).
	Self-care <b>SSSC</b>	I know I am stressed this year so I take extra time I the evenings to relax and go for a walk or a swim (Int. 9, L 57).  With a class like this you have to mind yourself and see that you are not getting too wound up (Int. 3, L 148).
	Mental health <b>SSMH</b>	<i>I think at the end of the day I think it is my mental strength that is most important</i> (Int. 5, L 378).

		<i>I would also like to say that your mental health is very important you need to mind it and be aware of it (Int. 9, L 315).</i>
	student's progress <b>SSSP -</b>	<i>he could fall behind if his behaviours continue (Int. 6, L 211).</i> <i>he finds it difficult to engage in any learning (Int. 7, L 320).</i>
	Progress of Other Students <b>SSOS</b>	I feel now I can get on with my class and that's very important (Int. 8, L 220).
	Positive Response of Parents <b>SSPR</b>	<i>maybe also when you meet parents and they make very positive remarks and how you are working with the child (Int. 6, L 396).</i> <i>when her mother tells you that things are going well and that there is no upset in the morning before she comes to school all that helps, support from the parents really helps (Int. 8, L 273).</i>
	Feeling of Control <b>SSFC</b>	and even working through the failures I has a reward system that didn't work because it was on a weekly basis then I changed to a daily basis and it was much better I think I am more confident that I had been able to change it to a system that worked better 2:8:234-235  /I think experience is good as well so for example now at the end of the year I can see they have learned so you know that will happen again next year3:6:178-180  I also feel that having survived this year if I do survive I can survive anything 2:9: 246-247

		<p>/when I started I was trying to get from break to break when I came in in the morning can I get to little break, from little break to lunch and from lunch to home time 4:4:119-123</p> <p>/but I have survived what do they say what doesn't kill you... 9:6:188-189</p> <p>/I think having got through this and knowing I've survived10:4:115</p> <p>/now I'm not expecting everything to work, I am more relaxed and I don't think things are too much to heart6:6:171-173</p>
	Relationship with student <b>SSRS</b>	<p><i>I suppose his reaction like he loves to see me and I've really grown to love him (Int. 3, L 312).</i></p> <p><i>one other thing is I really like this boy, I love working with children they love being in my class and that's important (Int. 9, L 378).</i></p>
Perceived Challenges to Self-Efficacy	September CSS	<p><i>In September I would have said very low but now it is stronger (Int 8 L 218)</i></p> <p><i>The thoughts I was having at the beginning of the year about my ability were not good but I feel much better at this stage of the year (Int 7 L 178-179)</i></p> <p><i>September was one of the hardest months I have ever worked (Int. 1, L 421).</i></p> <p><i>if you asked me in September I would say it (self-efficacy) was very low (Int. 9, L 321).</i></p> <p><i>in terms of comparing between where I am now and September I am far more confident now (Int. 3, L 412).</i></p>

		<p><i>I certainly remember walking on egg shells in September afraid that something will trigger a meltdown (Int. 10, L 313).</i></p> <p><i>if you had seen me in September I was tearing my hair out (Int. 7, L 217).</i></p>
	Emotional Impact <b>CSEI</b>	<p><i>from day to day I am on tender hooks and high alert all the time (Int. 5, L 342).</i></p> <p><i>this has affected me so much this child is in my head morning noon and night I dream about this child I told my husband about this child I am constantly wondering what I can do to manage the situation I am thinking about him every minute of every day when he is in school (Int. 6, L 277).</i></p> <p><i>you need to find a way to get rid of the dread of coming to school every day (Int. 8, L 326).</i></p> <p><i>and taking a deep breath when the student came into class and the relief when he was absent was really hard (Int. 3, L 282).</i></p>
	Physical Toll <b>CSPT</b>	<p><i>it can be really draining and exhausting (Int. 4, L 119).</i></p>
	Lack of Control <b>CSLC –</b>	<p><i>Well for example one day I was on my own and he started acting out he was shouting at me spitting at me I was there with the children on my own I had no SNA I really panicked I did know what to do my confidence was clearly not I didn't know how to react (Int. 7, L 348).</i></p>

