An appreciative exploration of what works to enhance the wellbeing of staff working in a special education school

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Disclaimer

This thesis is being submitted for the award of Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology. I confirm that this work has not been previously submitted or assessed for any other qualification at either Newcastle University or any other Universities. The work completed is solely my own and, to the best of my knowledge, does not contain material previously authored by another person unless referenced.

Overarching abstract

This document includes three key sections; a systematic literature review, an empirical research study and a bridging document (linking the other two documents). Overall this project seeks to explore 'what works' to enhance the wellbeing of staff working in special education schools.

The first chapter, the systematic literature review, critically examines the literature surrounding special educational teacher burnout. The review is guided by recommendations from Petticrew and Roberts (2006). Eight pieces of research literature are found to meet the inclusion criteria and are consequently used within the review. A process of textual narrative synthesis is used to inform synthesis of the studies. Themes are identified across the studies and subsequently, divided into two sub-categories; risk factors and protective factors. Within the first category, risk factors, the following themes were apparent: role conflict and role ambiguity; workload manageability; self-esteem, self-efficacy and classroom management efficacy; and perceived stress. Within the second category, protective factors, the following themes were apparent: perceived support, including the type of support and where the support came from; leadership style; building relationships with students; coping strategies; career professional development; and overall happiness and job satisfaction. Based on findings from the literature review, the empirical research project seeks to explore the organisational factors enhancing staff wellbeing in a special education setting. An empirical research project in Chapter Three, draws upon appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003) to explore the factors enhancing their wellbeing. Inductive thematic analysis using a hybrid of semantic and latent coding is used to analyse the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Willig, 2013). Five organisational factors including leadership; having a shared goal and understanding; supportive structures being in place; staff feeling supported; and the adoption of a person-centred approach are determined to enhance the wellbeing of staff within the school. Links are then made to the wider literature, with particular exploration of 'professional learning communities' (PLCs). The project closes by considering the implications for Educational Psychologists looking to support staff wellbeing within schools. These chapters are linked by a bridging document – Chapter Two - which explores the research journey including consideration of the philosophical assumptions underpinning and the influence these may have had on the empirical research project.

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Chapter One: A Systematic Literature Review

What are the organisational factors impacting special education teacher burnout?

Abstract

Within the literature, it has been suggested that special education teachers (SETs) are 2.5 times more likely to leave the classroom after the first year of teaching, than other beginning teachers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004); with 50% quitting in the first five years (Singer, 1992). Burnout has been identified as a lead predictor of SET attrition (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Mastropieri, 2001; Shen et al., 2015); the detrimental impact of which has been highlighted across the literature (e.g. Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Ruble & McGrew, 2013; Wong, Ruble, Yu, & McGrew, 2017). This systematic literature review looks to explore the organisational factors impacting on SET burnout. Guided by recommendations from Petticrew and Roberts (2006) eight pieces of research literature – seven quantitative and one mixed methods - are included within the review. A process of textual narrative synthesis informs the synthesis of the studies. Drawing upon the findings, common themes are identified across the studies as contributors to burnout and subsequently, divided into two sub-categories; risk factors and protective factors. Risk factors are suggested to include role conflict and role ambiguity; workload manageability; self-esteem, self-efficacy and classroom management efficacy; and perceived stress. Protective factors, are suggested to include perceived support, including the type of support and where the support came from; leadership style; building relationships with students; coping strategies; career professional development; and overall happiness and job satisfaction. The implications of this are considered and a conclusion drawn.

Context and Rationale

In 2017, the Government set out the ambition to enhance the provision of mental health support available to children and young people (CYP) through the publishing of Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: A Green Paper (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017). Within the paper, schools and colleges are identified as key stakeholders in the delivery of 'early intervention'. However, little suggestion is made as to how the mental health agenda fits with schools' specific requirements to drive up educational standards (Finney, 2006; Gott, 2003).

In a recent report by the Department for Education (2018b) it was identified that teacher retention rates at all career stages are declining, with an increasing proportion of newly starting and more experienced teachers leaving the profession. In the literature focusing on special education teachers (SETs) it is suggested that 50% of SETs quit in the first five years of teaching (Singer, 1992) and that SETs are 2.5 times more likely to leave the classroom after the first year of teaching than other beginning teachers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004); with burnout being identified as a lead predictor of SET attrition (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Mastropieri, 2001; Shen et al., 2015). Farber (2000) highlights that teachers in special education schools experiencing emotional exhaustion (a dimension of burnout) often perceive themselves to be doing so for the benefit of the CYP; yet there appears to be limited awareness of the detrimental impact of this (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Ruble & McGrew, 2013; Wong et al., 2017). Taking into account reports by the Department for Education (2018a) 'that where a pupil has certain types of special educational need (SEN) there is an increased likelihood of mental health problems'; it may be assumed that, due to the ambitions set out in the Green Paper (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017), SETs will play a vital role in the provision of support for these pupils. As such, it may be suggested that the ambitions laid out in the Green Paper (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017) are insufficient without provision first being put into place to support the wellbeing of SETs.

Focus of the Review

This review seeks to identify the factors impacting upon SET burnout. As well as contributing to the existing literature within this area, it is hoped that this review will facilitate the identification of key factors which may help to reduce the experience of burnout for SETs and, consequently, enhance their positive experiences within the profession.

To aid contextual understanding, the next section examines the wider literature surrounding teacher attrition including the contributing factors. A definition of burnout will then be

provided and explored in relation to teacher and, subsequently, SET burnout. Following this, the potential impact of SET burnout will be discussed, and consideration given as to why this is an important area to explore.

Introduction

Teacher Attrition

In a publication by the Department for Education (2018b) it was highlighted that teacher retention rates at all career stages are declining, with an increasing proportion of newly starting and more experienced teachers leaving the profession. The daily stress experienced by those working within the teaching profession has been a central focus of research within the field of Occupational and Health psychology with suggestions made that it often culminates in the experience of burnout (Cooper, 1995; Kyriacou, 1987; Travers & Cooper, 1996). In a large scale study, De Heus and Diekstra (1999) determined that teachers were at a higher risk of burnout than other social professions. Moreover, in a review of the literature surrounding SETs, Brunsting, Sreckovic, and Lane (2014) identified that SETs are at an increased risk of burnout than their mainstream counterparts. Perhaps as a consequence, burnout has been identified as a lead predictor of SET attrition (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Mastropieri, 2001; Shen et al., 2015). As such, in order to address SET attrition, it is proposed that focus is placed upon burnout, as a lead predictor, with particular attention being paid to the factors leading to its onset.

Teacher Burnout

Within the literature, it is suggested that burnout can have a significant effect on physical and psychosocial wellbeing (Honkonen et al., 2006; Shin, Noh, Jang, Park, & Lee, 2013). In defining burnout, the focus is placed upon the cause being work related rather than multifactorial in its origin and pervasive in nature, as with mental illnesses such as depression (Bakker et al., 2000). When defining teacher burnout Maslach and Jackson (1981) identified three common features:

- *Emotional exhaustion:* When the teacher feels that they have no more left to give others on an emotional or psychological level.
- *Depersonalisation:* When the teacher experiences psychological detachment and social distancing from both their personal and professional lives.
- *Reduced personal accomplishment:* When the teacher feels that they are no longer effective in their professional responsibility.

In line with suggestions by the World Health Organisation (2005) that the focal point of mental wellbeing should not be limited to the absence of mental illness but the positive

character of mental systems and attitudes that are inherent to it when considering burnout, as a term, this study will draw upon the definition as provided above.

Special Education Teacher Burnout

Burnout arises in response to chronic interpersonal stressors and job tediousness (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). As such, teachers may experience features of burnout when the stress they encounter outweighs their resources and abilities to cope adequately resulting in them feeling emotionally exhausted, cynical, or unaccomplished in their work (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Maslach et al., 2001). Across the literature, a number of factors are identified as contributing to teacher burnout, such as:

- A lack of administrative support (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007)
- A high level of paperwork (Billingsley, 2004)
- Challenging student behaviour (Hastings & Brown, 2002)
- Feelings of role overload (Adera & Bullock, 2010)
- And, an expectation-reality mismatch (Zabel, Boomer, & King, 1984)

Whilst these factors may be reflective of any teacher role, further factors such as the requirement to address the unique needs of their students (usually on an individual basis); to facilitate team teach; and, to maintain caseload responsibilities (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010), have been identified as specific to the SET role. The acknowledgement has also been made that SETs often use their time to perform non-instructional tasks - not carried out by general education teachers - for example, IEP meetings/paperwork (Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010) which may impact upon the time they have available to spend within the classroom or to complete other administrative tasks associated with the job. Perhaps, as a consequence, Brunsting et al. (2014) suggests that SETs are at an increased risk of burnout.

The impact of burnout

Within the literature, the implications of burnout for teacher physical and mental health have been highlighted (Armon, Melamed, Shirom, & Shapira, 2010; Bianchi, Boffy, Hingray, Truchot, & Laurent, 2013; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). At the organisational level, burnout is associated with turnover intention, lower productivity and a decreased commitment (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998; Maslach et al., 2001). Moreover, in a longitudinal study, burnout has been identified as one of the strongest predictors for depression (Shin et al., 2013). Perhaps as a consequence, high levels of absenteeism have also been associated with burnout, with the potential of leading to attrition (Billingsley, 2004; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Pullis, 1992). Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997) suggest that teachers experiencing burnout direct their energy towards that of 'basic survival'. Possibly, as a result, teachers often experience

detrimental effects to their creativity, lesson planning, behaviour management skills, and their ability to respond effectively to the needs of pupils (Glazzard, 2018).

The specific implications of SET burnout have also been explored. Ansley, Houchins, and Varjas (2016) identified that SETs experiencing burnout are at risk of developing long-term mental health problems. As a consequence, there is an increased likelihood of teacher turnover, resulting in less stability and predictability for the students. This may be particularly detrimental to pupils with SEN as often they struggle with changes to structures and routines, particularly when those changes are unexpected and/or unplanned, enhancing the chances of disruptive behaviour and/or disengagement from learning (Ansley et al., 2016). In addition, it has been highlighted that students being taught by SETs experiencing emotional exhaustion are often more disruptive, struggle socially and emotionally, and achieve their individual education plan (IEP) goals less frequently (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Ruble & McGrew, 2013; Wong et al., 2017).

Taking this into account, it seems critical that consideration is given to SET burnout to reduce the potential of negative outcomes for both themselves and the individuals they are working alongside.

Systematic Literature Review Process

This section outlines the systematic literature review process. Guided by recommendations from Petticrew and Roberts (2006) seven stages were followed (See Table 1.1):

Table 1.1, Stages of the systematic review

Stage 1	Formulate the research question
Stage 2	Determine the type of studies required in order to answer the research question
Stage 3	Carry out the literature search
Stage 4	Screen relevant studies using inclusion criteria to identify those suitable for in-depth analysis
Stage 5	Map out study findings and appraise for quality
Stage 6	Synthesise findings
Stage 7	Disseminate findings of the systematic review

Stage 1: Formulate the research question

In the initial stages of question development - due to a reluctance to come from an angle of deficit - focus was placed upon exploration of the literature surrounding SET wellbeing. However, the availability of literature found within this area was limited. As such, further exploration of the literature was facilitated and, as a consequence, the following question was chosen for the review:

What are the organisational factors impacting special education teacher burnout?

Stage 2: Determine the type of studies required in order to answer the research question

An initial search was carried out to identify any other reviews published in this field. Within the search, the following paper was identified as the most recent publication: Special Education Teacher Burnout: A synthesis of Research from 1979 to 2013 (Brunsting et al., 2014). The current research literature was then drawn upon to identify possible search terms for initial searches (See Table 1.2):

Factors	Factors
Special Education	Special Education
	Special School
Teacher	Teacher
	Educator
Burnout	Burnout
	Emotional Exhaustion
	Cynicism
	Depersonalisation

Stage 3: Carry out the literature search

Using the search terms (Table 1.2) as a guide, a systematic combination of searches was undertaken. Between 17th January 2019 and 12th April 2019, electronic searches were carried out of the following databases: ERIC (Educational Resource Index and Abstracts), Scopus, and Web of Science, on various occasions.

Table 1.3, Total results from initial searches

Database	No. of results from initial search
ERIC (EBSCO)	1012
Scopus	17
Web of Science	57

From these searches, a plethora of literature was identified as being relevant to the search terms (See Table 1.3).

Stage 4: Screen relevant studies using inclusion criteria to identify those suitable for in-depth analysis

To narrow the literature down inclusion criteria were applied to the searches being carried out, within the electronic databases. (See Table 1.4).

- **Date:** 2012 to date of last search (April 2019)

- Peer reviewed

- **Language:** Published in English

- Inclusive only of literature not included in research synthesis (Brunsting et al., 2014)

In addition, further screening was conducted using the titles and, if necessary, the abstracts to identify studies unrelated to the review question.

Table 1.5, Comparison of results from initial searches and results following application of inclusion criteria

Database	No. of results from initial search	No. of results after initial inclusion criteria applied
ERIC (EBSCO)	1012	211
Scopus	17	8
Web of Science	57	27
		Total: 246

246 studies were identified as relevant to the review question (See Table 1.5). To ensure all literature relating to the question had been identified, further searches were carried out in the form of reference harvesting and citation searches. Within these searches a further six studies were identified, bringing the total number of studies to 252. To further refine the number of studies additional inclusion criteria were applied (See Table 1.6).

Table 1.6, Step 4: Further Inclusion Criteria

- **Participants:** Special Education Teachers. If a sample includes both special and general education teachers, then the findings needed to be differentiated.

- The **central focus of the study should be burnout**, preferably in one or more of the three areas identified by Maslach and Jackson (1986): emotional exhaustion, depersonalization/cynicism and/or lack of personal accomplishment

- *A **measure** of burnout to be used*

Using the criteria, further screening was conducted. Following this, focus was placed upon the titles, abstracts and keywords. Subsequently, 26 studies were identified as relevant to the review question. The full texts of the remaining eligible studies were read, and outstanding ineligible studies excluded. Upon completion, 11 studies were deemed as

relevant to the review question. Taking into account the limited availability of United Kingdom (UK) based literature, a final inclusion criterion (See Table 1.7) was applied.

Table 1.7, Step 4: Final Inclusion Criteria

- Studies to be from *Western Educational Jurisdiction*.

On the basis of this, eight studies were identified as relevant for the next stage of the process.

