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To cite this article: Sandra Dunsmuir, Emma-Kate Kennedy, Jane Lang & Jeremy J. Monsen (2023) A Qualitative Review of Pre-Service Training of Educational Psychology Consultants in the United Kingdom, Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 33:3, 314-344, DOI: [10.1080/10474412.2022.2090949](https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2022.2090949)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2022.2090949>



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Published online: 23 Jun 2022.



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A Qualitative Review of Pre-Service Training of Educational Psychology Consultants in the United Kingdom

Sandra Dunsmuir ^a, Emma-Kate Kennedy^b, Jane Lang^a, and Jeremy J. Monsen^c

^aUniversity College London, London, UK; ^bTavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK; ^cBorough Educational Psychology Consultation Service, London, UK

ABSTRACT

In the field of Educational Psychology, consultation is both a core competency to be achieved by the end of pre-service training and a practice that infuses all aspects of service delivery post-qualification. The present study aimed to explore the perspectives of university educators on preparing trainee educational psychologists to consult, especially following significant systemic change at social-political and professional standard levels. A qualitative exploratory design was chosen to inform semi-structured interviews with 14 participants from 16 universities in the United Kingdom providing post-graduate training. These interviews were analyzed thematically, with 10 overarching themes identified. Themes are discussed across three aspects: (i) systemic factors, (ii) facilitators and barriers in consultation training in the current UK context and (iii) curriculum content and pedagogic methods used in consultation training at pre-service level. Strengths, limitations, and implications for applied practice and future research are discussed.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 18 January 2019

Revised 12 May 2022

Accepted 14 June 2022

Consultation in educational psychology practice: definitions and models

Consultation underpins all aspects of the educational psychologist (EP) or school psychologist role in relation to working at individual, group, and organizational levels of practice. Ysseldyke et al. (2009) argued that to achieve effective outcomes for all students and to enhance whole system capacity, “a consultation framework for service delivery” (p. 184) was required. Indeed, consultation is a functional competency required of all psychologists (Fouad et al., 2009; Hatzichristou & Rosenfield, 2017).

Whilst there are conflicting understandings of the term both in the academic literature and applied practice, there is general consensus that a consultant and consultee work together through a systematic and staged problem-solving approach, where consultants empower the consultee by facilitating their efforts to provide support to the client (Erchul & Sheridan, 2014; Farrell & Woods, 2017; Kennedy et al., 2009, 2017; Newman, Hazel et al., 2018). The consultee may be a parent/carer or a practitioner working in

CONTACT Sandra Dunsmuir  s.dunsmuir@ucl.ac.uk  Educational Psychology Group, Department of Psychology and Language Sciences, University College London, 26 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AP, United Kingdom

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a school or other human services organization and it is for this reason that the paradox of school psychology is often invoked – that the capacity to provide the most effective consultative service to children and young people often rests on the psychologist's relational process skills in working with adults (Gutkin & Conoley, 1990). Ensuring novice consultants in training achieve a standard of competent practice, and that models of consultation skill development are effective, is of clear relevance in applied psychology contexts.

Internationally, different theoretical traditions are apparent in the various models of consultation detailed in the literature. For example, problem-solving models of consultation have their roots in behavioral approaches initially developed in the 1970s (Frank & Kratochwill, 2014); consultee-centered approaches to consultation have evolved from the psychodynamically informed approaches first outlined by Caplan and colleagues (Knotek & Hylander, 2014). In the United Kingdom (UK), common consultation models include the Wagner model (Wagner, 2017) which adopts an interactionist approach with roots in personal construct psychology, symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and systems theory (Wagner, 2000), and problem-solving approaches, one of which is Problem Analysis (Monsen & Frederickson, 2017). A potential confusion in the field is the lack of clarity between the psychological theory underpinning any particular model of consultation, the framework(s) for practice which may be informed by theory, the techniques or strategies employed and how this is justified and articulated by the consultant.

Development of consultation competence

The work of a psychologist, for ethical, legal, and professional reasons, must be of the highest quality possible and be undertaken with an abiding commitment to beneficence. In addition, practice should integrate “the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of patient characteristics, culture and preferences” (American Psychological Association, 2006, p. 273). Evidence-based practice in applied psychology is a complex undertaking (Kennedy & Monsen, 2016), yet developing competent individuals who are informed by this is a central aim of contemporary professional training. This has led to interest in developing a “science of training” (Callahan & Watkins, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c), a direction of travel that is apparent in the educational psychology literature (e.g., Frank & Kratochwill, 2014; Hazel et al., 2010; Kennedy et al., 2017; Newell & Newman, 2014). Application of evidence-based practice within consultation training requires a rigorous exploration of how training providers integrate the best available research about consultation pedagogy with their practitioner expertise about what, when and how to teach and assess consultation, whilst accounting for the cultures, preferences, and characteristics of service users.

Kelly (2017a) highlighted the need for EPs, at all stages of their careers to have effective mechanisms for drawing on psychological theory to guide and support practice. Because of the substantial emphasis during initial professional training on the practicum, a significant degree of influence is exerted by the placement supervisor in organizing the trainee EP's learning experiences in that context. It is therefore essential for training providers to ensure that there are conceptually clear theory-to-practice links in consultation training. The experiences of training providers communicating their stance on consultation theories, frameworks, and techniques to professional practice placement supervisors are an important consideration when reviewing how consultation competencies develop within the broader professional context.

There is therefore a need to review the research on consultation training, and to view the intersection of theory and practice during initial professional training, as this is a defining stage in the professional development of the consultants of the future.

Training in consultation

The importance of high-quality training was highlighted over 20 years ago by Caplan and colleagues, who argued that “consulting is a method of professional functioning having a separate body of concepts and techniques . . . one may be a competent psychologist, but is unlikely to be an effective consultant without additional training” (Caplan et al., 1994, p. 5). Nearly 10 years after Caplan's original call, Alpert and Taufique described consultation training as a field in need of review, revision, and research (Alpert & Taufique, 2002a). At that time, Kratochwill and Pittman (2002) outlined a reconceptualization of problem-solving models, where consultation included as much or as little contact with the client as was needed during the assessment stage of consultation, and where the indirect nature of consultation practice pertained more to the delivery of intervention to the client (the so-called “consultation task distribution continuum”). This formulation is relevant to UK training providers and consultants in training today, because of the continued debate about the tensions between working consultatively and completing psychometric test-based evaluations of individual children and young people (Farrell & Woods, 2017). It is critical that such issues are addressed in initial professional training.