		<i>sometimes when there is nothing else you can do it's very difficult (Int. 4, L 294).</i>
	isolation <b>CSI</b>	<i>maybe because it's such a small school with small staff I don't have access to the same number of people as I would have had in a previous school so you feel are your own like in another school I could have opened the door and called out to somebody there to help with the student (Int 3 L 254)</i>
	Self-Doubt <b>CSSD -</b>	<i>You might be thinking if another teacher had him he'd be better and you ask yourself what are you doing wrong (Int. 7, L 219).</i>  <i>if things aren't working you would feel a failure (Int. 4, L 192).</i>  <i>You feel like as a qualified teacher you should be able to manage this and that this behaviour is a reflection of you (Int. 2, L 273).</i>
	progress of other students <b>CSPOS</b>	<i>he will lash out at other children (Int. 8, L 137).</i>  <i>he has punched other children (Int. 7, L 241).</i>  <i>he gets aggressive with other students (Int. 2, L 165).</i>

		<p><i>absolutely it has so impacted on the other children they have lost out on so much contact time (Int. 3, L 287).</i></p> <p><i>this child has affected the whole class (Int. 1, L 305).</i></p> <p><i>one thing that worries me however is the other kids in the class and how this child behaviour is impacting on them sometimes I feel it's not fair (Int. 4, L 234).</i></p> <p><i>there is always a balancing act and it's not always easy because you want to keep a culture of fairness in the class too (Int. 8, L 179).</i></p>
	Professional Reputation <b>CSPR</b>	<p><i>I had a handover meeting for my class and I never felt so embarrassed about what I had covered (Int. 7, L 124).</i></p> <p><i>You are also aware of how you are being perceived by other teachers (Int. 2, L 167).</i></p> <p><i>When you have to go to senior management .. you feel like as a qualified teacher you should be able to manage this (Int. 9, L 176).</i></p>
	Student's progress <b>CSSP -</b>	<p><i>yes for me it certainly that (a sense of success). I feel if I tried everything and it hadn't worked then that would really knock my confidence it didn't benefit class didn't benefit the child and you didn't benefit</i></p>

		<p><i>and that's very difficult even though it has been very difficult he has made progress, other teachers might not feel the same (Int. 7, L 309).</i></p> <p><i>I suppose if nothing was working if his behaviour was bad every single day like if there were incidents serious incident five days in a row and nothing was working (Int. 4, L 319).</i></p> <p><i>if nothing was working a matter of what you had set up nothing was working and you had gone down every path you can think of, that would erode your confidence (Int. 7, L 402).</i></p>
	Negative responses of colleagues <b>CSNCR -</b>	<p><i>I suppose how other teachers respond is very important, so if they said gosh that class were fine last year that would make you feel bad, but if they say we couldn't manage this boy either then you wouldn't feel it was you (Int. 9, L 232).</i></p>
	Inconsistency of the student's behaviour <b>CSIB</b>	<p>He's never the same two days in a row (Int. 2, L 349).</p> <p><i>You might have a plan in place but then he won't co-operate so it's back to the drawing board (Int. 5, L 178).</i></p>



## Appendix 18 - Theme 4 Main Theme, Subthemes, Codes and Relevant Statements

### Theme 4

Class teachers' perception of their learning needs and the impact of training and CPD		
Subtheme	Codes	Relevant statements
	<p>Opportunities to Access Training and CPD</p> <p><b>ATOT</b></p>	<p><i>we really don't do any particular CPD unless EPV summer courses or Croke park hours</i></p> <p>(Int. 9, L 232). (Croke Park hours are based on DES Circular Number 0008/2011 which stipulates that school staff engage in 36 hours of whole school planning in addition to their contact time with students)</p> <p><i>I did a course on behavioural management course in the education centre it was over two nights</i> (Int. 10, L 252).</p> <p><i>I have done CPD courses over the years but nothing specific to behaviour</i> (Int. 4, L 346).</p> <p><i>not really just a summer course for EPV days a couple of years ago</i> (Int. 9, L 285).</p> <p><i>I'm going to do more courses because I'm in the smaller school I will need to go and find out other courses to continue my learning</i> (Int. 5, L 169).</p>
	<p>Summer Courses</p> <p><b>ATSC</b></p>	<p>/not really, just a summer course a couple of years ago for EPV days 10/5/141</p> <p>/we really don't do any particular CPD unless summer courses or Croke park hours 3/8/232</p>

Access to training and CPD		<p>/not really I haven't done any training just a summer course3/9/257</p> <p>/I did a one week course online last year4/7/208-210</p>
	<p>Incredible Years TCM ATiy</p>	<p><i>the structure of the Incredible Years has been very good and I have learned so much from this course (Int. 3, L 203).</i></p>
	<p>Learning from colleagues  ATLC</p>	<p><i>learning happens definitely to listening to all the other teachers particularly the older, I mean more senior teachers, who have more experience and also some of the newer teachers just out of training because they have loads of new ideas teamwork is great we have a Senior infant team that plan together and we help each other and we plan together ( Int 3 L 345)</i></p>
	<p>Other learning  ATOL</p>	<p>I am doing a post grad at the moment and I'm doing a lot of reading which is very interesting (Int. 1, L 315).</p>