Stage 5: Map out study findings and appraise for quality

The eight studies were then individually mapped out using the tables below.

Table 1.8, Stage 5, Mapping out the study: A study of the relation between special education burnout and job satisfaction (Robinson, Bridges, Rollins, & Schumacker, 2019)

Purpose/Research Question(s)	Context	Participants	Method/Design	Measure of burnout	Other Measures	Data Analysis	Brief outline of suggested findings
To investigate the relationship between teachers having meaningful professional development opportunities, feeling supported by their schools, and whether or not they plan to leave the field with links to burnout. To analyse the relationship between two sets of variables using canonical correlation analysis (CCA)	USA	363 public special education teachers from elementary, middle and high schools	Electronic survey method	Maslach burnout Inventory – Educator Survey (MBI-ES; Maslach & Jackson, 1986)	13 demographic and teaching-related questions Three questions exploring job satisfaction (split into three key areas: perceived level of support; professional development opportunities; and intent to leave)	Canonical correlation analysis	Results indicate two statistically significant canonical correlations between job satisfaction and level of teacher burnout.

Table 1.9, Stage 5, Mapping out the study: Mixed methods analysis of rural special educators' role stressors, behaviour management, and burnout (Garwood, Werts, Varghese, & Gosey, 2018)

Purpose/Research Question(s)	Context	Participants	Method/Design	Measure of burnout	Other Measures	Data Analysis	Brief outline of suggested findings
Identified a gap in the literature regarding rural special education teacher burnout	USA	64 rural special education teachers took part in the survey. From this, 12 teachers took part in the focus groups.	Mixed-methods sequential explanatory design (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006)	Maslach burnout Inventory – Educator Survey (MBI-ES; Maslach & Jackson, 1986)	Demographic questions	Quantitative data: >Descriptive statistics, frequency counts, and zero-order correlations	Results indicate that role conflict was a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation.
Research questions					Questions about teachers' educational background		Classroom management efficacy was a significant predictor of depersonalisation and sense of personal accomplishment.
1.What is the relationship between rural special education teachers' self-reported classroom management efficacy and role stressors to their feelings of burnout?					Classroom management efficacy subscale of the Teachers' sense of efficacy scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001)(	>Multiple regressions	
2.To what factors do rural special education teachers attribute their feelings of burnout?						Qualitative data: >constant comparative method (Glesne, 2011)	Role ambiguity was a significant predictor of sense of personal accomplishment.
3.What practices do rural special education teachers find successful in preventing burnout?					Role conflict and role ambiguity questionnaire (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970)	>memo writing (Glesne, 2011) >Inter-rater reliability (House, House, & Campbell, 1981)	In addition, the researchers identified the following themes as issues related to burnout: role conflict, role ambiguity, exhaustion, personalisation and accomplishment, behaviour management, relationships with students and relationships with colleagues.

Table 1.10, Stage 5, Mapping out the study: The potential role of perceived support for reduction of special education teachers burnout, (Langher, Caputo, & Ricci, 2017)

Purpose/Research Question(s)	Context	Participants	Method/Design	Measure of burnout	Other Measures	Data Analysis	Brief outline of suggested findings
To explore the potential role of perceived support for reducing burnout in special education teachers coming from secondary school.	Italy	276 special education teachers working in lower and higher secondary schools	Multi-method approach	Maslach burnout Inventory – Educator Survey (MBI-ES; Maslach & Jackson, 1986) – Italian adaptation (Sirigatti & Stefanile, 1993)	The perceived collaboration and support for inclusive teaching (CSIT) scale (Caputo & Langher, 2015)	Descriptive statistics Correlation analysis Multilevel regression analysis	Perceived support may have a role in reducing emotional exhaustion and improving sense of personal accomplishment.

Table 1.11, Stage 5, Mapping out the study: The effects of transformational leadership and the sense of calling on job burnout among special education teachers (Gong, Zimmerli, & Hoffer, 2013)

Purpose/Research Question(s)	Context	Participants	Method/Design	Measure of burnout	Other Measures	Data Analysis	Brief outline of suggested findings
To explore the effect of transformational leadership and the sense of calling on job burnout among special education teachers.	USA	256 special education teachers		Maslach burnout Inventory – Educator Survey (MBI-ES; Maslach & Jackson, 1986)	Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999)	SPSS: Descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment coefficients	Transformational leadership negatively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and positively related to personal accomplishment.
					Calling scale (Markow & Klenke, 2005)	Mediation Model (Baron & Kenny, 1986)	Relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' burnout mediated by sense of calling.
						'Bootstrapping' method (See Preacher & Hayes, 2004)	

Table 1.12, Stage 5, Mapping out the study: Workload manageability among novice special and general educators: Relationships with emotional exhaustion and career intentions (Bettini, et al., 2017)

Purpose/Research Question(s)	Context	Participants	Method/Design	Measure of burnout	Other Measures	Data Analysis	Brief outline of suggested findings
To explore novice special education teachers (SETs) perceptions of workloads.	USA	61 special education teachers	Secondary Analysis of existing data set	Emotional Exhaustion subscale from Maslach burnout Inventory – Educator Survey (MBI-ES; Maslach & Jackson, 1986)	Secondary analysis of existing data	Two-way repeated measures ANOVA (Cohen, 2008)	Perceived workload manageability predicted emotional exhaustion, which mediated a relationship between workload manageability and career intentions.
To explore whether novice SETs perceive workloads as less manageable than novice general education teachers (GETs).		And 184 general education teachers			>Workload manageability	Structural equation modelling	
					>Career intentions		
To explore whether perceptions of workload manageability predict career intentions and emotional exhaustion.						Confirmatory factor analysis	

Table 1.13, Stage 5, Mapping out the study: Teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder across various educational settings: The factors involved in burnout (Cappe, Bolduc, Poirier, Popa-Roch, & Boujut, 2017)

Purpose/Research Question(s)	Context	Participants	Method/Design	Measure of burnout	Other Measures	Data Analysis	Brief outline of suggested findings
To compare the experiences of French-Canadian teachers of pupils with ASD according to the educational setting within which they work, through dispositional and transactional variables, as well as burnout	Canada (French-Candian)	115 French-speaking Canadian teachers split into the following categories: Teachers in a regular class in mainstream school with at least one pupil with an ASD (n=26); Teachers in a specialised class in mainstream school (n=41), Teachers in a specialised institution (n=9); and mainstream teachers with no children with ASD in their class (n=39)		Maslach burnout Inventory (MBI-ES; Maslach & Jackson, 1986) – French Adaptation (Dion & Tessier, 1994)	Sociodemographic and occupational characteristics French Adaptation of the general self-efficacy scale (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1992; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)	Analyses of co-variance (single-factor ANCOVA) with planned contrasts	Perceived stress and social support predict burnout among teachers of children with ASD in mainstream classes.
To assess the relations and weight of these dispositional and transactional variables on burnout dimensions					French Adaptation of the Empathy Quotient (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004; Berthoz, Wessa, Kedia, Wicker, & Grèzes, 2008) French adaptation of the Appraisal of Life Events Scale (Cappe, Poirier, et al., 2017; Cappe, Wolff, Bobet, & Adrien, 2011; Ferguson, Matthews, & Cox, 1999)	Multiple linear regression analyses	Self-efficacy predicts burnout among teachers in specialised settings. Teachers of children with ASD in specialised setting evaluated experience of teaching as a challenge to a greater extent than teachers of children with ASD in mainstream classroom.

>"Questionnaire de Soutien Social Percu" French Questionnaire assessing perceived social support (Cappe et al., 2011; Koleck, 2000)

French version of the Ways of Coping Checklist – Revised (Cappe et al., 2011; Cousson, Bruchon-Schweitzer, Quintard, Nuissier, & Rascle, 1996; Vitaliano, Russo, Carr, Maiuro, & Becker, 1985)

Teachers in specialised settings rely significantly more on problem-solving and support-seeking strategies.

Table 1.14, Stage 5, Mapping out the study: Comparative study of teachers in regular schools and teacher in specialized schools in France, working with students with an Autism Spectrum disorder: Stress, social support, coping strategies and burnout (Boujut, Dean, Grouselle, & Cappe, 2016)

Purpose/Research Question(s)	Context	Participants	Method/Design	Measure of burnout	Other Measures	Data Analysis	Brief outline of suggested findings
To compare the experiences of teachers in France working with children with ASD in different environmental settings by evaluating perceived stress, perceived social support, coping strategies, and burnout	France	245 primary and secondary school teachers split into three groups: Teachers in a mainstream school with a child with ASD in their class (n = 103), Teachers from specialised classes or institutions teaching at least one child with ASD (n=100), control group (n=42)		Maslach burnout Inventory (MBI-ES; Maslach & Jackson, 1986) – French Adaptation (Dion & Tessier, 1994)	French adaptation of the Appraisal of Life Events Scale (Ferguson et al., 1999)	Analyses of variance (MANOVAs and ANOVAs with post hoc tests)	Teachers in specialised settings perceive their experiences more as challenges and less as threats or losses compared to teachers in mainstream.
To study influence of transactional variables (perceived stress, perceived social support, coping strategies) on burnout					"Questionnaire de Soutien Social Percu" French Questionnaire assessing perceived social support (Koleck, 2000)	Multiple linear regressions (stepwise method)	Teachers in specialised settings felt received more social support from colleagues and other professionals, particularly emotional, informational, and appraisal support also tend to use more problem-focused coping strategies.
					Ways of Coping Checklist – Revised by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) revised by Vitaliano et al. (1985)		

Table 1.15, Stage 5, Mapping out the study: Burnout in special needs teachers at kindergarten and primary school: Investigating the role of personal resources and work wellbeing (De Stasio, Fiorilli, Benevene, Uusitalo-Malmivaara, & Di Chiacchio, 2017)

Purpose/Research Question(s)	Context	Participants	Method/Design	Measure of burnout	Other Measures	Data Analysis	Brief outline of suggested findings
To examine the contributions of sociodemographic variables, personal resources, and work wellbeing to teacher burnout.	Italy	194 full time in-service special education teachers	Cross-sectional survey-based study Integrative predictive model	Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, & Christensen, 2005) - Italian adaptation by (Fiorilli et al., 2015)	Teacher self-efficacy Rosenburg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 2015) Job satisfaction survey (Spector, 1985) Teacher's happiness at school (adapted from the School Children's Happiness Inventory by (Ivens, 2007)	Bivariate correlations: Pearson correlation coefficient Multiple regressions	Teacher happiness at school and job satisfaction incrementally predicted variance in personal, work-related, and student-related burnout, even after controlling for the effects of sociodemographic factors and personal resources.

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Stage 5 (continued): Map out study findings and appraise for quality

Weight of Evidence

The eight identified studies were subjected to intense scrutiny to establish the overall quality and relevance of each study to the review question. To do so systematically, guidance by Gough (2007) surrounding the Weight of Evidence (WoE) and TAPUPAS (Pawson, Boaz, Grayson, Long, & Barnes, 2003) (See Table 1.16) was drawn upon to develop a tool (See Appendix 1) to assess each individual paper.

Table 1.16, TAPUPAS dimensions and the Weight of Evidence Framework (Gough, 2007)

Weight of Evidence A: Trustworthiness of results in terms of own question (Methodological quality)
Transparency: Clarity of Purpose
Accuracy: Accurate
Accessibility: Understandable
Specificity: Method-specific Quality
Weight of Evidence B: Appropriateness of study design linked to this review Question (Methodological relevance)
Purposivity: Fit for Purpose Method
Weight of Evidence C: Appropriateness of focus of research in answering this review Question (Topic relevance)
Utility: Provides Relevant Answers
Propriety: Legal and Ethical Research

Once the WoE had been determined for each individual paper, the overall WoE in relation to review question was determined utilising the weighting from WoE B and C (See Table 1.17).

Table 1.17, A table to show the Weight of Evidence for each paper included in the review

Paper: Title/Author(s)	Weight of Evidence A: Trustworthiness of results in terms of own question (Methodological quality)	Weight of Evidence B: Appropriateness of study design linked to this review Question (Methodological relevance)	Weight of Evidence C: Appropriateness of focus of research in answering this review Question (Topic relevance)	Overall Weight in relation to review question (Weight of Evidence B and C)
A study of the relation between special education burnout and job satisfaction (Robinson et al., 2019)	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Mixed methods analysis of rural special educators role stressors, behaviour management, and burnout (Garwood et al., 2018)	High/Medium	High/Medium	Medium/Low	Medium
The potential role of perceived support for reduction of special education teachers burnout, (Langher et al., 2017)	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium/Low
The effects of transformational leadership and the sense of calling on job burnout among special education teachers (Gong et al., 2013)	High/Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Workload manageability among novice special and general educators: Relationships with emotional exhaustion and career intentions (Bettinni, et al., 2017)	Medium/Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder across various educational settings: The factors involved in burnout (Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017)	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium/Low
Comparative study of teachers in regular schools and teacher in specialized schools in France, working with students with an Autism Spectrum disorder: Stress, social support, coping strategies and burnout (Boujut et al., 2016)	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium/Low
Burnout in special needs teachers at kindergarten and primary school: Investigating the role of personal resources and work wellbeing (De Stasio et al., 2017)	Medium	High/Medium	Low	Medium

Weight of Evidence: Summary

After careful consideration of each individual paper, five of the studies (Bettini et al., 2017; De Stasio et al., 2017; Garwood et al., 2018; Gong et al., 2013; Robinson et al., 2019) were judged to provide medium WoE, in relation to the review question and, three of the studies (Boujut et al., 2016; Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017; Langher et al., 2017) were judged to provide a medium/low WoE, in relation to the review question. It should be noted that, despite adherence to the guidance provided by Gough (2007), the WoE rating is a subjective process which is open to influence from individual bias. As such, the ratings should be approached with caution. This will be given consideration in the next stage of the review.

Stage 6 and 7: Synthesise and disseminate findings

Within the WoE process all studies were weighted as having medium or medium/low relevance to the review question. Therefore, it is deemed appropriate that all studies are drawn upon to inform the discussion. However, this will be done so with a degree of caution, taking into consideration the weightings. A process of textual narrative synthesis (see Table 1.18) - suggested to be a useful approach to synthesising evidence of different types (Lucas, Baird, Arai, Law, & Roberts, 2007) - was used to inform synthesis of the studies.