Other key concerns highlighted at that time included theory-practice links, relationship process skills development; the critical role of supervision, the place of coursework, assessment, and evaluation of competence, multi-cultural issues, and the role of the practicum/placement (Alpert & Taufique, 2002a, 2002b; Meyers, 2002; Rosenfield, 2002). Rosenfield's (2002) classic paper highlighted the developmental progression from novice to competent practitioner, subsequently extended to consider impact as well (Rosenfield et al., 2010). Three developmental stages were differentiated across training (novice-acclimation,

competence and proficiency-expertise), and suggested different instructional activities were linked to each stage. For example, lectures, readings, and observations may be of use for consultants in training in the early stages of developing their understanding of consultation, whereas research and the supervision of others' consultation practice are strategies better suited to the enhancement of on-going expertise. This has remained a popular conceptualization within the consultation training field and informed one of the three research agendas identified by Newell and Newman (2014). These included:

- (1) Identifying the most effective approaches to teach and assess consultation competencies.
- (2) Distinguishing between novice and competent consultants, and understanding which competencies are necessary to achieve prior to progression to the next stage of proficiency.
- (3) Developing and applying reliable and valid outcome measures to assess competence, as well as consultee and client outcomes.

There have been few studies into consultation training in the UK to date. What research there is, reported that consultation skills were taught in initial training and subsequently applied by the recently qualified practitioners surveyed (Evans et al., 2012). More is known about consultation training in the US (Anton-LaHart & Rosenfield, 2004; Hellkamp et al., 1998). Anton-LaHart and Rosenfield (2004) surveyed trainers and supervisors, an exercise that revealed a range of theoretical approaches to consultation training, with the most frequently used being behavioral/problem-solving (91%), mental health (59%), instructional (53%) and organizational (52%) consultation. Almost all participants reported teaching a stage-based model of consultation, with a relative emphasis on delivery of conceptual and theoretical information during preservice training. This focus could be potentially at the expense of developing consultants in training relational or process maintenance skills, hence supervision was noted to be an important aspect of the training process, even though this occurred infrequently or rarely at the time the study was conducted.

Curriculum content and pedagogic methods

Content covered by consultation training courses in the US was examined in a review of the syllabi of 25 American Psychological Association (APA) approved school psychology programs (Hazel et al., 2010). The authors reported that most programs had a primary goal of teaching consultation theory and research underpinning consultation practice, and offered at least one course in consultation that addressed multiple consultation models (e.g., problem-solving, mental health, ecological/organizational, instructional, conjoint, and cross-cultural). It has been argued that

regardless of the consultation model espoused, consultation training programs need to focus more on skills development, particularly in client-centered, consultee-centered and organizational consultation (Ysseldyke et al., 2009). These authors emphasized the critical nature of supervisor capability to support such skills development, and while they did not detail *how* training providers would most effectively ensure this, they noted the amount of time consultants in training spend on placement and the importance of the training institution-practicum provider link. The essential nature of supervisory relationship, and supervisory knowledge and skill in supporting consultants in training, has been noted time and again in the literature (Cramer & Rosenfield, 2004; Hazel et al., 2010; Newell & Newman, 2014; Rosenfield et al., 2010), but empirical research regarding “what works” in consultation supervision has been less forthcoming. One development in supervisory practice is reported by Newman et al. (2013), who describe the application of a structured peer group supervision (SGPS) model. Although not an empirical study, this is informative work detailing a model of consultation supervision that is worthy of further exploration.

More recently, Newman and colleagues conducted a qualitative meta-synthesis combined with constructivist grounded theory methods to explore consultee-centered consultation and related relationship and process-oriented research. Based on a final sample of 38 studies, they noted that consultation training was strongest when it weighed interpersonal, relational, and communication dimensions, including how to address cultural issues during consultation (although this and other themes such as “cultural responsiveness” were less well defined; Newman et al., 2017). Indeed, the importance of cultural competence and addressing diversity and social justice concerns within consultation has been increasingly discussed in the consultation training literature (Hazel et al., 2010; Newell & Newman, 2014; Sander et al., 2016). Finally, and in keeping with previous studies, the Newman et al. (2017) metasynthesis suggested that consultants were not receiving sufficient training or were ineffective in their application of consultation process skills (although primarily in analog or simulated experiences, as opposed to “real” consultations in the field). Once more, the importance of supervision in consultation training was highlighted, specifically the use of techniques such as review of audio/video recordings, engagement in critical, evidenced-based self-reflection, and the receipt of performance-based feedback in enhancing consultation process skills.

The research context

The relative paucity of research into consultation theory, practise and training in the UK at a time of significant legislative and policy change, has meant that there have been no published reviews focused on the impact of these systemic modifications on EP delivery of consultation. Recent legislation relating to children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has been designed to increase emphasis on the need for person-centered planning, collaboration with parents and carers, early identification, intervention, and inclusion in mainstream education. EP consultation knowledge and skill are implicitly implicated throughout statutory guidance for SEND, especially through (i) enabling all teachers to be effective teachers of children and young people with SEND and (ii) contributing to continuous cycles of Assess-Plan-Do-Review in targeted work with individuals, a graduated approach similar to the response to intervention (RTI) model.

These legislative changes occurred at a time of fundamental shifts in the public sector, where austerity policies instituted after the global recession in 2008 meant significant real term cuts in local authority budgets (Buser, 2013; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2015). The majority of qualified EPs in the UK are employed directly by local authorities (National College of Teaching & Leadership, 2014), the equivalent to school districts in the US. In recent years, reduction in funds available in the public sector has meant that more EPs work privately, delivering services to those that are prepared to purchase them. Thus, market economy principles such as competition, privatization and commodification have become evident throughout the public sector, and have had a significant impact on the role of the EP (Eddleston & Atkinson, 2018; Gibbs, 2018; Woods, 2014).

In England, where the impact of local government budget cuts has perhaps been the greatest, most local authority EP services have had to review their model of service delivery in the last decade. The majority have moved from being directly funded via central and local government to some form of partial or full trading, where the psychology service is obliged to generate income from customers or purchasers (Lee & Woods, 2017). Purchasers are usually schools or groups of schools but in some cases may include other local public services (e.g., children's welfare). It is espoused that schools are now funded in such a way that they can exercise greater control and independence over which services – including psychological – they wish to purchase, with a consequent impact on the nature of the EP work commissioned. Evidence for the impact of trading is in its infancy. The limited data available suggest that there are benefits and opportunities, in terms of increased overall demand for EP services, improved professional effectiveness and an amplified sense of accountability (Lee & Woods, 2017). Pertinent to the present study was Lee and Woods' finding that one consequence of traded EP services has been a reduction in the demand

for consultation, at a time when other aspects of EP service delivery have been in greater demand (e.g., direct assessment, intervention, and commissioned project work). Describing consultation as a “discrete activity” (p. 117), separable from observation, assessment, and intervention suggests operationalization of a narrow definition of the term and indicates that it would be timely to conduct further investigations into how consultation is defined and understood in the UK, through reviewing what is being taught and how within pre-service consultation training.