<p>Teachers' perspectives on training and CPD</p>	<p>Relevance of Training Attended</p> <p><b>TPTA</b></p>	<p><i>well to be honest there is only so much they can tell you in training (Int. 3, L 132).</i></p> <p><i>(online course) it was very general and it didn't focus on specific difficulties (Int. 7, L 345).</i></p> <p><i>well not always sometimes I use it (what she learned) for a while and then it can fall away (Int. 5, L 372).</i></p> <p><i>I don't think it's about training no training just common sense (Int. 6, L 231).</i></p> <p><i>it was good but it would be better for a learning support teacher because they would be working one to one (Int. 1, L 165).</i></p> <p><i>I suppose it would have been better for a learning support teacher resource teacher as it talked about things you could do on a one-to-one basis but I did take some ideas from it (Int. 7, L 276).</i></p> <p><i>what I learned was I needed to develop a relationship with them and that's what I've been doing (Int. 10, L 332).</i></p> <p><i>well I suppose having more ideas and strategies you might use I'm not sure how you would get that (Int. 8, L 198).</i></p>
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	<p>Adequacy of Skill Levels</p> <p><b>TPAS</b></p>	<p><i>No I don't think so definitely not</i></p> <p><i>absolutely not even with seven years' experience where I have dealt with different situations before this was really very little help with this situation (Int. 9, L 178).</i></p> <p><i>no not enough I've got to the point where I have used everything I could possibly think of, everything I could possibly use, I've come to the point of saying what more can I do so I think that answers your question (Int. 5, L 245).</i></p> <p><i>I don't think teachers have the expertise to work with a child like this (Int. 8, L 274)</i></p>
	<p>Experiential Learning</p> <p><b>TPEL</b></p>	<p><i>I suppose as you go along you learn by experience the same things will not work for the same class because classes are different experiencing different classes and different children helps you learn</i></p> <p><i>I think the experiences I have had in previous classes before has helped</i></p> <p><i>I think it's learning through experience at this stage rather than from books</i></p> <p><i>Your best to learning is to be in the midst of it being thrown in like they can tell you this is what an autistic child will do this is what an ADHD child is like but surely each child is different and what might work for John might not work for Mary</i></p>

		<p><i>I think it's experience that helps you learn and when you are working hands-on you learn faster and quicker than you would reading stuff online or in books</i></p> <p><i>well first of all I am learning so much this year having to deal with this child</i></p> <p><i>I suppose you could say I spent years learning theory in college this year I'm learning the real thing</i></p> <p><i>I've also gained so much experience working with this boy which has given me confidence</i></p> <p><i>(Int. 2, L 173).</i></p> <p><i>I've learned more in the past year working with this child than I did in any training</i></p>
	<p>Transferring Theory to Practice</p> <p><b>TPTP</b></p>	<p><i>no I don't think any psychological theory was of any benefit to real-world situation and he is so inconsistent that it makes it difficult to apply any theory to the way he behaves (Int. 1, L 96).</i></p> <p><i>very little really to be honest I think you are thrown in at the deep end with a child like this and it's difficult to see how that relates to what you learned in college (Int. 3, L 87).</i></p>

		<i>I mean the theory I mean it was interesting at the time but I don't know how it helps you dealing with a real life situation (Int. 8, L 107).</i>
Engagement in Reflective Practice	<p>Awareness of Reflective Practice</p> <p><b>RPA</b></p>	<p><i>Then I had time to think about what else I might have done so I felt a little better about it (Int. 4, L 325).</i></p> <p><i>I really enjoyed this (laugh).. like you were saying about reflection and how I learn, I wouldn't have thought those things through before, like you don't really have time in the day to think about things and maybe you should set aside time, yet it is only now talking things through with you, it has been really good and it even puts the whole thing in context for me ( Int 1 L 258-261)</i></p>
	<p>Consultation with colleagues</p> <p><b>RPC</b></p>	<p>yes like it's just a chat after school in the staff room particularly with teachers who have worked with this girl well sometimes we might discuss an issue as a staff meeting but that's it 7/3/91-95</p> <p><b>Do you have a set time to meet with the resource teacher? Int 3 L187</b></p> <p>No, not really, we just chat at break time and after school, it depends on how things are going with him, we talk more if things are not going too well</p> <p><b>Do you think it would be helpful if you had more structured times to meet?</b></p> <p>Yes, yes I think it would, because then you are just not waiting for things to go wrong</p>