Table 1.18, A table to show the process of textual narrative synthesis (adapted from Lucas et al. (2007))

	Action suggested by Lucas et al. (2007)	Action taken in this review
Step 1	Study grouping	As it had been determined that each paper made a contribution towards addressing the review question, the studies were considered to have been grouped on this basis.
Step 2	Study commentaries produced	Commentaries on the key aspects and/or features of the individual studies were identified. The similarities and differences between each aspect and/or feature were considered, in line with the impact this may have upon the studies' suitability to address the review question.
Step 3	Sub-group synthesis produced	Taking into consideration the review question, the similarities and differences across the studies' findings were taken into account. These were then used to draw overarching conclusions, with regards to the findings made, across the eight studies included.

Study characteristics

A total of eight studies are included in this review. Of the eight studies, seven were quantitative (Bettini et al., 2017; Boujut et al., 2016; Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017; De Stasio et al., 2017; Gong et al., 2013; Langher et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019) and one was mixed methods (Garwood et al., 2018).

Defining and Measuring Burnout

Seven of the studies defined burnout using the definition by Maslach and Jackson (1981) within which three subdimensions of burnout are identified: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment. One of the studies (De Stasio et al., 2017) defines burnout using the definition by Kristensen et al. (2005) within which three alternative subdimensions of burnout are identified: personal burnout (the feelings of physical and psychological fatigue experienced by an individual); work-related burnout (the degree of physical and psychological fatigues and exhaustion perceived by a person that can be

related to his/her work); and client-related burnout (the physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion that is perceived by a teacher to be related to his/her work with students specifically).

To measure burnout, three of the studies (Garwood et al., 2018; Gong et al., 2013; Robinson et al., 2019) use the MBI-ES (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) – a scale specific to educator burnout – in its original format; One of the studies (Langher et al., 2017) uses the MBI-ES, Italian adaptation (Sirigatti & Stefanile, 1993). Three of the studies (Bettini et al., 2017; Boujut et al., 2016; Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017) use the MBI (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) – a scale not specific to educator burnout. One of the studies (Bettini et al., 2017) uses just one of the subscales from the MBI; emotional exhaustion; Two of the studies (Boujut et al., 2016; Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017) use a French adaptation of the full MBI scale (Dion & Tessier, 1994); and one of the studies (De Stasio et al., 2017) uses an Italian adaptation (Fiorilli et al., 2015) of the Copenhagen burnout inventory (CBI) (Kristensen et al., 2005).

MBI (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) and MBI-ES (Maslach & Jackson, 1986):
It has been suggested across the literature that the MBI-ES has been used extensively in studies to measure educator burnout (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Fore, Martin, & Bender, 2002; Gong et al., 2013; Hakanen et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2019).

Reliability
In an analysis of 84 published studies, it was found that both the MBI and MBI-ES have strong reliability (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Wheeler, Vassar, Worley, & Barnes, 2011) when used within the intended context. Taking this into account, caution is advised as when they are being used within the Italian context, it has been suggested that the scale internal consistency is just satisfactory (Sirigatti & Stefanile, 1993).

Validity
The MBI has been validated for general populations (Dion & Tessier, 1994; Schaufeli, Bakker, Hoogduin, Schaap, & Kladler, 2001)

The MBI-ES has been validated specifically for educator populations (Byrne, 1993; Gold, 1984; Kokkinos, 2006; Maslach & Jackson, 1986) with the norms deriving from North American workers (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). As such, whilst Dion and Tessier (1994) suggest that the validity of the MBI, French adaptation has been confirmed, this is not necessarily specific to the teaching population. However, it is apparent that other research studying burnout in the French teaching population has used this measure (e.g. Genoud, Brodard, & Reicherts, 2009; Laugaa, Rascle, & Bruchon-Schweitzer, 2008; Levesque, Blais, & Hess, 2004).

CBI, Italian adaptation (Fiorilli et al., 2015; Kristensen et al., 2005): Validity and Reliability

Although not a widely used measure of burnout, within the literature, the CBI has been identified as having satisfactory reliability and criterion-related validity for assessing burnout in Italian teachers (Fiorilli et al., 2015).

Other measures

Within each of the eight studies, the demographic information such as the gender, age, number of years of experience, seniority within their roles, was collected and reported. Most of the studies (e.g. Boujut et al., 2016; Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017; Langher et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019) used this information to determine whether the research sample was reflective of the wider context within which the study was being facilitated. Whilst this may be useful it may limit the quality of such studies as they have not taken into account the wider impact of such information on their overall findings. Some of the studies, (e.g.De Stasio et al., 2017; Garwood et al., 2018; Gong et al., 2013), also took this information into account when reporting findings and the implications this may have, possibly enhancing the quality of this particular study.

One of the studies (De Stasio et al., 2017) explored personal burnout (the physical and psychological fatigue and overall exhaustion experienced by an individual). This may have enhanced the quality of the findings as an extra dimension of burnout was considered. Two of the studies (Boujut et al., 2016; Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017) also explored the influence of support from those outside of school, such as family and friends, and the impact this may have on teacher burnout. By including these personal measurements, which may not be influenced by the school environment itself, the researchers may have developed a more holistic view of the contributors to burnout enhancing the quality of the findings.

Summary:

The different definitions and measurements of burnout across the eight studies may have implications for comparison within this review. As the majority of the studies draw upon the definition of burnout, as provided by Maslach and Jackson (1981), comparison between them may be possible. However, due to the differing measures utilised, i.e. the MBI (Maslach and Jackson, 1981) and the MBI-ES (Maslach and Jackson, 1986), it is acknowledged that the validity of the data may be somewhat limited. It is also recognised that one of the studies (De Stasio et al., 2017) uses an alternative definition (Kristensen et al., 2005) and thus, measure. However, it is felt that the work-related and client-related aspects of burnout identified within this definition, and subsequently explored within the study, may be drawn upon to address the review question. As such, this paper will be

cautiously drawn upon within the review, with links made to the definition as provided by Maslach and Jackson (1981).

Context of studies

Context

The studies in this review derived from differing contexts. Four of the studies (Bettini et al., 2017; Garwood et al., 2018; Gong et al., 2013; Robinson et al., 2019) were undertaken in the United States of America (USA); two of the studies (De Stasio et al., 2017; Langher et al., 2017) were carried out in Italy; and two of the studies were carried out in French speaking contexts: one French-Canadian (Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017) and the other in France (Boujut et al., 2016). As a result of the differing contexts of the studies used in this review, the education systems and, thus, the approach taken towards teaching and learning of children with SEN may differ across the studies. For example, some of the studies view the SET role as co-teaching within mainstream settings (to enhance inclusion), whilst others are specifically based within specialised settings. Perhaps as consequence of this, two of the studies (Boujut et al., 2016; Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017) specifically focus on a specific area of SEN, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), across varying educational contexts.

Overall, this has implications for the review in that the findings within each study may potentially only be relevant to that specific context. It is recognised that this is not ideal however, the sparsity of UK based literature means that this is the best available literature.

Participants

Participation was voluntary for all studies in the review. Whilst Bettini et al. (2017) carried out a secondary analysis of previously collected data, most of the studies identified that they used convenience samples. Some of the studies recognised the limitations of this, i.e. how reflective the sample was of the teaching population in that context and the potential bias associated with how the participants may have engaged with the questions (Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019).

Quality of studies

Data Collection and Interpretation

Seven of the studies used a quantitative approach to data collection and analysis (Bettini et al., 2017; Boujut et al., 2016; Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017; De Stasio et al., 2017; Gong et al., 2013; Langher et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019). Whilst one of the studies (Garwood et al., 2018) used a mixed method design. Within this study, Garwood et al., (2018) identified that the quantitative data gathered in the study was used to inform the qualitative data collection and analysis, potentially resulting in more robust findings.

One of the studies (Bettini et al., 2017) used a secondary analysis of already existing data. This may have had implications for the conceptualisation of factors being investigated within the study, due to the availability of the data. It is possible that as a result the terms and specific definitions used in the study were tailored to meet the requirements of the data already collected rather than being defined and then data collected to suit this. As a consequence, the study was limited to only investigating one component of burnout (emotional exhaustion). Consequently, the quality of the findings may have been reduced and the conclusions implicated. In addition, the initial data collection was facilitated a number of years prior, therefore may be of less relevance to the context within which the study took place.

All of the studies included in this review draw upon self-report measures as their main sources of data. This type of measurement is highly susceptible to social desirability bias - for example, teachers may have displayed a reluctance to report experiencing a cynical attitude towards students - this may have resulted in the data being skewed.

Most of the studies used the MBI-ES (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) as a means of measuring burnout. Although a widely used measure, the scale was developed over 30 years ago. Taking into account the changing contexts and even more so the changes in educational contexts, throughout this time, a modified version of the scale may be necessary to enhance the quality of the studies. To address this consideration may be given to the inclusion of questions exploring teacher physical health as well as items relating to teacher's relationships with students and colleagues (Garwood et al., 2018). Alternatively, a multi method approach towards the investigation of burnout, may enable consideration of other measures of burnout such as absenteeism rates (Langher et al., 2017).

Findings

In this section, the findings of the studies are discussed. Taking into account the review question, the findings of each study were considered both individually and collectively. As a result, key themes were identified. These themes were then split into two sub-categories; risk factors and protective factors.

Risk factors

Role conflict and Role ambiguity

Role conflict was identified as a key contributor to SETs emotional exhaustion (large effect size) and depersonalisation (moderate effect size) (Garwood et al., 2018). More specifically, unrealistic expectations, unfair distributions of caseloads, and the competing requirements of the job were identified as key areas of conflict for SETs (Garwood et al., 2017). Greater ambiguity within their role predicted less feeling of personal accomplishment (moderate

effect size) (Garwood et al., 2018). In particular, the ambiguity surrounding expectations from others (from school level to wider systems level) was indicated as a concern. Garwood et al., (2018) highlighted that without clear guidance, SETs felt they had no idea what to expect. In order to address this, it was suggested that SETs could benefit from the provision of effective feedback surrounding their roles, which may promote their sense of personal accomplishment whilst allowing them to feel supported by the school (Garwood et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2019).

Workload manageability

The impact of workload manageability on SET burnout was highlighted (Bettini et al., 2017; Garwood et al., 2018). When comparing workload manageability over the course of a year, Bettini et al. (2017) identified that SETs were more likely to find the workload less manageable later on in the school term, i.e. during the spring term. One explanation for this may be the struggle experienced by teachers in saying "no" perhaps (Garwood et al., 2018) which over a prolonged period of time, may lead to an accumulation of work. Findings by Bettini et al. (2017) further support this, suggesting that Autumn (fall) workload manageability significantly negatively predicted spring emotional exhaustion. In considering these findings, it is important to take into account that Bettini et al. (2017) focused their study specifically on 'novice' special education teachers and consequently, it is uncertain how generalisable this is to all SETs. On the contrary, De Stasio et al. (2017) identified that for some SETs the workplace may be a resource for dealing with issues such as workload perhaps, through the receipt of more support to complete paperwork (Garwood et al., 2018).

Self-esteem, self-efficacy and classroom management efficacy

Self-esteem, self-efficacy and classroom management efficacy were identified as key factors impacting upon SET burnout (Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017; De Stasio et al., 2017; Garwood et al., 2018). A common theme throughout this, was the link between self and relationships with the students. For example, De Stasio et al. (2017) reported that a low level of self-esteem may predict personal burnout. Moreover, self-esteem and self-efficacy are negative predictors of student-related burnout (ibid, 2017). Cappe, Bolduc, et al. (2017) suggested that higher level of general self-efficacy may predict a greater sense of personal accomplishment. Similarly, Garwood et al. (2018) indicates that classroom management efficacy is a significant predictor of personal accomplishment (large effect size) and depersonalisation (large effect size).

Taking this into account, it may be assumed that SETs experiencing low self-esteem, particularly in relation to classroom management, are at an increased risk of experiencing burnout. Conversely, those who view themselves as being able to manage behaviour within

a classroom are more likely to experience a greater sense of personal accomplishment within their role (Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017) and, thus, less at risk of burnout.

Perceived stress

Within the review, one of the studies identified perceived stress as a predictor for SET burnout (Boujut et al., 2016). Whilst this idea was not reflected within any of the other studies included in this review, it is apparent across the literature that stress may be a factor contributing to burnout (See Brunsting et al., 2014).

Protective factors

Perceived support (Interpersonal relationships)

Within the review, the importance of perceived support was identified (Boujut et al., 2016; Langher et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019). Low levels of perceived social support were found to predict a higher level of burnout for teachers in specialist settings (Boujut et al., 2016). Similarly perceived support was found to be negatively correlated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation but positively associated with personal accomplishment (all modest associations) (Langher et al., 2017). Moreover, perceived support was determined to play a role in reducing emotional exhaustion and improving personal accomplishment (ibid). This may be explained by the possible link between the feeling of being supported by the school with emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment (Robinson et al., 2019).

Perception of the type of support

Perceptions surrounding the type of support being received was also determined as an important factor (Bettini et al., 2017; Boujut et al., 2016; Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017). Two of the studies identified that SETs perceived themselves to receive less informative support than other teachers (e.g. mainstream) (Bettini et al., 2017; Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017). In spite of this, SETs identified that they received more emotional support in comparison to teachers in mainstream settings (Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017). This perception of support, may be beneficial for SETs as Boujut et al. (2016) suggested that, for SETs, emotional support is protective but instrumental support predicts a higher level of burnout.

Who should provide the support?

When SETs feel supported by their place of work the less likely they are to experience emotional exhaustion and their feeling of personal accomplishment is greater, within their role (Robinson et al., 2019). Within their roles, SETs perceive receiving less support from their friends and more support from health professionals than teachers working in mainstream settings (Boujut et al., 2016). Boujut et al. (2016) suggested that support from family was predictive of a higher level of burnout within SETs. Perhaps, as a consequence,

SETs perceived that they obtained more support from colleagues and professionals, particularly emotional, informational and appraisal support than teachers in mainstream. Additionally, SETs perceived support from friends as less important for their work but support from health professionals as more important (ibid). Garwood et al. (2018) identified that the support SETs received from administrators was less important to them than the relationships they had with colleagues. Within this, particular importance was placed upon supporting one another and celebrating each other's successes within the school setting (Garwood et al., 2018). Furthermore, SETs rating as having a higher level of burnout did not have as strong a social network among their peers (Garwood et al., 2018).

Given these points, in order to reduce SET burnout, it appears that importance should be placed upon the perceived availability of emotional support in schools.

