Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology

Programme Director: Vivian Hill

Doctoral Thesis

Exploring the Application of a ‘Capabilities Approach’ in Educational Psychology Practice to Promote Inclusion in Education

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the UCL Institute of Education, University of London, for the Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology
Declaration

I, Rhea Powell, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed:

Rhea Powell
June 2020
Abstract

Equality is a central value underpinning educational psychology. Promoting equality in and through education is encapsulated in the concept of inclusion. The field of inclusive education is beset by tensions and dilemmas, many of which relate to conflicting conceptualisations of disability. The Capabilities Approach is thought to offer the conceptual means for overcoming these issues. The Capabilities Approach is a framework for making sense of and evaluating human wellbeing and quality of life as a matter of social justice that has diversity at its heart. Acknowledging the power relations inherent in professional practice necessitates a consideration of social justice and anti-oppressive practice. These issues can also be addressed by the Capabilities Approach. This thesis explored the application of the Capabilities Approach in the context of educational psychology practice. Specifically, it presents the development of two frameworks for consultation based on theoretical ideas from the Capabilities Approach and the perspectives of children and young people on their valued capabilities. The use of these frameworks was explored in the context of a pragmatic, reflective practitioner study, employing a design informed by multiple case study approaches and action research. Qualitative data collection strategies were used to consider the possible contributions to inclusive practice made by the capabilities-informed approach to consultation developed in this study. Findings suggested that this consultation approach offered a framework for collaborative problem-solving that attended to educational disadvantage arising from personal, social and environmental factors, and a method for incorporating potentially marginalised voices of children into a consultation approach, helping teachers to develop a clearer understanding of the whole child. Results of the analysis tentatively suggest that a capabilities-informed approach to consultation can support Educational Psychologists in managing opposing views on the nature of inclusion and disability, and guide and inform priorities for intervention and support, generating jointly formulated action plans for schools.
Research Impact

This thesis will have a number of beneficial uses in both academic research and professional practice in educational psychology. It presents the development of a number of tools that can be applied in the context of educational psychology consultation in schools. These tools will support educational psychologists and school staff to promote inclusive education practice through their consultation discussions. They also put forward a method for eliciting and incorporating pupil views into professional practice tools, and within consultation practice itself. Disseminating this research to those in the educational psychology profession will benefit children and young people who may be at risk of exclusion or who may face barriers to learning and wellbeing in mainstream schools. It will also benefit school communities by facilitating them in listening to pupil views in a meaningful way. These tools were developed using theoretical ideas from the Capabilities Approach. This study will benefit future academic researchers exploring the application of these ideas in the UK education context, particularly those seeking to translate them into applied practice.
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Be patient towards all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.

Resolve to be always beginning – to be a beginner!

Rainer Maria Rilke
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Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter describes the rationale for engaging with the proposed research topic, based on experiences of training as an EP and growing awareness of debates in inclusive education. It will set out the chosen methodology for this research, including the theoretical orientation, research design, data collection strategy and approach to data analysis. Finally, it will outline the overall structure of the thesis.

1.1 Rationale

Through my experiences of training to become an Educational Psychologist (EP) I have come to hold a personal view that equality is the profession’s most fundamental value. For me, the promotion of equality, both in and through education, is the most essential function of the EP. The Equality Act requires that no pupil should be discriminated against in decisions made about their access to education or in the way their education is provided, on the basis of disability, gender identity, pregnancy, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation (Equality Act, 2010). EPs are ideally placed to support schools’ response to all forms of diversity, as represented by these protected characteristics. Disability is perhaps the most educationally relevant of these characteristics. The Equality Act confers a duty on education providers to make reasonable adjustments for those pupils deemed to be disabled and therefore at a substantial disadvantage compared to their peers (2010). EPs also have a key role in determining what these reasonable adjustments should be, both through their statutory and non-statutory functions.