	<p>Opportunities for Structured Reflection</p> <p><b>RPO</b></p>	<p><i>Not really in teacher training the whole reflection piece has been ignored really when you start teaching it's all about your day-to-day lesson plans getting on with what you have to do, getting on with the urgent, you don't really get an opportunity to reflect in any systematic way, sometimes you might reflect if something worked really well it was rubbish but not as I say in a systematic way (Int. 4, L 214-218).</i></p> <p><i>oh absolutely without a doubt take for example with this child if I hadn't take time for reflection I would be dreading every day I wouldn't be able to cope I think I had to reflect to get my head around what was happening (Int. 6, L 198-200)</i></p> <p><i>no well I don't think so really I suppose when we... No I don't really think so, we don't have time– I know every class is different but in a case like this it would be important may be at the end of the year you might think how things work and changing something and introduce new things that worked (Int. 2, L 278-280).</i></p> <p><i>(incredible years) it has been great to have an opportunity to speak with other professionals and to sit back and think about what I'm doing (Int. 3, L 246-247).</i></p>
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## Appendix 19 - Theme 4 Main Theme, Subthemes, Codes and Relevant Statements

### Theme 5

#### Class teachers' views on the support systems that are needed when working with students presenting with challenging behaviour

Subtheme	Codes	Location Relevant statements
Teacher Support Networks	<b>TSSNA –</b> SNA Support	<p><i>You really do need an extra support of an SNA I'd be very concerned for a teacher working with this child without an SNA(Int 8 L 289)</i></p> <p><i>I've been very lucky because an SNA has been reallocated this child without this I would have had a much tougher time and I don't think the child would have made the same progress you are just not able to give as much time to the child when you're on your own (Int 6 L 455)</i></p>
	Collegial Support  <b>TSC</b>	<p><i>Sometimes you feel that other teachers aren't too happy with you working with this child and they feel that teachers shouldn't have to put up with behaviour like this (Int. 10, L 273).</i></p>



		<p><i>and other colleagues do not understand him they might even say you need to talk to him about something that happened in the yard but you might have done that 10 times already so it's not understanding where things are at (Int. 6, L 148).</i></p> <p><i>so you feel are your own like in another school I could have opened the door and called out to somebody there to help with the student 5/4/107-108</i></p> <p><i>maybe because it's such a small school with small staff I don't have access to the same number of people as I would have had in a previous school so you feel are your own like in another school I could have opened the door and called out to somebody there to help with the student (Int 3 L 254)</i></p>
	<p>Support from Management <b>TSP</b></p>	<p><i>I have been able to go to management and this has supported me more than it might have supported the child (Int. 6, L 148).</i></p> <p><i>The principal's door is always open you can always ask for help</i></p>

		<p><i>not really from the principal she just sees the child as being bold and her solution is to suspend him and I don't agree with this because when it is over he's back again and nothing has changed (Int. 6, L 148).</i></p> <p><i>the principal probably feels that you are grumbling about it and I understand they have other things to do (Int. 6, L 148).</i></p>
	Parental Support  <b>TSP</b>	<p><i>And also having the parents involved is really good ( Int 3 L 365)</i></p> <p><i>also the parents I feel there are my side the mum is very supportive ( Int 8 L 254)</i></p>
	Online Support  <b>TSO</b>	<p>I am signed up to a discussion board where I talk to teachers who are also working with a difficult students I find this very helpful and they have good suggestions ( Int 7 L 428)</p>
	Structured support required  <b>WSSS</b>	<p><i>On a day-to-day basis there is no consistent support there ( Int 2 L 219)</i></p> <p><i>yes definitely it's very hit and miss at the moment and you have to go looking for help or make a fuss ( Int 10 L 267)</i></p>