Leadership style

One of the papers (Gong et al., 2013), included within this review, identified the impact of transformational leadership on burnout. Within this study, findings indicated that transformational leadership negatively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation but positively related to personal accomplishment, after controlling for teachers' sense of calling. Similarly, collaborative leadership styles, which look to promote and support teachers were identified by De Stasio et al. (2017) as potentially reducing the risk of burnout. Perhaps through the notion of involving SETs in decision making which Robinson et al. (2019) suggested may support them to feel more valued.

To summarise, it appears that through the adoption of a collaborative and/or transformational style of leadership, which includes the involvement of staff in decision making, SET burnout may be reduced.

Building relationships with students

Within the review, SETs appeared to place importance upon being afforded the time to build and develop interpersonal relationships with students (Garwood et al., 2018). It may be suggested that through this teachers are potentially able to develop a more holistic understanding of their students which in turn, may lead to an increase in their classroom management efficacy (a risk factor) leading to an overall increased sense of personal accomplishment (Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017; Garwood et al., 2018). However, to do so Garwood et al. (2018) identified that teachers must first be low on burnout to embrace the challenge of trying to educate and form relationships with students.

Coping strategies

Some of the studies included in this review considered the coping strategies adopted by SETs and the possible implications of their use. Cappe, Bolduc, et al. (2017) and Boujut et

al. (2016) identified that teachers working in specialised settings are more likely to adopt problem-focused coping strategies than teachers in mainstream. It was highlighted that this was potentially positive as emotion focused coping strategies, not typically used by SETs, were predictive of higher levels of burnout (Boujut et al., 2016). SETs were suggested to rely significantly more on social support seeking strategies than teachers in mainstream schools (Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017). Potentially highlighting the importance of perceived support (see above). In addition, the type of support, and who it is being received from, plays an important role in SETs' ability to cope (Bettini et al., 2017; Boujut et al., 2016; Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017; Garwood et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2019). SETs expectations of success within their roles was also identified as a positive coping strategy (Garwood et al., 2018). By redefining their meaning of student success, i.e. focusing on the small steps of progress made, Garwood et al., (2018) suggested that they were able to reduce their experiences of burnout. This could perhaps, be linked to findings by Cappe, Bolduc, et al. (2017); De Stasio et al. (2017) regarding self-efficacy as through the act of redefining success SETs may be more able to experience a greater sense of personal accomplishment within their role.

Career professional development

Opportunities for career professional development (CPD) have been highlighted as important for the prevention of SET burnout (Garwood et al., 2018; Gong et al., 2013; Langher et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019). By accessing and engaging in CPD Langher et al. (2017) identified that feelings of depersonalisation were lowered, perhaps due to the development of teachers perceived competence in the classroom. Taking this into account, Robinson et al. (2019) and Garwood et al. (2018) highlight the importance of the CPD being offered to SETs is meaningful to the individual, with the potential for detrimental effects if it is not. Therefore, it may be suggested that when organising CPD it is up to school leaders to align CPD to the needs of the students and teachers within that particular setting (Gong et al., 2013).

Overall happiness and job satisfaction

Across the studies, overall teacher happiness and job satisfaction were highlighted as important mediators of burnout (De Stasio et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019). The conceptualisation of job satisfaction appeared to be an area of difference across the studies however, findings on the impact of job satisfaction on burnout appeared to be similar. In one of the studies, SETs who experience lower levels of job satisfaction (defined by three questions exploring feeling supported by school, opportunities for professional development and intent to leave) were likely to experience higher levels of burnout (Robinson et al., 2019). Similarly, De Stasio et al. (2017) identified that overall job satisfaction – as defined

using the job satisfaction survey (Spector, 1985) - predicted variance in work-related and student-related burnout, even when controlling for sociodemographic factors and personal resources. In addition, teacher happiness was found to predict variance in both work-related and student-related burnout (De Stasio et al., 2017). As such, De Stasio et al. (2017) suggested that happiness and job satisfaction have the strongest potential to prevent SET burnout, irrespective of other factors.

Conclusion

To conclude, this review sought to identify organisational factors impacting SET burnout. Whilst acknowledgement has been made of the differences between the included studies, with regards to context and other variables it is felt that commonalities, in terms of factors, have been identified across the studies. For ease of reference, these have been split into two sub-categories; risk factors and protective factors.

Within the first category, risk factors, the following themes were apparent: role conflict and role ambiguity; workload manageability; self-esteem, self-efficacy and classroom management efficacy; and perceived stress.

Within the second category, protective factors, the following themes were apparent: perceived support, including the type of support and where the support came from; leadership style; building relationships with students; coping strategies; career professional development; and overall happiness and job satisfaction.

Although it is recognised that some of the themes within this review reflect findings in previous reviews, such as Brunsting et al. (2014), it is also felt that the focus on 'organisational factors' offers a novel focus. As such, it may be suggested that by drawing upon the protective factors identified within this review, leadership teams within schools may seek out to develop structures and, thus cultures, with the intentions of enhancing staffs' feelings of wellbeing within the setting which have the potential to foster the enhancement of both staff and learner outcomes.

Implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs)

Taking into account the protective factors identified within the review, it may be suggested that, in order to facilitate change and reduce teachers experience of burnout, the ecosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) within which teachers operate must be considered. As part of this, it appears that great importance must be placed upon the relationship's teachers develop within schools, and the support these relationships provide. As such, it is important to consider the implications of, for example attachment theory (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991), and the way in which such theory may be drawn upon to explain why teachers working in

'high reliability organisations' (Lekka, 2011) may seek out relationships as a means of reducing feelings of burnout.

In order to support schools to develop such cultures, EPs may be called upon to establish an understanding of the current culture present within the school. This may then be drawn upon to support schools to establish a culture which is conducive to wellbeing. For example, through the delivery of training which seeks out to enhance staffs' understanding of the coping strategies they may use when problem solving. In addition, EPs may support schools to establish structures which seek to develop relationships, for example group supervision sessions within classrooms and/or regular feedback between teachers, leadership and/or teaching assistants which focuses on success and improvement. This may also include modelling, by the EP, within the classrooms – perhaps when carrying out other pieces of work such as individual observations of children – when the EP may feedback to the staff with regards to how the staff were working well together to support one another and how this may continue to occur, in order to enhance their feelings of wellbeing whilst also enhancing the outcomes for the individual pupil.

Limitations of the review

Although the review has been carried out as robustly as possible, it is necessary to acknowledge the potential of bias within the review. Whilst a systematic approach, following guidance from Petticrew and Roberts (2006), was taken towards the selection of literature it is recognised that the conclusions drawn within this review may be limited by the fact that the author was the one selecting/rejecting the studies and, thus, selection bias may have occurred. Although guidance from Gough (2007) was followed to inform the weighting process, it is recognised that bias within this process may have been further increased due to the greater level of subjectivity, which is unavoidable when attributing weights. However, it is hoped that the use of the guidance reduced some of this bias.

A further limitation of this review is the use of self-report measures within the studies, which could themselves be problematic and lead to social desirability bias. However, it was recognised that due to the concept being investigated, i.e. burnout, and the tools often used to measure this, this was unavoidable. Finally, the contextual basis of the studies included may be viewed as a limitation. Due to a sparsity of literature availability the contextual basis of the studies was widespread. It is recognised that drawing upon literature from different contexts may have resulted in cultural effects. Therefore, when considering wider generalisation of the findings it is advised that this be taken into account.

Chapter Two: Bridging Document

Bridging the research and the project

Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to offer the reader a 'bridge' between Chapter One: A Systematic Literature Review and Chapter Three: A Research Project. In addition, taking into account my current status as a Year Three Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). At the end of this chapter I shall provide a short summary of how this journey has informed my views surrounding the unique role of the Educational Psychologist including consideration of how this may influence my future practice. To begin, I shall discuss the journey surrounding the identification of a focus for this project.

Determining the focus of the Research Project

Personal rationale

In 2017, when I started my Doctorate training the Government Green Paper was released (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017). Reading the paper, I noticed that references were made to 'whole school approaches' yet there was no suggestion as to whom 'whole school' referred, e.g. children, young people, teaching staff etc. Simultaneously, I wondered how the mental health agenda would fit with schools' specific requirements to drive up educational standards (Finney, 2006; Gott, 2003) and the possible implications this may have for teaching staff already expressing concerns regarding 'the changing nature of their roles' (Rothì, Leavey, & Best, 2008, p. 1227). As a result, I began to consider how whole school approaches may be drawn upon, in an inclusive way, to promote the mental health and wellbeing of a whole school. Whilst carrying out my exploration of the literature, I became aware of the concerns surrounding teacher retention and attrition. Within this I noticed that burnout was a key contributing factor. Concurrently, I came across the suggestion that children and young people (CYP) with special education needs (SENs) were at an 'increased likelihood' of experiencing mental health problems (Department for Education, 2018a, p. 12). Having previously worked in a special education setting, prior to my training, I was aware of the challenges already faced by staff within these settings. As such, I felt it appropriate to place my focus on special education provisions.

In parallel to this, my personal interest in positive psychology and collaborative working developed. Whilst carrying out my literature review, I was aware of my own tensions with regards to research placing focus upon deficit, i.e. burnout. In addition, I was mindful that (dis)stress may be a sensitive topic to explore with school staff (Sharrocks, 2014). As such, I identified three key features in the development of my research project (1) a positive focus; (2) a focus on wellbeing; and (3) the promotion of collaborative working.

Within the literature it is suggested that, among those who have developed successful comprehensive approaches there is a strong consensus that social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) has to be high profile, not tucked between other matters and topics that a school perceives as more important (Elias, 1995; Elias et al., 1997; Weare, 2000). Whilst I was clear on the project focus from a personal perspective, I recognised that to increase the opportunity for success it was important to consider how the project would align within the wider systems. Taking this into account, I felt it important to consider the context within which the project would be taking place.

Local Authority (LA) Context

At the time of carrying out the project, I was based in a LA identified as one of the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) trailblazers - an initiative introduced through the Green Paper (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017). Unusually, the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) was a key stakeholder within this project, with a central focus of their role being around the whole school. To facilitate this, an individual audit was carried out by each school, within which they were encouraged to consider their current SEMH provision. Following this, it was reported to the EP team that staff wellbeing had been identified as an area of development within some of the schools. As such, I felt that my project may help to address this.

Identification of Project Context

When considering potential participants for my research project, I identified that it would be important to find a school within which 'wellbeing' was an area of focus. In discussions with a colleague, my attention was drawn to a LA special school currently taking part in a 'wellbeing award project'. The EP was supporting the school to facilitate this and felt that the project would offer something additional to the work she was doing. Subsequently, I was invited to a planning meeting with the Headteacher, within which I was afforded the opportunity to explain the project. Following this meeting, after the provision of further information and negotiation of the project, the Headteacher agreed for the project to go ahead in the school.

Adopting a Systemic Approach: From 'teacher' wellbeing to 'staff' wellbeing

Within the review, I noticed that many of the 'protective' factors for SET burnout were dependent upon the wider systems present within school, for example perceived support; leadership style; and building relationships with students. Taking into consideration the idea that systems are made up of interacting parts which mutually communicate with and influence each other (Bateson, 1972) I began to query whether it was possible for teacher burnout and/or wellbeing to be addressed without the environment, within which they work, also being taken into account. Subsequently, I gave consideration to the influence of

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ecosystems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) in terms of the importance of engagement with systems when attempting to unravel complexity. With this in mind, when exploring possible methods for the project I noticed that within Appreciative Inquiry (AI) the inclusion of key stakeholders is advised in order to facilitate lasting change (Cooperrider, Whitney, Stavros, & Stavros, 2008). Moreover, during negotiations with the Headteacher queries were raised as to why an explicit focus would be placed upon teacher wellbeing, when teachers were part of a wider system of staff. Consequently, a systemic focus was adopted with the question being adapted from a teacher focus within the review to a staff focus within the research project. I believe that this offers a unique perspective as throughout the literature the predominant focus is placed upon SET burnout with little focus being placed upon other staff also working to support students.

Research Paradigms

The Philosophical Journey

Beliefs about the nature of reality and how it can be known may guide and shape a research journey. At the beginning of my journey, as a TEP, my attention was drawn to the influence of philosophical assumptions on practice. As I have continued this journey, I have been encouraged to explore, consider and reflect upon the philosophical assumptions underpinning my stance as both a researcher and a practitioner. At my current level of understanding, in the next section I present my thinking surrounding my own world view.

Ontology and Epistemology

Often in qualitative research, the researcher seeks to generate knowledge to develop, as closely as possible, an accurate picture of something that is happening in the social (or real) world (Willig, 2013). A realist approach presupposes that there are processes of a social nature, which exist and can be identified, provided a researcher is skilled enough to do so (ibid). A critical realist approach assumes that, although data 'can tell us something about what is going on in the 'real' world, it does not do so in a self-evident, unmediated fashion' (Willig, 2013, p. 16). As such, it is not assumed that the data is a direct reflection of what is going on in the social world; rather that, in order to develop an understanding of the underlying structures contributing, the data must be interpreted further to try and identify the factors or forces beyond the participants knowledge (Willig, 2013). A critical realist approach assumes that, whilst the research participants may not be aware of what it is that is driving their behaviour, the underlying structures - identified by the researcher – are real and thus offer, a fundamental truth (ibid). Similar to suggestions by Dewey (1929) I believe that the notion of a fundamental truth diverts 'attention from the kind of understanding necessary for dealing with practical problems' (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p. 143). As such, I propose that

my world view aligns with that of a pragmatic critical realist approach as described by Johnson and Duberley (2000). Reflective of their suggestions, I believe that knowledge can be socially constructed to help solve problems (ibid). Moreover, I am of the view that the aim of research is to transform a situation rather than to reach an 'inaccessible reality' (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p.144).

Project Aims

As a consequence of my pragmatic critical realist stance the aims of this project were two-fold: (1) to identify organisational factors which may enhance the wellbeing of staff working in a special education school; and (2) to facilitate a culture shift within the school to support staff wellbeing beyond the containment of the overarching project. In the next section, I shall consider how these assumptions and, subsequently the project aims, influenced the methodology within this project.

Methodology

Methodology describes the approach to the research, including what you do and how you do it; this is also informed by the ontology and epistemology of the researcher (Grix, 2001). In order to choose an appropriate methodology, it was important to consider my world view and the project aims. This will be explored further in the next section.