It is therefore appropriate to review systems and structures underpinning pre-service EP training in the UK and consider national professional guidance in relation to the development of competence in consultation. The present study is a qualitative exploration of initial educational psychology trainers in the United Kingdom (UK) and their approaches to evidence-based consultation training in the current socio-political context.

EP pre-service training in the UK

In contrast to countries such as the US where a doctoral degree is not required to be a school psychologist (Newman, Simon et al., 2018), educational psychology training in the UK is at doctoral level. Pre-service training is funded by central and local government, followed by a defined period of local authority employment (usually two years). Sixteen UK universities provide doctoral level training and both the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and the British Psychological Society (BPS) play a part in their approval and accreditation. “Educational Psychologist” is a protected title by law, meaning that anyone who uses the title must be on a register maintained by the HCPC. The council sets standards for education and training and completing a HCPC-approved course confers eligibility to be admitted to the register. The BPS accredits pre-service training courses in a partnership approach, the basis of which is laid out in the Standards for the Accreditation of Doctoral Programmes in Educational Psychology (British Psychological Society, 2019).

Consultation is one of ten “overarching goals, outcomes, ethos and values for all programmes” (p. 14) and the set of consultation competencies that all trainee EPs must meet by the end of the three-year program were defined by the BPS (Dunsmuir et al., 2015). Consultation requires EPs to demonstrate and deploy core competencies to good effect (Newell et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2015). However, is it not always easy to provide agreed specifications of such competencies and it was in part to address this issue that the BPS consultation competency standards were developed. Their introduction provided some degree of clarity and consistency across UK accredited doctoral training programs regarding what was to be taught about consultation. Trainee EPs, training providers and professional practice placement supervisors now have a shared and explicit set of proficiencies that the trainee must

demonstrate at the end of their three-year training program. These include, “knowledge and understanding of evidence-informed models of consultation,” application of “transparent, systematic problem-solving approaches within the consultation process” and use of “person-centred approaches that ensure clients and consultees are appropriately included within consultation and are able to contribute to plans and decisions that are made for them” (British Psychological Society, 2019, p. 17). The competency standards do not stipulate *how* such competencies should be taught, nor how they should be assessed. To date, no investigation has been undertaken to explore how each training provider has interpreted the standards and used them to inform their pre-service training program. In fact, and in contrast to the US, there are no published research studies on UK pre-service consultation training.

Thus, given the socio-political changes and accommodation of consumerist principles within public services in the UK, it was considered relevant to devise a study to examine the influence of trading on consultation service delivery, and how this changing context has impacted on consultation training within universities.

The present study

The present study was designed to address the following research questions:

- (1) What are the key systemic contextual factors that have impacted on pre-service consultation training in the UK?
- (2) What do training providers consider to be the facilitators and barriers experienced by novice consultants following the introduction of traded services in professional practice placements?
- (3) How have training providers addressed what to teach (consultation training content) and how to teach (consultation training methods) in the current context?
- (4) How do training providers assess and monitor developing competence in pre-service consultants?

Method

Design

Researchers sought to gain an insight into, and an understanding of, current consultation training in the UK, and for this reason a qualitative research methodology was used. Qualitative research is considered appropriate “if a concept or phenomenon is to be explored and understood because little research has been done on it” (Creswell, 2014, p. 20). The design of this study was underpinned by the researchers’ experience as educational psychology

trainers in the UK. The theoretical stance that informed this research was social constructionism. As researchers and participants had common experiences training pre-service consultants in the UK, there existed a shared understanding of the delivery and teaching of consultation within educational psychology practice. A qualitative paradigm enabled the researchers to deploy a critical approach to exploring how the context had shaped understanding, by drawing on their subjectivity to articulate thematic conceptualizations, based on the reported experiences of fellow trainers.

Data for the study were collected in the form of semi-structured telephone interviews, analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Guest et al., 2012). The interviews were conducted to explore i) theoretical models, course content, and teaching practices ii) structure of consultation training iii) supervision of consultation iv) assessment approaches used and v) evaluation in terms of consultant in training, consultee and client outcomes within the current UK socio-political and educational context. Telephone interviews were conducted with all participants, as respondents were spread geographically over the whole of the UK and full representation was considered desirable to obtain a comprehensive data set. Face-to-face interviews would not have been viable for this study, so data collection was via telephone, enabling flexibility in the scheduling of interviews and efficient use of time (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). Semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to control the line of questioning (Creswell, 2014) and allow for participants to consider their responses, with prompts from the interviewer for clarification (Gillham, 2000).

Participants

The interviews were carried out with 14 individuals delivering consultation training at universities in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. Program tutors (educators or faculty) were recruited from 14 of the 16 universities in the UK that provide educational psychology postgraduate doctoral training. All are established universities located in major cities. Tutors at two universities did not participate: one made an appointment for interview but canceled due to other commitments and subsequently did not take part, and one did not respond to the e-mail invitation. All participants had post-graduate qualifications in educational psychology and worked part-time in professional practice, in addition to their employment as an academic and professional tutor in a UK university. This meant that all were involved working consultatively within professional practice, as well as delivering training in consultation. There was one participant aged 30–39 years, three aged 40–49 years; eight aged 50–59 years and two aged over 60 years. Ten were female and four were male. Twelve were of white ethnicity (86%), one defined themselves as mixed/multiple ethnicity (7%) and one was of Black Caribbean

heritage (7%). This ethnic representation is congruent with UK Census data (2011), which reported that 87% of the population of the UK were white and 13% from Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic groups (Office for National Statistics, 2011). The mean length of experience since participants had completed their professional training was 27.2 years (range = 10–36). The mean length of time working in universities as a program tutor delivering EP training was 19.8 years (range = 5–31).

Procedure

Heads of all 16 initial educational psychology training programs in the UK were contacted by e-mail by the first author, a professional colleague in the national network of trainers. They were invited to take part (or to nominate one of their tutors) in a semi-structured telephone interview lasting approximately 40 minutes. Once agreement was confirmed, participants were emailed an information sheet about the project and asked to provide written consent. Additionally, they were provided with Frank and Kratochwill's (2014) definition of consultation as: "... a stage-based model that emphasises the need for collaboration with professionals and parents, problem definition, assessment for intervention, on-going progress monitoring, and evaluating outcomes to determine intervention effectiveness" (p. 18) and the relevant competencies from the Division of Educational and Child Psychology standards for the accreditation of educational psychology training in England, Northern Ireland, and Wales (see items 1–2 in the [Appendix](#)). They were also emailed the interview questions in advance, so that they could reflect on these and begin to formulate responses (see [Appendix](#), items 3–7). Participants were informed that interviews would be audio recorded to enable full transcription of the content and ensure no data were lost, and once a transcript had been made the audio file would be deleted. They were assured of confidentiality and removal of identifiable data from transcripts. At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer checked that the interviewee had Frank and Kratochwill's (2014) definition of consultation, the list of DECP Consultation Competencies and the interview questions visible. The questions were asked in the order presented in the [Appendix](#). Duration of the interviews was from 32 minutes to 50 minutes (mean 39 minutes). The study received ethical approval from the first author's university.