Within School Support Systems	Unstructured supports  <b>WSUS</b>	<i>like a chat after school in the staff room particularly with teachers who have worked with this girl well sometimes we might discuss an issue as a staff meeting and how best to respond to it but that's it Int 2 L342)</i>
	Whole school behaviour support  <b>WSWS</b>	<p><i>Am.. I wouldn't say so, not that I know of, not anything that is of help to me in this situation, we have a code of discipline but that's about it, each teacher has to figure it out by themselves ( Int 9 L 232)</i></p> <p><i>it's not something I've been made aware of ( Int 3 L 312)</i></p> <p><i>Well if you mean is there a policy in place to help someone like me working with this child no, the school have a discipline policy but that is no help for a child like this ( Int 4 L 421)</i></p> <p><i>I think it would be good though, I think that might be very helpful.....Well you wouldn't feel it was just your problem and you have somewhere to go (Int 7 L 198)</i></p> <p><i>oh absolutely without a doubt take for example with this child if I hadn't take time for reflection I would be dreading every day I wouldn't be able to cope I think I had to reflect to get my head around what was happening (Int. 6, L 198-200)</i></p>

		<i>no well I don't think so really I suppose when we... No I don't really think so, we don't have time– I know every class is different but in a case like this it would be important may be at the end of the year you might think how things work and changing something and introduce new things that worked (Int. 2, L 278-280).</i>
	Collaboration and Reflection <b>WSCR</b>	<i>Not really in teacher training the whole reflection piece has been ignored really when you start teaching it's all about your day-to-day lesson plans getting on with what you have to do, getting on with the urgent, you don't really get an opportunity to reflect in any systematic way, sometimes you might reflect if something worked really well it was rubbish but not as I say in a systematic way (Int. 4, L 214-218).</i>
Supports from External Professionals	Liaison with NEPS <b>ESN</b>	<i>well I'm involved in that process now I just started on the process now I've never experienced it before and I think it's really good I wasn't even aware of that way of working I was delighted with the kind of support I think even from the first meeting I've had somebody else sitting down and talking things to me you begin to see things from a very different perspective and even the fact that the psychologist is kind of struggling to</i>

		<p><i>understand what's going on and asking questions that's very reassuring and it's great to have another listening ear someone else was helping to point you in the right direction it's just nice to have time to sit down and think about the situation and ask questions and have the support its great ( Int 7 L 367)</i></p> <p><i>I've just got through the process into a very detailed process I'm not sure the psychologist took on board some of the information I was giving her so I feel more collegial support be more effective if the psychologist realised that the teacher has a wealth of data on the child also they have experience and practical knowledge and we have to work together rather than coming in as experts ( Int 5 L 421)</i></p>
	<p>Liaison with other professionals</p> <p><b>ESOP</b></p>	<p><i>Well to be frank a lot of what they do is related to paperwork and ticking boxes become inward strategies that work. Because they are textbook strategies they are not related to the individual child and they are not specific enough. If there was more mutual professional respect, if there was collaboration rather than feeling they are the experts I think there is a sense there might be a hierarchy of knowledge about children such as this and that is not true(Int 8 L 214- 222)</i></p>

		<p><i>yes that's right I think the way they work is not suitable for this type of situation (Int 4 L 364)</i></p> <p><i>not really it was just about gathering information about the child I was working with but it didn't really help me as a teacher (Int 9 L 311)</i></p> <p><i>I find the system quite funny there's lots of filling out questionnaires it's like you are being interviewed but no one gives you any practical support ( Int 2 L 435)</i></p> <p><i>I've had involvement with someone from the HSE but this was not helpful and it didn't help this child there was a lot of contradiction you should try this you should try that like one day they were here and a meeting and the child began to kick off which was a great opportunity for them to see him as he was in the classroom but they didn't go down they just stayed sitting at the table ( Int 6 L 391)</i></p> <p><i>it was good to talk to someone outside the school but I didn't get too many new ideas so I'm not sure how good it was ( Int 10 L 478)</i></p>
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	<b>ESPR - Value of professional reports</b>	<p><i>getting reports that's not helpful for the teacher it's just some general suggestions ( Int 5 L 421)</i></p> <p><i>some are okay but others just give back what you told a professional and the diagnosis which you probably know already ( Int 3 L 489)</i></p> <p><i>well I suppose some of the recommendations might help. The report has not really been of any help because I didn't understand some of the language in the report I think sometimes attested by psychologists are very technical and focus on different parts of the brain and the child may not be able to do certain tasks you may not read the report again for six months and it no longer makes sense to you ( Int 9 L 427)</i></p> <p><i>the ability to communicate meaningfully with the author can be an issue so it would be great to have an opportunity to talk about what's in the report and ask what does this mean should I do it this way or is there a way I can do it better, communication is the key I feel ( Int 5 L 419)</i></p> <p><i>conversation is more important than a written report ( Int 1 L 496)</i></p>
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