Method

Within the literature, method has been defined as the tools, processes and procedures explicitly used during a research project to collect and analyse data (Cordeiro, Soares, & Rittenmeyer, 2017; Gough & Lyons, 2016). When developing their knowledge of qualitative research, student researchers – an identity I associate with - are often taught how to collect and then analyse (or code) data (Brinkmann, 2014; St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014) to generate new knowledge. This traditional understanding of research is based on the assumption that the purpose of research is simply to generate new knowledge for the wider academic community. Taking into account the aims of the project, and my pragmatic critical realist stance, it was important that – supportive of a traditional understanding of research - the method adopted produced data which may address the research question (aim 1) whilst also facilitating the potential for a transformation or social change (Mertens, 2014) within the school (aim 2). In addition, perhaps due to my personal interests, I was keen to adopt a methodology that supported collaborative working whilst also enhancing the wellbeing of staff both within the containment of the project and beyond this – through their experiences of engagement within the project and the project findings.

Action Research (AR): Appreciative inquiry (AI)

AR looks to improve practice by improving knowledge (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). AI may be described as a form of AR which places focus on appreciative narratives in order to bring about positive change (Ridley-Duff & Duncan, 2015; Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008). AI is a strength-oriented approach (Hammond, 2013) underpinned by the premise that within every organisation there exist processes that work well and, consequently, may be drawn upon as a starting point to create positive change (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). Due to its generative nature, AI can be used support co-operative interactions and spontaneous participation of those within a system (or organisation) resulting in an exploration of their strengths, resources, values and high points (Bright, Powley, Fry, & Barrett, 2013). The AI process is underpinned by a set of principles and assumptions (Cooperrider et al., 2008) (See Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1, The Assumptions of AI (adapted from Hammond, 2013, pp. 14-15)

1. **In every organisation something works**
2. **What we focus on becomes our reality**
3. **Reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities**
4. **The act of asking questions of an organisation of group influences the group in some way**
5. **People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known)**
6. **If we carry parts of the past forward it should be what is best about the past**
7. **It is important to value differences**
8. **The language we use creates our reality**

As a consequence, AI can be viewed as both a method for organisational improvement and a research method (Reed, 2006) and thus, it was felt appropriate to address both of the research aims. No single method is identified for the facilitation of AI; doing so may inadvertently work against the conceptual essence of AI, as a process, being different for each group or organisation engaging with it (Fitzgerald, Oliver, & Hoxsey, 2010). However, aware of my stance as a novice researcher and to ensure that the project aims were addressed, a more structured approach was taken towards the facilitation of AI within this project (See Figure 3.3).

AI and wellbeing

When considering a method for this project, I came across AI. Taking into account the wellbeing focus within this project, and my personal interest in positive psychology, I was initially drawn to AI due to the positive focus and the assumption that what we focus on becomes our reality (Hammond, 2013). I hoped that within this project the focus on wellbeing, within the process of AI, would support a reality of wellbeing for the participants. To me it was important that engagement within the process was, at the very least, supportive of staff wellbeing. Taking this into account when I came across the suggestion that the process of AI can act as a tool to nurture a group's sense of positivity (Bright et al., 2013); my justification for the use of AI as a research method was solidified. Moreover, I noticed suggestions that through co-operative interactions and enhanced spontaneous participation AI can afford those involved the opportunity to develop a shared sense of collective wellbeing, whilst also creating new and hopeful realities (Saha, 2014; Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008). Considering my personal interest surrounding collaborative working, and the promotion of systemic thinking, I felt that this fit well with the way in which I wanted to practice as a practitioner-researcher. As such, I hoped that the process of AI within the research project would develop a shared sense of collective wellbeing which would culminate in enhanced wellbeing within the school.

Focus Groups

Considering the notion that schools are high reliability organisations (Lekka, 2011) I was aware of my position as a researcher coming into a school and placing what may be deemed as extra pressure on staff through the facilitation of a research project. Drawing upon my pragmatic critical realist stance, I am of the belief that knowledge can be socially constructed to help solve problems (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). In order to facilitate this, I believe that collaborative working is an essential element – something I often draw upon within my practice. Within this, I am aware that a cohesive group tends to be more creative, insightful and enthusiastic than one person alone (Cooperrider et al., 2008). As such, I was keen to facilitate the project in a way that promoted collaborative working, within a cohesive group. Focus groups, made up of approximately eight to ten participants (Morgan, 1996), allow participants to discover a joint understanding; generate wider discussion; and create a breadth of themes (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). As such, they have been identified as an efficient way of generating appropriate data without the need for substantial amounts of time (Robson, 2002). For this reason it was felt that focus groups, informed by the 5D cycle of AI (Cooperrider et al., 2003), may be a viable method for both the facilitation of the project and data collection.

The Process of Inquiry

The position of the researcher

Collaboration in action research is largely based upon trust (Grant, Nelson, & Mitchell, 2008), sameness (McArdle, 2008) and reciprocity (Robertson, 2000) between the practitioner(s) and the outsider. Cognisant of my role within the group as an insider-outsider I continually reflected on the influence of this status upon the project (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Thomson & Gunter, 2011). I also gave consideration to the second-person inquiry nature of the project and the influence this may have on the process (Torbert & Taylor, 2008). Second-person inquiry is essentially speaking and listening with others (Isaacs, 1999); it embraces people coming together to do a co-operative inquiry into a subject of shared interest or concern (Heen, 2005) with the aim of the group developing more mindful ways to act in the world (Heron & Reason, 2006). This can include an outside researcher working with a group of insiders. Aware of my stance as an outsider, I drew upon McArdle (2008) to consider the phases of this project - getting in, getting on and getting out (See Table 3.19 for further information) - and how I might manage them effectively.

The impact of group dynamics

Whilst cognisant of my role as a researcher and an outsider, I was keen to work with the participants, not on or about them (Heron & Reason, 2006). However, I was also aware of my role as facilitator and prior to facilitation of the project, gave consideration to the possibilities surrounding this role. Within the focus group sessions, I considered the effects that group dynamics may have in terms of either promoting or hindering the discussions (Leong & Austin, 2006). Prior to the commencement of the first session, I reflected on my current role as a TEP and how my personal values (e.g. Burden, 1996) - which had led to me entering such a role - may be similar to those held by the participants (e.g. Crutchfield, 1997) thus, promoting a sense of solidarity within the group. Moreover, I hoped that the somewhat homogenous nature of the group, in terms of similar values surrounding entry into our roles, would act as a support for the stimulation of discussion whilst also promoting the forming and sharing of views (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Irrespective of this, throughout the sessions I remained cognisant that skilled facilitation played a central role, in terms of time keeping etc., to ensure that all participants were afforded the opportunity to share their views (Robinson, 1999) and, to enhance the sense of shared collective wellbeing (Saha, 2014; Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008).

> **The 'positive' focus of AI**
>
> Throughout the process of inquiry, on occasion, group members queried whether – due to the nature of AI – it was ok for the conversation to adopt a negative focus. This idea has been explored within the literature, with suggestions made that the positive focus of AI may potentially hide or invalidate any negative feelings or experiences (Oliver, 2005) leading to a one sided/half formed view of an organisation (Bushe, 2011). Similarly, the potentially blinding nature of the positive focus of AI, has been highlighted (Bushe, 2007). Bushe (2007) suggested that one way to overcome this is to focus on the core of AI being about the generative not the positive (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). For example, consideration may be given to the idea that the dreams presented often reflect the frustrations that come from unrealised potential and from barriers within the organisation (Bushe, 2011; Patton, 2003) – in other words, AI may be supporting problem based discussions but in a solution-oriented way (Hammond, 2013; Rees, 2008). Whilst I recognise that some AIs may overemphasise the positive, with critical and cynical voices being suppressed or silenced (Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008) I was keen for this not to happen within this particular project. To account for this, in discussion with the group we recognised that AI is an approach which may be used for discovering, understanding and nurturing ideas (Cooperrider et al., 2008). As such, it was felt that the negative nature of such stories often acted as catalysts for discussions surrounding how things may be changed or made better. Consequently, it was deemed important that all stories were embraced however, such stories were often followed up by solution oriented (Rees, 2008) 'exception questions' to try and facilitate a shift in thinking towards one of solution or dream.

The production of data

Thematic Analysis (TA)

TA was identified as an appropriate method of analysis, within this project, for the following reasons: it can be used flexibly with various methods of data collection; it is considered to be an appropriate method for novel researchers; and it is deemed as being accessible to a wider audience and therefore, appropriate for use with participatory approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). Although TA has been present for some time (Merton, 1975) it was Braun and Clarke (2006) who clearly outlined a set of procedures for its use in the social sciences. By focusing on what was said, rather than how it was said, TA looks to capture something important within a data set; in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). As TA is an iterative and reflective process that develops over time it involves the researcher constantly moving back and forward between the phases (Nowell, Norris,

White, & Moules, 2017). Perhaps for this reason, it is not deemed essential to have all the data before carrying out analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). It was therefore felt appropriate to use within different stages throughout the process of this project. To ensure 'analytic sensibility' (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 201), adherence to the TA stages was not strict but instead adapted according to the purpose of the analysis and the researcher's own interpretations (see Table 3.19). As the aims of this project were two-fold, not all the data collected was used to inform the project findings (see Table 3.19). Consequently, the data collected in the initial focus group was subjected to TA by the group, within the session, as a means of developing a shared conceptualisation of wellbeing. For the purpose of data, to inform the projects findings and thus, address aim (1) the audio recordings taken in the second focus group session were transcribed and analysed by the researcher. In doing so, I recognised that no researcher is a 'blank slate' and thus acknowledged that the TA would be influenced by my own theoretical and philosophical orientations (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017).

> ***Understanding Organisational Culture: Making Tacit Knowledge Explicit***
> Within every system there is a set of assumptions, often not visible or verbalised, but which group members accept and follow (Hammond, 2013). Such assumptions often develop, and exist, at an unconscious level (ibid) (See, Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture (Appendix 4) for further explanation). Consequently, difficulties often arise when attempts are made to articulate and define this set of assumptions, which may otherwise be referred to as the culture (Schein, 2004) - AI is one approach which may support the facilitation of this process. Through the use of AI, within this project, it was hoped that the researcher would be able to support the uncovering of participants knowledge, to support the identification of underlying assumptions – or tacit knowledge – and make this explicit. Thus, identifying the underlying structures present which supported the enhancement of staff wellbeing within the school.

An inductive (data driven or 'bottom up') TA approach was taken (Willig, 2013) meaning that the analysis was not shaped by an existing theory (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Reflective of my pragmatic critical realist stance, a combination of semantic (data derived) interpretations, in the initial coding stages, and latent (researcher-derived) interpretations, in the later stages, were used to analyse the data. As such, it was recognised that the meanings captured by themes may have been both manifest (i.e. directly observable meaning) and/or latent (i.e. implicit meaning) subject to the researchers interpretations (Joffe, 2012). It was hoped that by the adoption of this process any tacit knowledge would be made explicit – by means of

the researcher's interpretations – and thus, further knowledge of the organisational factors enhancing staff wellbeing within the school would be gained. However, to ensure that the findings were reflective of the group's views, and thus the school culture, they were presented to the group in the third focus group session, with the opportunity given for any feedback or comments. Following this the agreed themes were used to inform the development of provocative prepositions within the final focus group session.

The Unique Contribution of the Educational Psychologist

Having grappled with the complexities surrounding the role of the EP (see Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Cameron, 2006 etc.) both as a practitioner and a researcher, I have continually found myself considering the unique contribution of the EP within any given situation. Taking this into account, within the final section of my bridging document I shall outline my current thoughts surrounding the unique contribution (Farrell et al., 2006) I, a TEP, have offered as a researcher-practitioner as well as considering the influence that this may have in my future practice as an EP.

- As I consider the impact of this project, I wonder if perhaps the 'research' feature of the EP role (See Currie, 2002) is a central feature; and also, a 'unique contribution' being made by EPs. Within this, I am referring to research in terms of smaller scale, individual school projects. I am particularly drawn to the possible influence such research could have on both the staff, children and young people within an individual school. I wonder if perhaps this what the Green Paper (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017) may be referring to as 'whole school approaches', i.e. the development of a bespoke approach which 'fits' an individual school and enhances the overall mental health and wellbeing of all those associated with that system, e.g. teachers, children, parents etc.
- Considering the current climate surrounding traded EPSs (e.g. Lee & Woods, 2017), I wonder if by offering services, such as small scale research projects which offer the opportunity to facilitate change - not only within the containment of the project but also beyond - EPs may facilitate a shift in focus of their work from individual casework to wider systemic work. This will lower costs to schools, through the facilitation of a contained, yet sustainable, piece of work whilst also promoting the EP role as a 'systemic worker'.
- Whilst I recognise the merit of evidence based and/or informed practice (e.g. Levant & Hasan, 2008) it is hard to neglect the notion that pre-prepared interventions 'fade out' more quickly than those generated by the school itself (Moos, 1991). As a consequence of this, I suggest that in order for an approach to mental health, and wellbeing (such as that outlined in the Green Paper (Department of Health &

Department for Education, 2017)), to be successful it must be designed to 'fit' with the individual school (Elias et al., 1997). In order to do so, an understanding of an individual school's aims, ethos, policies, rules, disciplines and procedures, must be developed to enable those supporting them to effectively work with staff strengths and teaching styles Weare (2000). Within this project, I believe that I have shown one way in which EPs may facilitate this role which may enable schools to align their ambitions without taking up a large amount of staff time and/or applying additional pressures, which may act detrimentally.

Chapter Three: A Research Project

What organisational factors enhance the wellbeing of staff working in a special education school?

Abstract

Within the literature, it is reported that children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs (SENs) have an increased likelihood of experiencing mental health conditions (Department for Education, 2018a, p. 12). With the rising pressure being placed upon staff in schools to support the mental health and wellbeing of CYP (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017) it is important to consider the implications of this for staff, particularly those working within contexts with a high level of SEN. Although the impact of special education teacher (SET) burnout has been highlighted within the literature (e.g. Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Ruble & McGrew, 2013; Wong et al., 2017); and consequently the suggestion that in order for SETs to embrace the challenge of educating and forming relationships with students they must first be low on their experiences of burnout (Garwood et al., 2018) it appears that there is a misconception surrounding this within SET practice (Farber, 2000). Within the Green Paper (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017) 'whole school approaches' are advocated for as an 'early intervention'. Whilst no suggestion is made as to whom this includes, it seems imperative that – if this is deemed a way of addressing the wellbeing of CYP – 'whole school' may also need to incorporate the wellbeing of the staff (e.g. Graham, Phelps, Maddison, & Fitzgerald, 2011; Sisask et al., 2014). In order to contribute to the literature surrounding the facilitation of this, this research project seeks to identify organisational factors which may enhance the wellbeing of staff working in a special education school. Through the facilitation of focus groups with staff in a special education school, informed by the 5D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987) data is collected addressing the research question. Thematic Analysis is used to analyse the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). Five organisational factors including leadership; having a shared goal and understanding; supportive structures being in place; staff feeling supported; and the adoption of a person-centred approach, were identified as contributing to the enhancement of staff wellbeing within the school. The implications of this in relation to the wider literature and the possible role of the Educational Psychologist are considered.