Data analysis

A deductive approach to analysis was applied, through which existing research and theory associated with the research questions influenced the analysis of the data (Miles et al., 2014). The data were analyzed thematically following the six stages described by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013). This process began with

the first and second authors familiarizing themselves with the transcribed data (Stage 1), taking note of points of interest and independently identifying specific elements of relevance to the research questions (Stage 2). The third stage is known as coding, where the aim was to identify any particularly relevant data, then label it with a word or brief phrase to encapsulate its essence. At the end of Stage 3, there were many independently rated codes. At Stage 4, the first two authors met to compare their codes and search for themes, agree names/titles for the themes where there was agreement and to resolve areas of disagreement through discussion and debate. This led to settlement on a thematic structure. The third author was then appraised of the thematic structure by the first author, to enable her to collate the data from all the transcripts into these themes and sub-themes with the aid of a qualitative data analysis package (Atlas.ti). This software is one of a number of programs developed to aid in the processes of qualitative data analysis (Friese, 2013; Silver & Lewins, 2014). At Stage 5, the first two authors met to review the thematic analysis and revise themes and sub-themes further. These were then re-organized within Atlas.ti by the third author. This re-analysis was then independently checked by a fourth author by coding a selection of quotes against the thematic structure and comparing judgments. A total of 30% of the data were checked in this way. The agreement rate was 84%. Where there was disagreement, conferencing took place between the researchers to resolve and agree either an alternative structure or a clearer definition of the theme/sub-theme to enable alignment. This was Stage 6, where names and definitions of themes were finalized and data accommodated within this thematic structure.

A thematic table of the data was produced (Table 1) in order to report the findings in relation to the research questions and literature.

Trustworthiness

Processes were followed to ensure trustworthiness of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Shenton, 2004). To ensure credibility, transcripts that had been thematically analyzed were sent to four volunteer participants (25% of the sample), following an e-mail request (i.e. through convenience sampling). Member checking involves validating the analysis with participants, by requesting their views on the authenticity, resonance, and credibility of themes and subthemes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The aim was to ensure that participants' articulations were accurately captured and the analysis matched the respondents' intent (Shenton, 2004). There was therefore a process to enable validation of the common thematic interpretations. No significant disagreements were revealed. Some suggestions about the refinement of thematic titles were helpful in clarifying the content and revisions incorporated into the subsequent analyses. For example, the term consultation

Table 1. Consultation training themes and sub-themes.

Systemic Factors	Facilitators and Barriers in Consultation	Curriculum Content and Pedagogic Methods
Broad organizational and contextual factors impacting on or influencing consultation training	Professional and training level factors that enhance/enable or block/impede effective consultation training	Training provider-specific dimensions pertaining to what is taught [teaching content] and how [teaching practice]
Traded services: addressing multiple contextual constraints where placement providers are in a traded environment, including the ethics of psychological service provision in a “market-driven” economy	Consultation definitions: challenges presented by confusion and disagreement in defining consultation Frameworks: benefits of teaching consultation with transparent conceptual frameworks	Techniques: what is taught pertaining to the “act” of consulting and across consultation models or frameworks Teaching: syllabi and pedagogical methods
BPS competency-based approach: challenges and opportunities in competency-based approaches to teaching and learning in applied contexts	Theory-practice connections: roles played by psychological theory and the evidence-base when teaching consultation	Development of consultation competence: developmental progression from novice to “competent,” extending skills across consulting with individuals to consulting with groups to consulting at the level of the organization, as well as advances in service user [client] involvement and in approaches to documenting consultation
Variables in professional practice placements: professional practice placement influences on learning	Supervision: the significance of supervision in learning consultation including the complexities presented by multiple supervisory relationships and models, supervision quality and the reflexivity of both consultant-in-training and supervisor	Assessment of trainee: role and influence of developmental multi-modal feedback [incl. self-assessment, peer assessment, etc.] as well as constraints presented by judging capability in consultation
Evaluation of consultation practice: utilizing the evidence base and effectiveness of consultation in achieving outcomes for clients and consultees		

“Methods” was renamed “Techniques” following the member checking process. Dependability was addressed by reporting the process of the study in detail (Shenton, 2004). To ensure the findings emerged from the data and researcher bias was minimized (confirmability), researchers referred to the original transcripts throughout the process of analysis for verification. In order to determine transferability, participants, and conditions of the study have been described in detail (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).

With regard to the reflexivity of the researchers, it is important to note that the first and second authors are both employed as educational psychology trainers and were involved in analyzing the transcripts about practices described by individuals known to them professionally. The research was conducted within a social constructionist paradigm, which posits that as researchers and participants had common experiences training pre-service consultants in the UK, there existed a shared perception of reality, based on collective assumptions. Thus, although the positionality of a researcher inevitably shapes choice of research and interpretation of findings, this is not to be eschewed, especially in highly skilled specialisms where a deep level of

knowledge and professional expertise is required to understand and interpret data. As Bourke (2014) argues, what is important is the transparent disclosure of potential sources of researcher influence and bias, so that consumers can make an informed judgment about the “truthfulness” of research. In the context of this study, thematic analysis enabled the researchers to deploy a critical approach to exploring how the context-shaped understanding, by drawing on their subjectivity to articulate thematic conceptualizations, based on the reported experiences of fellow trainers.

Findings

Table 1 summarizes the themes and sub-themes with definitions yielded from thematic analysis of the data.

It can be seen that three overarching themes were identified, with four sub-themes within each. Here follows an account with a representative sample of succinct, verbatim quotes to illustrate the issues most frequently raised by participants.

Systemic factors

This study was undertaken across a distinct UK educational system and the broad organizational factors impacting on or influencing consultation training in this context were captured within this main theme. The first sub-theme relating to *Systemic factors* captured the impact of *Traded services* on EP practice and the ethical dilemmas presented to students by this change:

with increasing delegation of funds to schools . . . they now control their budgets and purchase services that would previously been provided by local authorities at no direct cost to the individual school . . . [trainee EPs] sometimes feel that their ability to negotiate style of service delivery is compromised and the balance of power is sometimes perceived to have gone towards the purchaser [i.e. the school].

Some reported ethical dilemmas relating to pressure from schools on psychologists to uphold teacher views about moving pupils to special education, where professional judgment and autonomy in decision making was considered to be compromised. There were many examples of the traded context being associated with trainees experiencing stress by being too close to the purchaser, for instance:

So, a school will say I am purchasing this number of sessions for the term, the trainee is told they have to deliver this number of sessions, they feel under a lot of pressure to go into schools and have face-to-face interactions, so they feel they have less time for administration, phone calls, liaisons with other services and all the other back up aspects of service delivery and that that can compromise consultation.