Introduction

The Mental Health Agenda

One in ten (or 850,000) children and young people (CYP) have a diagnosable mental health condition (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017). To address this issue, the Government Green paper (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017) was released. Within the paper it was proposed that 'early intervention' may be utilised to prevent such problems escalating with the potential for 'major societal benefits' (ibid, p.3). Moreover, perhaps as a consequence of teaching staff spending more time working with CYP than other health or social care professionals (Glazzard & Bostwick, 2018); the proposal is made that schools and colleges (and thus teaching staff) play an important role within this (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017).

Teacher Readiness to Support Mental Health

Teachers engage in regular and frequent interactions with a wide range of CYP (Sisask et al., 2014). Perhaps for this reason, they are often identified as playing a key role in the provision of mental health support for CYP (Kidger, Gunnell, Biddle, Campbell, & Donovan, 2009; Rickwood, Deane, & Wilson, 2007; Rothì et al., 2008; Scheerder et al., 2011; Sisask et al., 2014). Whilst it is proposed that staff in schools have the potential to establish positive mental health in CYP (Glazzard & Bostwick, 2018) it has been indicated by teachers that they often feel burdened by students' mental health needs, lack confidence in managing mental health related problems in the classroom, find difficulty identifying pupils with problems that may require intervention, and experience discomfort discussing mental or emotional health with students compared to other health topics (Cohall et al., 2007; Kidger et al., 2009; Moor et al., 2006; Roeser & Midgley, 1997; Walter, Gouze, & Lim, 2006). As a consequence, concerns have been raised by teachers with regard to the 'changing nature of their responsibilities' for pupil mental health and the potentially negative implications of this for teachers' sense of job satisfaction and wellbeing have been identified (Rothì et al., 2008, p. 1227).

Special Educational Needs (SENs), Mental Health and Wellbeing

Drawing upon research by the Office of National Statistics (2004), the Department for Education (2018a, p. 12) suggested that 'where a pupil has certain types of SEN there is an increased likelihood of mental health problems'. This notion is reflected in the literature, with research indicating that CYP with SEN are at increased risk of academic failure, depression, anxiety, and experience lower peer acceptance compared to their peers without a SEN (e.g. Bussing, Zima, & Perwien, 2000; Cook & Semmel, 1999; Danby & Hamilton, 2016; Maag & Reid, 2006; Sideridis, Mouzaki, Simos, & Protopapas, 2006). For this reason, the

assumption may be made that staff working alongside pupils with SEN will play a central role in the facilitation of the ambitions set out in the Green Paper (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017).

Special Education Teachers' (SETs') Mental Health and Wellbeing

SET Burnout

Teacher burnout is a frequently researched area. Within the field of Occupational and Health psychology much attention has been paid to the occupational stress experienced, on a daily basis, by those working within the teaching profession with suggestions being made that it may manifest or culminate in the experience of burnout (Cooper, 1995; Kyriacou, 1987; Travers & Cooper, 1996). Within the literature, it is suggested that teachers are at higher risk of burnout than any other social profession (De Heus & Diekstra, 1999). Burnout symptoms have typically been related to feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Throughout the literature, a number of factors have been identified as contributors to SET burnout (e.g. Brunsting et al., 2014). Such factors may be split into two categories: risk factors – those which may lead to burnout - and protective factors – those which may prevent feelings of burnout. Risk factors may include role conflict and role ambiguity; workload manageability; self-esteem, self-efficacy and classroom management efficacy; and perceived stress. Protective factors may include perceived support, including the type of support and where the support came from; leadership style; building relationships with students; coping strategies; career professional development; and overall happiness and job satisfaction.

The impact of Burnout

Across the literature, the impact of SET burnout is highlighted. For example, it is indicated that students are more likely to be disruptive, struggle socially and emotionally, and achieve their individual education plan (IEP) goals less frequently when their teachers are experiencing emotional exhaustion (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Ruble & McGrew, 2013; Wong et al., 2017). Taking into account the suggestion that SETs often perceive themselves to enter the field in the hope of helping others and making a difference to the lives of CYP with SENs (Crutchfield, 1997) it is interesting that often SETs experiencing emotional exhaustion (a dimension of burnout) perceive themselves to be doing so for the benefit of the CYP they are working alongside (Farber, 2000). As such, it seems that there is a misconception surrounding the importance of staff mental health and wellbeing for the provision of effective support to CYP with SENs.

A shift in focus; From 'Burnout' to 'Wellbeing'

'Wellbeing, or lack of it, is strongly related to work (dis)stress' (Bingham & Bubb, 2017, p. 175). Within the literature, the importance of wellbeing for organisational performance of 'high reliability organisations', such as schools is highlighted (Lekka, 2011). For this reason, it may be suggest that securing the wellbeing of staff is an important contributor to the quality, performance and productivity of an organisation, i.e. a school (Bingham & Bubb, 2017).

Conceptualisation

'Wellbeing is a subjective term' (Bingham & Bubb, 2017, p. 174). As such, difficulty may be encountered in its conceptualisation. However, one occupational definition, relevant to the school context, suggests:

> *'Wellbeing expresses a positive emotional state, which is the result of harmony between the sum of specific environmental factors on the one hand and the personal needs and expectations of teachers on the other hand'*

(Aelterman, Engels, Van Petegem, & Pierre Verhaeghe, 2007, p. 286)

Taking this definition into consideration, alongside the literature already present surrounding burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) it may be possible to determine that for teachers, (or teaching staff) working in a school context, wellbeing is present when they experience a 'positive emotional state' (Aelterman et al., 2007, p. 286) resulting in the symptoms relating to burnout being minimised.

Overarching Research Question

Within the literature, it is suggested that (dis)stress may be a sensitive topic to explore with school staff (Sharrocks, 2014). Despite this, in a review of the literature (see Chapter One) it seems apparent that whilst there is much literature placing focus on teacher burnout, and more specifically SET burnout (e.g. Boujut et al., 2016; Brunsting et al., 2014; Garwood et al., 2018), little attention has been paid to the factors which actively promote teacher wellbeing (Roffey, 2012).

Given the indication that there is an 'increased likelihood of mental health problems' for pupils with SEN (Department for Education, 2018a, p. 12; Office of National Statistics, 2004) and the notion that SETs often enter the field hoping to help others and make a difference to the lives of CYP with SENs (Crutchfield, 1997) and subsequently, the misconceptions present with regards to the impact of SET burnout on CYP with SENs (Farber, 2000;

Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Ruble & McGrew, 2013; Wong et al., 2017); it seems imperative that the factors supporting SET wellbeing are explored.

Taking this into account, and the findings of the review (see Chapter One), it is identified that in order to enhance the wellbeing of teachers, consideration must be given to the influence of the ecosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) within which they operate. As such, taking into consideration the rising pressure being placed upon all staff to support the mental health and wellbeing of CYP (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017) it seems favourable for focus to be placed upon the wellbeing of all staff supporting CYP in schools, rather than just SETs.

Therefore, this research project addresses the following question:

What organisational factors enhance the wellbeing of staff working in a special education school?

Methodology

Aims of the project

The aims of this project were two-fold: to identify organisational factors which may enhance the wellbeing of staff working in a special education school; and, through the use of appreciative inquiry, to facilitate a culture shift within the school to enhance staff wellbeing beyond the containment of the overarching project.

Context

The project was carried out in a Local Authority (LA) special school. With the support of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) the school were partaking in a 'wellbeing award'. In discussions with the school Educational Psychologist (EP) it was identified that this project may complement the work currently being carried out within the school. As such, the Headteacher was approached and provided with the project information. Following further negotiations, the Headteacher expressed an interest in the school taking part in the project.

Participants

The project was introduced to the school staff team, by the researcher. Ten members of staff, consisting of both teachers and teaching assistants, expressed an interest in taking part in the project. As it is suggested in the literature that eight to ten participants is an appropriate size for a focus group (Morgan, 1996) it was felt that this was an appropriate number of participants for the project to take place.

Method

An Action Research Paradigm (Lewin, 1946) was adopted using an Appreciative Inquiry approach (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987) to data generation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this project was provided by Newcastle University Ethics Committee on 23rd January 2019. Participation was voluntary. Prior to the commencement of the project, the researcher met with potential participants to negotiate the process of the project; answer questions; gain informed consent (Appendix 2&3); and clarify participants' right to withdraw at any time. All data collected was anonymised to ensure participants could not be identified.

Data Generation

Action Research

Action Research (AR) seeks to improve practice by improving knowledge (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a form of AR that is underpinned by the premise that within every organisation there exist processes that work well (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987).

Appreciative inquiry

Within the AI process (See Figure 2) focus is placed on appreciative narratives to identify what is working well and, as a consequence, promote change within an organisation (Ridley-Duff & Duncan, 2015; Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008).

Figure 3.2, The 5D Model of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2003)

Reed (2006) suggests that AI can be used as both a method for organisational improvement and as a research method. Consequently, for the purpose of this project, AI was identified as an appropriate method to address both of the research aims.

Focus Group

Informed by the 5D cycle of AI (See Figure 3.2) a series of three focus groups was facilitated with participants to address the aims of the research project (See Figure 3.3 for an outline of the process).

Figure 3.3, Appreciative Inquiry; Structure of focus group sessions

Session One: **Define** What is 'wellbeing'?	• Introduction • Develop ground rules • What does wellbeing mean to the group?
Session Two: **Discover** What is currently being done within school to support staff wellbeing?	• Discuss previous sessions conceptualisation of wellbeing • Draw upon this conceptualisation to inform discussions surrounding what is currently working well in school to enhance staff wellbeing.
Session Three: **Dream** Imagine it is five years time and school are a leading school for staff wellbeing, what would this be based on?	• Discuss the dream for what school would be like if it was as good at supporting staff wellbeing as could be
Session Three: **Design** How can we make school more supportive of wellbeing?	• Discuss one key areas the staff would like to focus on to enhance current staff wellbeing • Develop a provacative proposition in relation to this area
Post Project - Feedback Session: **Deliver/Destiny** What do we need to do to build on our current wellbeing practices?	• Feedback findings to the group and, with their permission the leadership team. Discuss how these findings may be drawn upon to inform next steps.

Data collection

All ten participants were invited to each of the three focus group sessions. Due to various factors the number of participants differed across the three sessions, though the group felt it appropriate to go ahead.

As the aims of the project were two-fold, the approach to data collection was adapted accordingly (see Table 3.19 for further information). Consequently, the data analysed and used for the purpose of this project was audio recorded in the second focus group session within which eight of the ten participants were present.

Table 3.19, A table to show the process of inquiry, data collection and data analysis

Phase (Adapted from McArdle, 2008)	AI Cycle Phase	Session	Action taken by researcher	Method of Data Collection	Method of Analysis	How data used in this research project
Getting in (July 2019)	Define	Session One	Discussing the project and obtaining informed consent. Establishing relationships with the participants taking part in the project through the use of introductory questions (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Establishing ground rules, to support the group to develop trust (Grant et al., 2008). Exploring what 'wellbeing' meant to the group. This gave the group chance to develop to achieve a shared understanding (McArdle, 2008).	Written	Data gathered within the session subjected to TA, within the session, by the group	Data used to produce shared understanding of group conceptualisation of wellbeing to inform next session
Getting on (July 2019)	Discover	Session Two	This was the main data gathering session. The session was recorded, transcribed and fed back to the group in the following session to inform further discussion.	Audio Recorded	Data gathered within the session subjected to TA, outside of the session, by the researcher. Themes checked back with participants in the following focus group session.	Data used within research project
		Post session	As agreed in the group sessions, the information gathered during session two was analysed using the first stages of Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013).			

Getting out	Dream/ Design	Session Three (September 2019)	The initial findings were shared with the participants. The participants were invited to feedback their views of the findings. The data was drawn upon to inform the final focus group session, within which the group utilised the data from previous sessions to inform the development of provocative propositions.	Written	Drawing upon the themes, provocative prepositions developed within the session, by the group, and left with the participants.	Data from previous session used to inform development of provocative propositions. Provocative propositions left with the participants to inform next steps.
	Deliver/ Destiny	Post project – feedback (June/July 2020)	Findings from the project fed back to the group. Discussion to be had around the potential use of the findings and possible dissemination discussed.			

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis

Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013) was identified as an appropriate method of data analysis for the following reasons: it can be used flexibly with various methods of data collection; it is considered to be an appropriate method for novel researchers; and it is deemed as being accessible to a wider audience and therefore, appropriate for use with participatory approaches (ibid). TA, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) is a linear six-stage process. An outline of the phases, as described by Braun and Clarke (2013) alongside the action taken by the researcher, within this project, is provided in Table 3.19.

To allow the author to immerse themselves within the data for this project (Willig, 2013) the audio-recording, taken in the second focus group session, was transcribed verbatim and the identities of the participants anonymised.

Table 3.20, The Phases of Analysis for Research Project Data. Collected in Focus Group: Session 2

Phases (Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2013)	Action taken by researcher in this project
1. Transcription	Transcribing the data.
2. Reading and familiarisation; taking note of items of potential interest	(Focus Group One) Re-reading the data within the session, with the group, to develop a joint understanding of the group's conceptualisation of wellbeing. (Focus Group Two) Re-listening to the data whilst re-reading the transcripts. Making a note of items of potential interest.
3. Coding – complete; across entire data set	Generating initial codes across entire data set. Coding anything of interest or relevance to answering the research question, within entire data set. Any extract may be coded in as many ways as fits the purpose.
4. Searching for themes	Collating the coded data. Search for clustering's of codes which may link or present as showing a pattern of meaning; developing candidate themes with descriptive names for the research question in this project.