Some participants mentioned that these pressures can be offset by program requirements that can facilitate trainees gaining balanced experiences of consultation, even within a traded model of service delivery: “. . . we require that the trainees do two to three pieces of casework over time using a problem solving consultation approach.” There was acknowledgment of the importance of local influence and marketing in traded contexts: “how the local authority itself and the psychology service in particular has marketed and sold on the idea of consultation as something that is effective and efficient.”

The second sub-theme reflected participants’ statements about the revised *BPS competency-based approach* and its influence on EP training and service delivery in the UK, as described by this participant:

There is no other Division of the British Psychological Society that has a distinctive set of competencies linked to consultation. So, as a method of service delivery, it is increasingly established as an aspect of practice that most educational psychologists engage in and that is a strength. It means that when trainees go on placement their supervisor is likely to work in a consultative manner in some way or other and therefore able to give appropriate feedback about the trainee’s consultations . . . one of the limitations is that there is still a degree of inconsistency around what consultation is, how to run an effective consultation. Hopefully these new consultation competencies will get people thinking and talking about what is involved.

A number of training providers mentioned the scale of the systems change required at universities to review programs, ensure alignment with requirements defined by the professional body and map the BPS competencies to academic teaching and learning activities to ensure that there is comprehensive coverage across the three years of training.

Variables in professional practice placements and how this influences trainee learning opportunities was a concern that formed the basis of the third sub-theme, illustrated by the following quote:

I mean the way in which different authorities function at the moment in terms of organising placements and the expectations . . . It really is a very mixed bag out there, so a central problem is the variation of opportunity to practice and that filters through.

However, local variations provided opportunities for services to do things differently within a traded environment: “. . . it sometimes opens up discussions about alternative models of service delivery and there certainly have been some examples in England of service development and service expansion as a result of trading.”

The fourth sub-theme under *Systemic factors* related to the role of *Evaluation in consultation practice*. Participants’ statements related to evaluation of service delivery and the theoretical and practical difficulties experienced:

... evaluating the effectiveness is hugely problematic, there are so many variables in that way of thinking implicit in any situation in which a psychologist is involved ... Actually gathering the evidence which makes it clear that they are the person who has made the difference ... is very difficult.

However, there were some positive responses about the way that consultee outcomes were measured:

... [trainees] negotiate the targets, they agree when the period of review will be and at the review time they should be able, through a categorical system, to appraise whether there has been any progress, some progress, targets have been met or targets have been exceeded.

Client outcomes and satisfaction with consultation was also a focus of evaluative efforts: “we do require them to seek user feedback, so we have an actual requirement in terms of their work that they ask their clients about the experience.”

Facilitators and barriers in consultation training

This second main theme was conceptualized as professional and training level factors that enhance/enable or block/impede effective consultation training, named Facilitators and Barriers. One barrier identified by participants related to *Consultation definitions*, a sub-theme that captured statements about the confusion caused by the differing and inconsistent ways that consultation is defined. The problems that this can present were mentioned by a significant number of participating university trainers:

the massive challenge for us is the lack of shared understanding across services. We've got trainees in lots of different placements ... Everyone is using the same word but not everyone is meaning the same thing and I think that's been a massive challenge for the trainees.

Participants commented on the scope or range of practices included within definitions of consultation, with one respondent describing this as “a continuum from ... a very pure approach to consultation where you would see the child infrequently (it would be very much about working with the adults), right through to something which is much more embedded within casework conversations.”

Confusion about what consultation constitutes is exemplified in the following critique from one university tutor: “I think the interesting thing for me is where problem solving as a framework begins and where consultation ends ... I am quite interested in how courses treat that, whether they do a problem solving model and then a consultation model.”

The benefit of clearly conceptualized consultation models were identified as a facilitator and formed the basis of the second sub-theme *Frameworks*. The majority of participants made reference to problem solving, e.g.:

... we introduce a problem-solving framework from day one and because it's an evidence-based approach ... the main framework to help them move through what sort of thing to ask, because what they are trying to find out is evidence that will allow them to construct hypotheses about what's wrong and how change can be brought about. So that really is the mainstay of teaching about consultation.

A smaller proportion of statements linked to facilitative frameworks identified the importance of process consultation where trainees are "encouraged to not adopt an expert position, particularly at the beginning of a consultation, and go much more on the process ... of helping others in a professional way." Consultee-centered consultation was also mentioned, for example, " ... we draw heavily on much of that psychodynamic and psychotherapeutic literature to enable people to see themselves as exploring the nature of the relationships implicit in the problem presentation."

Within the third sub-theme, *Theory-practice connections*, participants spoke of the challenges of integrating theories with effective, evidence-based practice:

I think the basis for a lot of our teaching is that you can give people information which gives them the theoretical background and understanding of the evidence-base and evaluation of certain techniques, but actually it is making sure that they have enough opportunity and that they are developing their skills with the process.

The fourth sub-theme was *Supervision* – of great importance in the development of consultation competencies, with an acknowledgment by some participants that in practice, there are multiple consultation models and supervisors so that student experiences can be variable:

It depends on how good the supervisor is at understanding consultation ... sometimes it can cause a problem if the trainee is placed with a supervisor for whom consultation is not that important.

Thus, the quality of supervision in consultation was considered to be of central importance, described by one participant as follows:

The quality of the supervisory relationship takes a while to build, obviously issues around trust etcetera. Trainees prefer a contracted space for supervision, where it's very clear what's in the supervision and what's not. Focus on client outcomes in supervision is very important to them, a reflective space, a capacity to be able to think about their work and also to be able to think about themselves.

Another important element of supervision of pre-service consultation that was mentioned was to encourage and support reflexivity:

And in supervision we do something called the meta-framework, it's a kind of multi-dimensional, ecological; it's basically trying to get them to think about their own gender, race, religion or no religion, their culture, their language, where they've come from in terms of their family of origin, how they live now and how all of that interacts and how other people's perceptions of them.

Curriculum content and pedagogic methods

The third main theme included variations in how different training programs teach consultation. The first sub-theme (*Techniques*) captured approaches used by participants at their university. This included mention of motivational interviewing, person-centered psychology (PCP), and solution focused approaches, for example, “so starting in year 1 . . . [trainees] are asked to do a 10-minute solution focused interview that . . . they record and transcribe . . . to discuss and reflect on their developing skills.”

A large number of responses were captured under the second sub-theme *Teaching* with comments relating what is taught (teaching content or syllabi) and how it is taught (teaching practice or pedagogical methods). Examples of each are presented below:

- *Teaching content (syllabi)*: consultation models, theoretical knowledge, systems/organizational focus, interpersonal relationships/communication skill development, collaboration, role of the EP, equality, and diversity.
- *Teaching practice (pedagogical methods)*: individual reflection, group reflection/peer supervision, use of video, observation of/shadowing consultation, problem-based learning, role play/simulation.