5. Reviewing themes	Reviewing the candidate themes in relation to the data and identifying links across the themes to the research question. Then, using a latent interpretation, to develop candidate themes into overall themes.
6. Defining and naming themes	Refining and naming each primary theme and developing a clear and unique description of each theme.
7. Writing up the analysis	Writing up the analysis, including the findings and a critical discussion of said findings to develop a broader understanding of the organisational factors identified within the project.

Findings

Through a process of thematic analysis, utilising a hybrid of semantic and latent interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Terry et al., 2017), the following five themes were discovered and developed:

- Leadership
- Having a shared goal and understanding
- Supportive structures being in place
- Staff feeling supported
- A person-centred approach

In the next section, each theme will be described and critically discussed in relation to the overarching research question.

Leadership

Butt and Retallick (2002) identified that school leaders play a pivotal role in creating a positive climate, conducive to staff wellbeing. This may be due to their significant role in defining and sustaining a school's culture (Bingham & Bubb, 2017). Yukl (2002) suggested that a central concept of leadership is that of influence rather than authority. The group appeared to place importance upon this, acknowledging the role of the leadership team, as leaders, but also recognising their willingness to offer help and support.

"it's the little things… yes of course [they] have to lead… but
they're also very willing"

Through the use of modelling, leaders may ensure that the values of the organisation are visible to all staff whilst also showing them how this vision may be realised and fulfilled (Day et al., 2009). This may offer some explanation why modelling has been identified as a characteristic widely observed of leaders of great schools (Brighouse, 2007). Importance was placed upon this by the group.

"being a good leader is about modelling the behaviour that you
want your team to have"

The ability to engage in open, two-way communication with school leaders, has been identified as a key contributor to teacher wellbeing in schools (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). In the discussions the group made comparisons between their experiences of leadership within

their current job role and previous job roles, and the possible impact this had on their ability to engage in communication with them.

"mainstream school… you don't see them… whereas here SMT are like bobbing in"

By the leadership team establishing a presence within the setting, it was apparent that the group felt more able to engage in two-way communication with them (Acton & Glasgow, 2015).

"I've never had any worries about going to either of them"

Supportive supervisors has been identified as a strong determinant to the factors that lead to burnout (Gong et al., 2013; Leiter & Maslach, 1988). Teachers experience a greater sense of wellbeing when leadership demonstrate the ability to help during difficult times (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). The group discussed the importance of feeling supported by leadership and acknowledged their own role in the facilitation of this support.

"As soon as [they] were aware of it [they] came straight out of [their] office and addressed it and now they're onit"

Schools leaders' ability to empathise and advocate for teachers during difficult times, is essential in supporting their wellbeing (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). The group appeared to identify with this, as they acknowledged the specific times when they would seek out support from the leadership team.

"[they] know that… we just call on [them] when we're really struggling"

De Stasio et al. (2017) identified that collaborative leadership styles, which look to promote and support teachers, may reduce the risk of burnout. The group acknowledged that, within the school, the leadership team exerted a 'lack of ego'. Particular importance was placed upon this, by staff, in situations whereby the leadership team were supporting staff with students experiencing emotional dysregulation. Within the discussion, a group member commented:

> *"I've said to SMT in the past… this works well with them and [they'll] take it on board"*

The group reflected on how this made them feel, i.e. that the leadership team recognised their 'expertise' in relation to their knowledge and understanding of individual children. Within the literature, Webb, Vulliamy, Sarja, Hämäläinen, and Poikonen (2009) highlighted the democratic structures in place in Finnish schools and the positive impact of this on wellbeing. By modelling such a stance, it was apparent that the leadership team were embedding a democratic culture within the school.

> *"there's no room for ego in this kind of job"*

As a consequence, the acknowledgement was made that no one was viewed as an 'expert' within the setting, rather all staff were viewed as having 'expertise'. This was particularly pertinent during 'times of need', such as when the children and/or young people were displaying emotional dysregulation, during which staff may require the support of others to help diffuse the situation. By adopting this approach, it was apparent that all staff felt supported and safe to 'seek out' support and express the need for 'help', if necessary, without it impacting upon their sense of wellbeing, e.g. self-efficacy, and ability to carry out their role. As a consequence of this, it may be suggested that their sense of personal accomplishment could be enhanced (Garwood et al., 2018) as they develop and recognise their own competence in managing such situations in the future.

In research by Webb et al. (2009) it was suggested that where teachers were most enthusiastic about their schools' supportive culture, the teachers' interviewed attributed this largely to the personality, value and actions of the headteacher. The group made reference to the 'ethos' within the school and identified the important role played by the leadership team in establishing this:

> *"SMT should really make an effort not to lose that ethos"*

Having a shared goal and understanding

Crutchfield (1997) suggested that almost all SETs enter the field due to a personal value of helping others and making a difference to the lives of CYP with SENs. An overwhelming consensus was expressed within the group that all staff within the school adopted this

personal value and, as a consequence, were working together to achieve it. Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) presented the view that when a collective vision permeates the whole institution it is felt by everyone who visits. The group appeared to recognise this within the school and considered the impact this may have on new staff coming to work there.

"I don't think you can work here if you don't get it"

Personal values have been highlighted as an essential component of job satisfaction – a contributor to staff wellbeing (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010). The group reflected on how their personal values had influenced them in applying for the role.

"I really wanted… to come and work in special education"

Reagh (1994) suggested that the personal values held by child welfare workers may act as a mediator between experiences of emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction. Similarly, Stalker, Mandell, Frensch, Harvey, and Wright (2007) attributed child welfare workers experiences of emotional exhaustion and high job satisfaction, to personal values.

Relationships with students have been highlighted as one of the most important sources of enjoyment and motivation for teachers (Hargreaves, 2000). This notion was reflected by one member of the group:

"my goodness, I've made a difference to her and she's made a difference to me… we'd made a connection"

This is indicative of the enjoyment and happiness the staff discussed in their experiences of working with students - a central concept in the development of professional happiness and sustainability of wellness (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). The group also reflected on their perceptions of pupil progress:

"my high point really was just around the progress that she made… seeing the tiny little steps that she sort of made that were just fantastic"

Within the literature, it has been identified that when SETs redefine student success, i.e. place focus on the small steps in progress that students make, they are less likely to experience burnout (Garwood et al., 2018). As such, it may be suggested that by focusing on the small steps of success made by the students, staff wellbeing within the school may have been enhanced.

Supportive structures being in place

Although it is recognised that what leaders do and say has an effect on student outcomes, Earley (2017) suggested that it is largely through the actions of others, i.e. teaching staff, that the effects of school leadership are mediated. The group identified a number of formal and informal structures in place within the setting which helped them to facilitate this.

Formal structures

The Foresight Report (2008) suggested that employers should be encouraged to foster work environments that are conducive to good mental wellbeing and the enhancement of mental capital[1]. Within the report, flexible work arrangements are one of the suggestions made to facilitate this (ibid). In the discussions the group reflected on the flexible working arrangements made by leadership.

"[The leadership team] have made a change to erm, briefing haven't they, they start it five minutes earlier and all ETA's are invited to attend … basically means that ETA's have to start five minutes earlier, but they can leave five minutes earlier on a Friday"

By making these adjustments, it may be suggested that the leadership team are encouraging a level of participation which could potentially result in high levels of morale and performance in staff (Moos, 1991).

Within the literature, belonging and a feeling of connectedness to the school have been identified as vital for both health, academic outcomes and wellbeing (Acton & Glasgow, 2015; Blum, 2005; Rowe, Stewart, & Patterson, 2007). Roffey (2012) suggested that in order for staff to thrive in their roles, they need to feel and be included. Through the adaptations, it

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[1] Mental Capital: 'This encompasses a person's cognitive and emotional resources. It includes their cognitive ability, how flexible and efficient they are at learning, and their "emotional intelligence", such as their social skills and resilience in the face of stress. It therefore conditions how well an individual is able to contribute effectively to society, and also to experience a high personal quality of life' (Foresight Mental Capacity and Wellbeing Project, 2008, p. 10).

was apparent that the leadership team had promoted this feeling for staff with the suggestion being made by one of the group members that:

'It's nice to be included'

'A leader is someone who creates an environment in which everyone can flourish' (Earley, 2017, p. 101). Within the literature, it has been identified that the distribution of leadership and teacher empowerment, with a focus on communal responsibility for teacher learning may be one beneficial way of facilitating this (DuFour, 2004; Kruse, Seashore Louis, & Bryk, 1995). Within the setting the staff identified the benefits of the provision of a clear working space for professional learning (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000), in the form of class meetings.

"[the leadership team] changed… the school day so that we got 20 minutes before and 20 minutes after… to work within our hours"

An important feature of distributed leadership, and professional learning, is the provision of time to meet and talk (Kruse et al., 1995). The group acknowledged this within their discussions:

"…so, we'd got time…and I think that was invaluable… the time"

The delegation of responsibilities to staff is one way of creating a more knowledgeable community that can cope with the diversity of demands (Day et al., 2009). Through the establishment of class meetings, it is possible that staff psychological wellbeing and eustress is enhanced as staff develop a sense of control over the work environment, i.e. the classroom (Bingham & Bubb, 2017). The group reflected on the potentially generative nature of this way of working (e.g. Lawson, 2004).

"it's always… really collaborative"

Stimulating relationships create effective individual and collective learning environments that support change (Seashore Louis, 2015). Perhaps, as a result, the group discussed how the meetings afforded them the opportunity to engage in collaborative reflection and problem solving, with regards to individual pupils and general classroom practices resulting in a:

"collective pooling of knowledge and skill"

Collegial team relationships foster self-belonging and a strong sense of identity and as a consequence, individual strengths are valued enhancing overall sense of wellbeing (Roffey, 2012). Through active participation within these meetings, as well as an enhancement within their practice, it is possible that staff pride (Owen, 2016) and sense of value (Robinson et al., 2019) may have also been increased.

If staff believe their colleagues respect their skills, they are more likely to believe they can solve problems, enhancing their sense of self-efficacy (Kruger, 1997). The development of a working community has been shown to support the demands being shared amongst colleagues; allow challenging problems to be discussed; allow potential solutions to be considered collaboratively; and encourage a healthy work-life balance which greatly improves work happiness by facilitating feelings of self-confidence and success (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). By allocating time for class meetings it may be suggested that the leadership team were able to enhance the learning of staff within the setting whilst also empowering them to problem solve and seek out support/advice from their colleagues. Perhaps, as a result a supportive learning environment is being created within which staff are given the opportunity to grow and explore new ideas in the classroom (Swaffield & MacBeath, 2008). Throughout the discussion, it was clear that the collaborative, problem solving approach encouraged by leadership, through formal structures, had become embedded within the school culture:

***"if your struggling with something… go and ask somebody else
and they've got a different look on it"***

This may indicate the development of a 'professional community' (Seashore Louis, 2015) within school, whereby staff are given the 'power' to make decisions, relating to individual pupils and their own classes, alongside other members of staff. Consequently, the overall culture of the school becomes centred around learning from one another, i.e. encouraging staff to share practice and confidently seek out help/advice, irrespective of hierarchy.

Informal structures

When SETs feel supported by the school within which they are working their feeling of personal accomplishment, within their role, is greater and the less likely they are to experience emotional exhaustion (Robinson et al., 2019). Within the discussion, the group identified informal structures taking place within classrooms. A consensus appeared present as to the use of such structures – often relating to staff emotional regulation. Within the literature, it has been identified that trust between staff is an essential element of a great school as it allows energy to be released in a way that is productive and efficient, supporting progression towards goals (Covey & Merrill, 2006). In discussions it was apparent that the implementation of 'informal structures' could be voluntary and/or directed dependent on the situation and, thus, an acknowledgement was made that they relied upon the attunement and trust of colleagues. One group member reflected on a situation they had experienced within which her colleagues had offered direction to support her emotional regulation:

> *"I tried to go back to class, I got sent away again… I thought I could cope… but they saw the body language and the way that I was talking"*

Teachers with higher reported rates of wellbeing have been suggested to demonstrate an emotional intelligence that allows them to apply realistic coping strategies to effectively manage demanding emotional situations that may arise in working closely with children and adults (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). One of the group members reflected on how the development of their understanding of emotional intelligence, in relation to CYP, may help them to provide support to their colleagues through the implementation of informal structures.

> *"we're very good at recognising when each other becomes emotionally dysregulated... which really helps"*

Staff feel supported

Professional working relationships provide networks of emotional support that promote and enhance positive emotional states (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). In addition, wellbeing may be enhanced when staff feel valued, respected, supported and cared for in the workplace (ibid, 2015). In order to facilitate this, one group member identified that a nurturing stance was

adopted within the setting and the way that this positively informed their interactions with staff members.

> *"the way we talk to each other is nurturing and the way we deal with people is nurturing"*

Perceived support has been highlighted across the literature as a protective factor for burnout (Boujut et al., 2016; Langher et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019). The group members acknowledged their perceptions of the availability of support and placed value upon this within the school.

> *"Sometimes you just need to like have that physical person there just to like, to hear what you've got to say"*

When teachers feel cared for in the workplace, their wellbeing may be enhanced (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). The group identified this feeling being present within the school. They placed particular importance on feeling cared for following incidents with children etc.

> *"…people were understanding and caring"*

Within the literature, SETs perceive receiving less support from their friends and more support from health professionals than teachers working in mainstream settings. Moreover, the support received from friends has been highlighted as less important but support from health professionals as more important (Boujut et al., 2016). The group identified a lack of understanding, with regards to their job roles, from those not working within the setting.

> *"if you speak to anyone outside of school… they're horrified"*

This may afford some explanation as to why importance was placed upon the support offered by staff within the setting.

Being involved in a support network is important for wellbeing (Huppert & So, 2009). Research from the UK's Education Support Partnership (2016) suggests that meaningful communication is an important factor for staff wellbeing. Within the discussions, the group identified a support network established outside of school within which various

communication methods were used as a means of collegial support, for example sending supportive messages; offering to see each other outside of the school setting; sharing stories of times in which they had experienced something similar; and offering reassurance and/or validation for their emotional response.

"offering… similar stories of when something like that happened to them and how they felt"

Within the literature, it has been identified that SETs rely significantly more on social support seeking strategies than teachers in mainstream schools (Cappe, Bolduc, et al., 2017). Moreover, SETs perceive that they obtain more support from colleagues, particularly emotional, informational and appraisal support than their mainstream colleagues (Boujut et al., 2016). Reflective of this, one of the group members – a teaching assistant – referred to a discussion they had with a colleague in a mainstream setting.