Within the third sub-theme (*Development of consultation competence*), participants' considerations of how trainees develop their consultation skills with a range of consultees were coded into the following sub-themes: children and young people, teachers, groups and organizations, parents and carers. Nearly one-third of statements within this theme related to practice with children and young people and several of these focused on taking on board their perspectives: “it's all about having the child at the centre of the services and locating themselves around the child and the families, rather than children having to fit into the existing services” and “we look at different approaches that the trainees could use to [gather the] views of the child or young person . . . depending on the age and ability level.”

The acquisition of organizational level consultation competencies was mentioned by several participants. For example, one argued that trainees with the requisite knowledge and understanding of systems level consultation benefit from direct experience of this “ . . . in more advanced placements where they have more autonomy and more flexibility over the work.”

The final sub-theme relating to the *Curriculum content and pedagogic methods* theme addressed *Assessment of trainees*. Participants referred to formative assessment, with one detailing how trainees “... self-reflect, they get peer reflection ... and feedback from the tutor on both strengths and achievements and areas to enhance.” Also, summative assessment, both from their placement supervisor who makes a judgment about consultation competence (pass/fail) at two or three time points each academic year, and “In the portfolio in years 1, 2 and 3, they have to show an application of consultation ... the assessment is also going to be summative.”

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore consultation training in a UK context, including (i) key systemic contextual constraints that have impacted on consultation training and how these are being addressed (ii) facilitators and barriers to training novice consultants, and (iii) consultation training content and process. This section is focused on the themes and tensions evident from the data in these areas, as well as implications for future training in consultation.

Systemic factors influencing consultation pre-service training in the UK

A range of systemic factors have influenced the context in which teaching and learning about consultation occurs in EP practice in the UK. Some post-positivist approaches conceive of the issues encountered not inherently as limitations or deficits but rather as underlying aspects of a situation that must be accounted for in subsequent practice (Robinson, 2014; Robinson & Lai, 2006), and it is in this vein that the participants' statements were considered. The context for professional practice in the UK has historically been relatively consistent across different regions and local authorities, due to centralized legal, educational, and professional practice frameworks. However, legislative and policy changes based on free market economic principles have led to shifts in the financial structure underpinning public service delivery in the UK, increasing variability between local authorities, where spending decisions are now more likely to be made. In this changing context, it is necessary for service leaders to engage politically and establish relationships at local levels to influence policy and the context for practice (Dunsmuir & Kratochwill, 2013). Some Educational Psychology Services have needed to negotiate and trade with educational settings, which has presented a complex array of challenges. Findings from this study, are congruent with those reported by Lee and Woods (2017) who observed that traded models can present opportunities as a result of the direct financial relationship between psychological services and educational settings. Some participants argued that when consultation was effectively marketed within a traded model, schools

were more likely to see this as effective, be prepared to purchase it and therefore to provide enhanced opportunities for trainees to develop consultation competencies.

Participants discussed how placements in traded psychological services could be more varied, with opportunities to negotiate approaches that moved beyond traditional expectations, and contribute to innovative service delivery. In some cases, trading had led to increased demand for EP services and expansion of staffing, although this model could lead to problems such as a perception that a specific psychologist's service could be directly purchased. As one participant noted, this has the potential to create pressure for both trainees and qualified practitioners where a close relationship with the purchaser has the potential to blur professional boundaries. The time available for consultation and for the non-contact related time, necessary aspects for effective consultation (e.g., reflection, supervision, keeping abreast of the research literature pertinent to the context) can also be limited by a traded model. Financial systems that accommodate non-contact time in service costing algorithms are essential to preserve best consultation practice and require a degree of professional expertise to achieve this (British Psychological Society, 2013).

When considering systemic factors that have influenced consultation training in the UK, programs were grappling with the dearth of UK-based research to inform practice, and the differences between the UK and other contexts where consultation training research has taken place. For example, some participants reported training consultants to work with the 16–25 year old age group, a current issue in the UK due to the expanded age range of EP practice (see, Atkinson et al., 2015). This issue has received little attention in the US literature. In the US, Sander et al. (2016) conducted an investigation into consultation training, and found a range of tensions between university settings and placement providers. For example, participants in their study reported that placements are sometimes unable to permit consultants in training to work with “real” cases, that university calendars did not always align with those in schools, and faculty can find training stressful because of the limited time available for “covering theoretical content and simultaneously supervising practical experiences” (p. 228). None of these issues were raised by participants in this study, perhaps because of significant differences between training models or because they were not explicitly asked. Whilst participants in the Sander et al. (2016) study were focused on systemic constraints relating to issues of diversity (especially culture, ethnicity and rural versus urban difference), the constraints for those in the UK sample emphasized power and oppression and implicitly, privilege. The seven university faculty interviewed in the Sander et al. (2016) study were grappling with “providing instruction for consultation courses that includes a large volume of reading about models of consultation and low

emphasis and accountability for student growth in the areas of diversity and self-reflection” (p. 233). This was not a problem for study participants in the UK, where trainees are required to gain experience of working with diverse client groups and demonstrate cultural competence, due to the strong emphasis within the BPS competency standards (British Psychological Society, 2019).

Identifying facilitators and addressing barriers in consultation training in the current context

An overarching facilitator for consultation training in the current context was the strength afforded by an underpinning philosophy permeating the program as a whole. This was apparent in the *Frameworks* and *Theory-Practice Connections* sub-themes; specifically, in the psychological theories privileged at various institutions. Theories highlighted included social constructionist and constructivist; information processing (in the context of problem analysis); solution-focused; psychodynamic; systems and systemic and humanistic. Behavioral theory was not explicitly referenced, perhaps reflecting the broader conceptual shift toward considering behavior to be a manifestation of a complex interaction between various biological, interpersonal, and wider systemic factors (Monsen & Frederickson, 2017). It may be that psychological theories that aid in working with such complexity have greater practical utility for consultation training. Other facilitators included the competencies themselves, in terms of the degree to which they support clarity and consistency, as well how they have prompted further development of the core training curriculum and approaches to assessment. This emphasis on competence in psychology training in the UK is consistent with the professional practice literature, in terms of the multi-modal, multi-informant nature of consultation competence assessment (Fouad et al., 2009). However, it differs in other ways. For example, Callahan and Watkins (2018c) reported that most professional training programs in the US used locally adapted measures of competence, whereas the participants in the UK study all used the same competency framework, agreed at national level (Dunsmuir et al., 2015).

The key barrier for teaching consultation was the on-going definitional confusion encapsulated within the *Consultation Definitions* sub-theme. Participants reported a long-standing problem linked to the inconsistency between what trainees were taught about consultation in the university setting and what they experienced on placement. The confusion extended to a possible perception that consultation and problem solving processes were separate entities. It may be that in the UK there is some residual perception that consultation means never working directly with clients. This model of “pure” consultation where there is limited or no contact between the consultant and client has been associated incorrectly with the Wagner (2000)

model and considered by some to be distinct and different from embedded casework conversations. As highlighted in the literature, this is a false dichotomy and consultation does not mean never or rarely working with individual children and young people; indeed, some have argued that “to rely solely on second-hand information provided by the teacher may be unreliable, even unethical, since the school psychologist’s expertise clearly brings additional insights on child-related concerns to teachers, parents and other professionals” (Farrell & Woods, 2017, p. 226). Wagner herself highlighted that full consultation does include both observations of children and young people in context and meeting with them in person (Wagner, 2017), and yet the belief that her model promotes a “pure” approach to consultation that involves largely working with adults, with little direct contact between consultant and client has clearly persisted.

The *Supervision* sub-theme highlighted how some consultants in training were supervised appropriately in developing their consultation skills, but that this experience was variable. Good supervision is of key importance in developing consultation competence (Rosenfield et al., 2010) yet it is defined and delivered in different ways according to supervisor knowledge, experience, professional background and sphere of operation. There is a lack of empirical research on the essential features of effective supervision, in particular with regard to work with children and parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Sheridan et al., 2014). It is essential to extend this research base in order to inform best supervisory practice. The role of the supervisor is of crucial importance in supporting consultation and ensuring that this can be delivered and appropriately supported within a range of changing Educational Psychology Service organizational and financial structures.

Curriculum content and pedagogic methods

In terms of the content covered on training programs, the findings of the present study were consistent with the existing literature in terms of (i) the theoretical orientation of programs in influencing principles and practice, (ii) the importance of teaching-staged approaches to problem-solving, (iii) covering various models of consultation (along with the tensions inherent in teaching multiple models for breadth versus one specific model for depth) and (iv) addressing consultation at individual-in-context, group, and organizational levels (Anton-LaHart & Rosenfield, 2004; Farrell & Woods, 2017; Hazel et al., 2010; Newell & Newman, 2014; Newman et al., 2017; Ysseldyke et al., 2009). Themes that were particularly pertinent and linked to the fourth research question included the sub-themes named *Techniques*, *Teaching*, *Development of Consultation Competence* and *Assessment of Trainee*. For example, specific psychological theories and techniques referenced included

social constructionism, solution-focused paradigms, narrative approaches, systemic and systems theory, personal construct psychology, the theory of planned behavior and social psychological phenomenon (e.g., influence, reciprocity, social proof). Pan-theoretical components were very diverse and included interpersonal and communication skills; parent partnership; collaboration; action planning; the history of consultation; power, inclusion, and exclusion; critical reflection; working with resistance in consultation; eliciting the voice of the child and appropriate engagement with them. These data provided some tentative responses to one of the three consultation training research agendas proposed by Newell and Newman (2014) in terms of what distinguishes novice and competent consultations and stages approaches to the acquisition of proficiency. For example, the focus for consultation training content in this study at the novice stage (i.e., Year 1 of EP training) was often on (i) psychological theory, principles/models and frameworks, (ii) relationships, interpersonal, and communication skills and (iii) consultation at the level of the individual-in-context.

With regard to what is taught, a broad range of content was noted by participants. Theories and frameworks used on programs included systems theory, personal construct psychology, and solution-focused approaches. Some participants indicated that the literature on consultation had a role to play when making decisions about curriculum content, and that problem-solving frameworks (e.g., Monsen & Frederickson, 2017) with links to psychological evidence-based and implementation science (Kelly, 2017b) were central.

Teaching about psychological theory and practice with regard to relationship building and development, as well as skills in dialog and communication, were considered to be critical across multiple programs. Training providers had to consider these two dimensions in terms of what was taught and how it was taught. For example, one commented on the work of Schein, both in terms of his seminal process consultation work and more recently the “humble” series of publications (e.g., Schein, 2013, 2016; Schein & Schein, 2018). Interpersonal and communication skills were focused on in terms of consultation content, teaching processes and assessment of trainee competence. It is encouraging that relationships and the importance of building relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002) are a central teaching focus, given the repeated finding that regardless of theoretical orientation or consultation model, “the consultation relationship is a cornerstone of the consultation process and mediates client outcomes” (Newman, Hazel et al., 2018, p. 107).

Overall, the multiplicity of approaches to delivering teaching in consultation was striking. This included lectures, workshops, seminars, and the use of simulation and role play. Video was a key medium used to review and reflect on role played consultations with peers or tutors, including Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) and Video Interaction Guidance (VIG; Landor

et al., 2011). On some programs, this was embedded as a teaching strategy, on others it was a key priority for development. It is interesting to note that the future research priorities identified by Newman et al. (2017) included research questions such as “what training contexts (e.g., simulation, university, real life) are effective to teach relational process skills to novice consultants?” (p. 31); and Callahan and Watkins (2018c) more recently noted that a historical lack of experiential observation in psychology training (e.g., through screens, use of video) has persisted to today. Our data suggest that UK consultation training providers are robustly implementing a wide variety of teaching strategies and may have helpful perspectives to offer to colleagues in other contexts, such as the US. Encouraging program providers to disseminate their approaches to teaching and learning at this level could be of great benefit, a good example of which is the recent empirical investigation of VERP and the development of consultation and peer supervision skills (Murray & Leadbetter, 2018).

Implications for Practice and Future Research

There are a number of implications for current practice emerging from the present study. One is to highlight the benefits for consultants in training, university tutors, and placement supervisors of developing conceptual clarity that links psychological theory, model of consultation and specific consultative technique. This would help to address the continuing consultation definitional confusion.

Participants in this study indicated the potential of collective action (e.g., trainee EPs, university providers, principal psychologists, professional and union representatives) regarding the ethical implications of traded services for provision of consultation within EP practice, including consultation training. It is a relatively unexplored issue, briefly touched upon by Midgen (2015) who noted that within the EP’s mandate, ethical and regulatory codes may promote sensitivity and reduce unethical behavior within the context of traded services. The British Psychological Society (2013) ethical trading guidelines referred to traded services and implications for trainee EPs, although not to the specific intersection between training, consultation and trading which is of particular focus here. At that time program directors highlighted the potential benefits associated with traded models of service delivery in that this model could, amongst other things, lessen “reliance on statutory assessment and local authority directed work” (British Psychological Society, 2013, p. 10). Current anecdotal evidence would suggest many services are inundated with requests for direct work with children and young people, in order to provide the written psychological advice required for statutory assessments, often at the expense of consultation. The reasons for this are varied and complex, but include the perverse incentives in a system that is reliant on psychological advice to obtain additional educational resources. The present study shows some of the

concerns identified in the British Psychological Society (2013) guidelines were prescient. As advocated by National Association of School Psychologists (NASP; National Association of School Psychologists, 2020), there is a parallel need in the UK for a broad coalition of stakeholders to advocate for ethical practice within EP consultation training, particularly given that it is a foundational competence permeating all aspects of service delivery, and to provide guidance on the ways that this may be achieved.