"I know people who work one to one in mainstream, and I don't know how they do it because… when someone's like it's so difficult sometimes because you feel like you're on your own and it's like, well we're never"

When SETs feel supported by the school within which they are working the greater their feeling of personal accomplishment within their role and the less likely they are to experience emotional exhaustion. (Robinson et al., 2019). This perhaps highlights the importance placed, by the group, on the continual availability of support within the setting.

"We've got others to lean on, we're not on our own"

Active and non-judgemental listening is an important factor in promoting mental health needs (Weare, 2000). Discussions were had around the non-judgmental stance adopted by staff in the school, and the benefits this may have, particularly during times when staff members were experiencing emotional dysregulation.

"if your sat in the corner having a little cry or just a little rant… there's always that support"

High levels of resilience have been linked to wellbeing (Mowbray, 2013). One definition of resilience is 'the level of inner grit you have to handle situations that require drive, focus and resolution…it is linked to achieving goals, getting things done and achieving personal potential' (Pryce-Jones, 2010, p. 74). Mowbray (2013) suggested that resilience is something that may be acquired through experience. Within the discussions, one of the group members reflected on the development of 'resilient attitude' and indicated that this had been heavily influenced by the environment within which they were working (Bingham & Bubb, 2017).

"the two years ago me and the me now, my skin is like ten inches thicker"

A person-centred approach

Webb et al. (2009) suggested that when Headteachers described themselves as 'people centred' rather than 'task centred', in addition to pupil's learning and welfare, they are also interested in the wellbeing, development and job satisfaction of staff (p. 409). Interestingly, within the interpretation of the data it was apparent that a person-centred approach was embedded within the school culture.

Consistent with findings presented by Roffey (2012) throughout the discussions an overriding focus was placed upon the value and wellbeing of the CYP. To ensure this, the group identified the importance of reflection within their practice.

"how can that be different… how can I change it… how can I make it better… and I think that's such a massive thing"

As well as enhancing their overall practice, it is possible that through the adoption of such practices staff's perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) may be enhanced as they develop a belief in their ability to support the child and/or young person more successfully (Bingham & Bubb, 2017) enhancing their overall wellbeing within their role.

When investigating the qualities of a 'great' school the London Leadership Strategy (2014) indicated that shared vision, value, culture and ethos must be adopted with a basis on the highest expectations for all community members. Once established it is important that all community members are committed to working towards and achieving the same thing whilst recognising individual needs and there implications for the achievement of the overarching

vision (Woods & Macfarlane, 2017). Within the discussions, it was apparent that a clear vision was present within the setting to support and protect the CYP.

"all of us have put ourselves in the way to protect the kids…

otherwise we wouldn't be here would we"

However, in order for staff in schools to develop the wellbeing of the CYP, Roffey (2012) identified that the relational values of respect, acceptance and care must be extended to staff. In other words, everyone needs to feel positive about being in the school and recognise that both staff and, consequently, CYP wellbeing is everyone's responsibility (ibid). By adopting a child-centred approach within school, it was apparent that the group has developed an awareness of the impact of staff wellbeing within this. As such, practices had been adapted accordingly. In order to facilitate this effectively, it seemed apparent that leadership played an instrumental role which was recognised by one of the group members within the discussion.

"that is a tone that is set from the top"

Limitation of the project

As this research project is carried out in an individual school it could be assumed that the findings may not be generalisable to other settings. To address this, within the next section consideration will be given to the findings in relation to the wider literature, and the possible implications this may have for schools, including the potential role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) in supporting this.

Discussion

The establishment of a school culture

Within the literature, the influence of school culture, on staff wellbeing, has been highlighted (e.g. Roffey, 2012; Webb et al., 2009). Similarly, within the project findings, it is identified by the group that a culture (referred to by the group as an 'ethos') is present within the school, which is conducive to staff wellbeing. Ethos or 'culture' – which may otherwise be described as 'the way we do things around here' – is suggested to derive from the norms, values and behaviours that constitute an organisation (Bingham & Bubb, 2017). Schein (2004) highlights the difficulties often experienced in the definition and articulation of culture within an organisation, such as a school (See Appendix 4 for further information). However, it is

proposed that through the use of AI - facilitated by a Trainee EP in conjunction with staff from the school - it has been possible to identify features of a school 'culture' which are conducive to wellbeing. As such, it is proposed that a potential role has been established for EPs in terms of supporting schools to define and articulate 'culture' within their setting.

Professional Learning Communities

Within the English education sector, often the terms ethos, culture and community are used to refer to what may otherwise be described as a Professional Learning Community (PLC) (Webb et al., 2009). The idea of a PLC overlaps with, and is informed by, earlier work on schools as learning organisations and school improvement research (Stoll et al., 2003). Whilst a consensus has not been reached with regards to a definition of a PLC a number of key characteristics have been identified such as, the need for shared vision and values, a supportive environment, reflective professional enquiry, collaboration, and collective responsibility (Webb et al., 2009). In addition, Stoll and Seashore Louis (2007) have offered the suggestion that you will know 'one exists when you can see a group of teachers sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth- promoting way' (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; Toole & Seashore Louis, 2002) (p. 2). For this reason, it is proposed that the 'ethos' described by the group, within the findings of this project, was reflective of a PLC. Consequently, as the aim of the project was to identify factors which may contribute to the enhancement of 'staff' wellbeing – similarly to findings by Webb et al. (2009) that PLCs may enhance teacher wellbeing - the proposal is made that through the establishment of a PLC, which is inclusive of all staff, it is possible that the wellbeing of staff working within a school may be enhanced. With this in mind - and taking into account the pivotal role school leaders play in the creation of a positive climate, conducive to staff wellbeing (Butt & Retallick, 2002) - it is suggested that by making school leaders aware of the potential benefits of PLCs, such as staff wellbeing and pupil outcomes (Webb et al., 2009), EPs may work together with school leaders to facilitate change within schools. This may be inclusive of adaptations, for example structures (such as those outlined within this project), which afford staff the time and space for reflection on their experiences throughout the school day. In addition, EPs may support the development of such a culture by drawing attention to the characteristics they have noticed within the school (e.g. Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; Toole & Seashore Louis, 2002) which are reflective of PLCs. In doing so, EPs are supporting the embedding of PLCs within a school a culture conducive to the promotion and enhancement of staff wellbeing.

Conclusion

As a consequence of the Green paper (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017) it may be expected that increasing pressure will be placed upon staff in special education schools to support the mental health of the CYP they are working alongside. To enable staff to do so effectively, a focus upon the development of their own wellbeing is essential. Within this study, organisational factors including leadership; having a shared goal and understanding; supportive structures being in place; staff feeling supported; and the adoption of a person-centred approach were found to contribute to a culture which supported the enhancement of staff wellbeing within a special education setting. As such, it is proposed that a potential role has been established for EPs in terms of supporting schools to define and articulate 'culture' within a school. Moreover, whilst these factors were specific to just one school, on exploration of the literature, it was found that the discussions identified characteristics that were reflective of PLCs. Consequently, it is felt that a role for EPs to facilitate the establishment of structures and characteristics reflective of PLCs may have been identified; which may enhance staff wellbeing, whilst simultaneously enhancing pupil wellbeing and outcomes.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Weight of Evidence Tool; Adapted from Weight of Evidence tool by Gough (2007) and TAPUPAS by Pawson et al (2003)

Paper:			
Things to consider	**Questions**	**Comments**	**Weighting**
Weight of Evidence A: Trustworthiness of results in terms of own question (methodological quality)			**High** **Medium** **Low**
Transparency: Clarity of purpose (Is it open to scrutiny?)	Is the purpose of the study clear?		
	Is their sufficient justification for the purpose of the study?		
Accuracy: Accurate (Is it well grounded?)	Is their sufficient justification for the sample used in the study?		
Accessibility: Understandable (Is it intelligible?)	Was the choice of research design appropriate for addressing the research question(s)?		
Specificity: Method specific quality (Does it meet sources specific standards?)	Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the repeatability or reliability of data collection methods or tools? Do the authors describe any ways they have addressed the repeatability or reliability of their data collection tools/methods?		
	Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the validity or trustworthiness of data collection tools and methods? Do the authors describe any ways they have addressed the validity or trustworthiness of their data collection tools/methods?		
	Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the repeatability or reliability of data analysis? Do the authors describe any ways they have addressed the repeatability or reliability of their data analysis?		
	Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the validity or trustworthiness of data analysis?		

	Do the authors describe any ways they have addressed the validity or trustworthiness of their data analysis?		
	Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the repeatability or reliability of data collection methods or tools? Do the authors describe any ways they have addressed the repeatability or reliability of their data collection tools/methods?		
Other things to consider	Have sufficient attempts been made to justify the conclusions drawn from the findings, so that the conclusions are trustworthy?		
Weight of Evidence B: Appropriateness of study design linked to this Review Question (methodological relevance)			**High** **Medium** **Low**
Purposivity: Fit for purpose method (Is it fit for purpose?)	Does the study use an appropriate measure of burnout?		High
	Are the other measures used in the study helpful in terms of the review question?		High
	Is the method of data analysis appropriate in answering the review question?		
Weight of Evidence C: Appropriateness of focus of research in answering this Review Question (topic relevance)			**High** **Medium** **Low**
Utility: provides relevant answers (Is it fit for use?)	Is the focus of the study relevant in answering the review question?		
	Is the context of the study relevant to the context of this review?		Medium
Propriety: Legal and Ethical Research (Is it legal and ethical?)	Is the sample (participants) of the study reflective of the sample being considered in this review?		High
	How generalisable are the results?		Medium
	Any ethical concerns about the way the study was done? (e.g. consent, funding etc.)		High

Weight of evidence A: Taking account of all quality assessment issues, can the study findings be trusted in answering the study question(s)?	High Medium Low

Weight of evidence B: Appropriateness of research design and analysis for addressing the question, or sub- questions, of this specific systematic review.	High
	Medium
	Low
Weight of evidence C: Relevance of particular focus of the study (including conceptual focus, context, sample and measures) for addressing the question of this specific systematic review	High
	Medium
	Low
Weight of evidence D: Overall weight of evidence Taking into account quality of execution, appropriateness of design and relevance of focus, what is the overall weight of evidence this study provides to answer the question of this specific systematic review?	
	High
	Medium
	Low

Appendix 2: Information Sheet

Research Project – Staff Wellbeing

Participant Information Sheet

Hello,

My name is Amy Bamford. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) working in Kirklees Educational Psychology Service. As part of my training I am required to complete a research project; the topic I hope to explore is ways in which the school culture can enhance wellbeing for staff in special education.

Aims and Rationale

In this project I am looking to work with a group of staff in a specialist school to both, explore and discuss ways in which the school culture supports their wellbeing. The aim is to inform the development of ways in which the school, as a whole, may support and enhance staff wellbeing. This will involve the staff partaking in a collaborative inquiry that offers the opportunity for reflective discussion between staff members. The discussions will provide opportunity for those present to develop a shared understanding of wellbeing and how the culture within school can be enhanced to support this.

I am hoping that this research project can be a joint endeavour where you, other members of school staff and I work together. I am pleased that you have expressed an interest in joining me on this venture. The information below provides details regarding the project including the aims of the project, what it might look like, the process itself and what might happen to the information gathered throughout the course of the inquiry.

Commitment

As this project aims to be a collaborative piece of work, I am hoping you and your colleagues will be able to have some ownership of the process of the project. Currently, I have some ideas of what the process may look like and believe it is likely to involve three sessions, one introductory session and two focus group discussions, each lasting approximately one hour, across the course of the Summer/Autumn term. The timing and potential focus of these sessions can be negotiated between the group and myself.

Possible outcomes

The hope is that through the process of collaborative inquiry those present will explore the current school culture and how this supports their wellbeing. This may aid you and other staff taking part to cultivate new, shared understandings and insights. In addition, it is hoped that through this exploration

the group will be able to inform future development and sustainment of practices that support staff wellbeing within school.

What will happen to the information?

As this research project is being undertaken as part of my doctoral training a research report will be required. To gather data, audio recordings of the group discussion will be taken and transcribed, by myself, following each session. In the transcription the identities of participants will be coded so that all names and personal details will not be revealed. The audio recording will then be securely destroyed and the transcribed data will be stored on a password protected computer solely accessed by me (the researcher). This information will be analysed, as part of my doctoral studies, to explore how a collaborative inquiry into restorative approaches might aid future developments in schools. After the final session has been completed, and I have explored the information gathered, I hope to share and discuss the interpretations with the group in the Spring Term in 2020.

The transcriptions will be stored in line with Data Protection legislation and will be kept for up to a year, or when the research report is completed if this is a longer period. Any names or identifiers will be changed to protect anonymity and confidentiality. Additionally, in the future, the information gathered may be used in other research articles or presentations to inform the use of restorative approaches more generally, but again, this will be anonymised.

Please note that you are under no obligation to take part in this project and if you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any point and for any reason.

Thank you for reading this information.

If you have any further questions regarding this project, or about any aspect of this project generally, please feel free to contact me. My email address is a.l.bamford2@newcastle.ac.uk. Alternatively, you can direct questions to my research supervisor at Newcastle University, Dr Simon Gibbs, Reader in Educational Psychology, who can be reached via email at simon.gibbs@newcastle.ac.uk.

Appendix 3: Consent Form

Research Project – Staff Wellbeing

Participant Consent Form

Please circle where applicable:

Have you read and understood the information pack provided?

Yes / No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and been given satisfactory responses?

Yes / No

Are you aware that at any time, up until the formal report is completed, you can withdraw from this study?

Yes / No

Do you give permission for the focus groups to be recorded (audio recording only) and to be transcribed for the purpose of this study only?

Yes / No

Are you happy to take part in the study and give your informed consent?

Yes / No

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 4: Model of Organisational Culture (Schein, 2004)

OUTWARD VIEW

Arterfacts
A. Product
B. Behaviors

Observable but hard to interpret

Visible organisational structures and processes

INWARD VIEW

Espoused Values
A. Values
B. Beliefs

Not directly observable, but can be distilled from how people explain and justify what they do

Strategies, goals, philosophies
(Espoused justification)

Underlying Assumptions

The foundations of culture which is so widely shared that people are largely unaware of them

Unconscious, taken for granted beliefs.
Perceptions, thoughts and feelings
(Ultimate source of values and action)

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