Further research in this area should include a more in-depth analysis of consultation training content and process, and in particular an examination of the evidence-base and application of the various teaching approaches discussed here (e.g., the potential of digital technology in the context of VERP), and the findings reported in Murray and Leadbetter's (2018) paper. A qualitative exploration of how academic tutors in any given system integrate this research with their own judgment and service user perspectives would be useful. In addition, it would be beneficial to further explore the supervision of consultation training – both the supervision provided by the university provider and that by the professional practice placement – and to investigate specifically the key factors that positively influence learning about consultation in supervision and those that may adversely impact upon it. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, if consultation is fundamentally a relationship where the consultant aims to empower the consultee and facilitate their efforts at providing support to the client, further research that focuses on all of those involved in the relationship could inform future practice (e.g., how are teachers prepared most effectively for consultation? Are there any merits derived from designing and delivering consultation training to pre-service teachers and consultants in training together?). As noted, “consultation is inescapably a relational endeavour” (Newman et al., 2017, p. 32) and advancing our understanding of how best to teach consultants in training about the patterns of interpersonal interaction and relational dynamics in systems is critical.

Strengths and limitations of the present study

As with any study, there are inherent methodological strengths and limitations. The semi-structured telephone interviews enabled a very high response rate, covering participants that were geographically dispersed across the UK. The advance access to interview questions enabled participants to contemplate their responses, which generated comprehensive and rich data for subsequent analysis in a cost-effective way. The current study was novel, being the first of its kind in the UK. The method of analysis produced a detailed account, retaining the complexities and contradictions inherent in any study of real-world phenomenon. However, unlike face-to-face interviews or focus groups, telephone interviewers, no matter how experienced and skilled, cannot see body language. For example, if

a participant looked taken aback in response to a particular question (likely indicating confusion or a lack of understanding which might prompt a probe or reframe to aid clarity or to drill further down into the interviewees perspectives), interviewers would not be able to adjust their response in real-time. Participants were emailed visual prompts in advance of their interview, thus giving them advance sight of the definition of consultation, BPS competencies and interview questions, in order to mitigate potential participant confusion, and allow time for advance planning and reflection. However, the study was limited in that only the views of university trainers were sought.

Future research seeking broader perspectives would help to extend knowledge and understanding. This could include the views of trainee EPs on whether the espoused consultation training content and process was actually in-use on their program, information on the training and skills of university tutors, and the perspectives of supervisors of consultation practice. This would enable further exploration of factors linked with effective training in consultation.

Conclusion

The full participation of all UK university educational psychology training providers may be indicative of the central role of consultation within service delivery, as well as the dedication of those preparing consultants in training for the complexities of real world applied psychology practice. Even at a time of significant socio-political change that produced systemic constraints not previously experienced, training providers were willing to consider facilitators and barriers and identify ways of addressing and accommodating these. A broad range of pedagogic methods were cited as applicable to delivering consultation training at pre-service level and individuals emphasized the significance of applied practice being informed by both theory and research. This study showed that there are high levels of interest and a consensus about the need to define and operationalize best practice. Thus, getting UK EPs thinking and talking about the psychology inherent in consultation training is a rich vein for future exploration and enhancement.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Sandra Dunsmuir, PhD, is Professor of Educational and Child Psychology at UCL and Director of the Educational Psychology Group. Her academic research and publications focus on early literacy development, child and adolescent mental health, consultation and cross-professional collaborative working. Sandra has led national projects to develop learning resources for professional training programmes in educational psychology.

Emma-Kate Kennedy, DEdPsy, is Deputy Director of Educational Psychology Training at the Tavistock and Portman National Health Service (NHS) Foundation Trust in London. In addition, she is the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Lifespan Autism and Learning Disabilities Team Manager. Previously, Emma was manager of the Integrated Child Support Service and Lead Responsible for Educational Psychology at the London Borough of Southwark.

Jane Lang is a Research Fellow with the Educational Psychology Group at UCL. She collaborates on research projects within the department and is involved with training educational psychologists in qualitative research methods.

Jeremy Monsen, PhD, is Head of Educational Psychology (Bi-borough EP Service, covering Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster, London) and is also seconded to UCL Institute of Education as an academic tutor. Jeremy's research and publications cover developing trainee EP problem solving and consultation skills, inclusive education and teacher attitude. He is a former Editor of *Educational Psychology in Practice* (2001 to 2005).

ORCID

Sandra Dunsmuir  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8315-7190>

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Appendix

Interview Questions

- (1) EP services are increasingly operating within a traded model of service delivery and trainees undertake placements in these contexts. Given this traded environment, what are the facilitators and barriers to a consultation model of service delivery from your perspective and that of your trainees? [Prompt – ask about both trainer and trainee perspectives]
- (2) Looking at the DECP Training Committee competencies for consultation which we have sent, how do you currently address these on your program? [Prompt – ask tutor to comment on these, one at a time]
 - 2.1 demonstrate knowledge and understanding of models of psychological consultation that are evidence-informed
 - 2.2 demonstrate effective interpersonal and communication skills that enable them to consult with children, families and other professionals (e.g., effective listening, a non-judgmental stance, empathy, acting as advocate)
 - 2.3 demonstrate competence in using consultation to respond to needs and concerns at individual, group, class and whole organization levels
 - 2.4 demonstrate skill in offering a clear explanation of the model and process of consultation being used
 - 2.5 demonstrate use of a transparent, systematic problem-solving approach within the consultation process
 - 2.6 demonstrate the ability to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their own consultations and interventions
 - 2.7 demonstrate skill in empowering consultees and in working collaboratively, identifying the strengths and skills of others that can be utilized
 - 2.8 use evidence-informed person centered approaches to ensure that children, young people and other consultees are appropriately included within the process and are able to contribute to plans and decisions that are made for them.
- (3) What are your key priority areas for development in consultation training? [Prompt – what course content/assessments will be added/amended on the program]
- (4) What methods do you use to assess your trainee's progression in consultation competence? [Prompts – experiences linked to competency development needed to support progression from novice to competent practitioner, order or sequencing of teaching/other training experiences]
- (5) What are the strengths and limitations of the supervision that is provided for trainees of their consultation practice?
- (6) How do you prepare trainees to consult with (a) diverse consultees and (b) consultees who are working with diverse client groups? [e.g., difference emerging from culture, ethnicity, race, faith, sexuality, gender, and so on]
- (7) Is there anything else you would like to add/comment on?