Equality is held by many educationalists to be core value that defines the principle of inclusion in education (Booth, 2011). Inclusion represents a contemporary mixture of ethical standards of equal opportunity, social respect and solidarity (Norwich, 2013). The principle grew to prominence in both United Kingdom (UK) and international education policy following the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994). I interpret inclusion as a specific and educationally relevant value, located within a wider set of values relating to equality and the promotion of a just society, that are of the highest priority for EPs. The precise definition of inclusion and the kinds of practices such definitions entail has been the subject of intense debate in education circles.
The Capabilities Approach has been put forward as offering the means to resolving some of the tensions and dilemmas in inclusive education through its alternative conceptualisation of diversity and disability (Mitra, 2006; Terzi, 2005). The Capability Approach was first set out by Amartya Sen as an answer to his ‘Equality of What?’ question (Sen, 1980). Sen argued that all societies striving for social justice promote the principle of equality, leaving the potentially more pressing question of precisely what it is that should be equalised, unanswered (Robeyns, 2017; Sen, 1980). Martha Nussbaum extended Sen’s original formulation to develop a theory of basic social justice. What she prefers to call the Capabilities Approach is also structured around a question: ‘What are people actually able to do and to be? What real opportunities are available to them?’ (Nussbaum, 2011, p.x). Nussbaum’s version of the Capabilities Approach has been suggested as a framework that can operationalise social justice values in a way that is methodologically well suited to psychology (Gloss et al., 2017; Munger et al., 2016). Hagenaars argues that the Capabilities Approach provides an appropriate basis on which to translate the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) into an applied psychological approach (2016).

Despite its apparent relevance to psychology and issues of inclusion, to my knowledge there is no existing research that has explored the application of the Capabilities Approach within EP practice. However integral it might be to values of equality and social justice, for inclusion to be meaningful it cannot remain simply a value, but must be translated into practices that contribute to greater equality for diverse learners. Amongst the five core functions of the EP—assessment, consultation, intervention, research and training (Currie, 2002) - the practice of EP consultation is the function most closely associated with the promotion of inclusion (Farrell, 2006; Wagner, 2000). Broadly defined, consultation is a way of working in which professionals collaborate, rather than referring a child to one another, in order to address educational difficulties (Caplan, 1970; Levin, 1991; O’Farrell & Kinsella, 2018; Wagner, 2000). Consultation’s capacity to address issues at a whole-school systems level is consistent with moves to make school environments themselves inclusive, rather than focusing on the deficits and difficulties of individual learners (Hick, 2005).

The research documented in this thesis took place within a Local Authority (LA) in England in which the need to create more inclusive school environments is a pressing concern. A recent Ofsted inspection identified lack of commitment to inclusion in
mainstream schools in the region as a key area of weakness. This is felt to be contributing to reduction in parental confidence in available support in schools for children with educational difficulties and disabilities, and the consequent sharp rise in requests for Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments. This is in line with national trends, which have seen a 35% rise in young people with EHCPs since 2013 (Hunter, 2019). These issues have stimulated debate concerning the theory and practice of inclusion across services in the LA and specifically within the educational psychology service (EPS), for whom finding modes of practice aimed at developing mainstream schools’ capacity to include, without requiring recourse to statutory action, has become a key priority. My own investigation into practices of assessment and classification in inclusive education, and the essential part played by the EP in such processes, led me to the Capabilities Approach, which is emerging as an alternative to traditional classification practices (Florian et al., 2006; Norwich, 2013).

1.2 Research Focus and Methodology
This thesis aims to explore the ways that theoretical ideas from the Capabilities Approach can be put to use in developing an approach to EP consultation, and the possible impacts this approach might have in developing more inclusive school environments.

1.2.1 Research Questions
RQ1. How can the Capabilities Approach be applied in EP consultation practice?
RQ2. How does taking a Capabilities Approach to EP consultation contribute to inclusion in schools?

1.2.2 Theoretical Framework
Throughout my trainee EP experience, I have found reflection to be an essential feature of the learning journey. It has been a valuable tool in developing my professional practice skills but has also become an essential part of my practice itself. Donald Schön’s concept of the Reflective Practitioner has been helpful to me in making sense of the role of reflection in professional practice (Schön, 1983). The significance of this model for me professionally meant that it was natural to apply it in the context of research aimed at developing an approach to practice. The concept of the Reflective Practitioner and its associated model of the epistemology of professional practice, Reflection-in-Action, refers to the methods by which professionals apply professional expertise to problem-solving in the real-life contexts of practice. Schön argues for the
centrality of reflection as a tool used by professionals to bring to the ‘surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of specialised practice’ in order to develop and refine new solutions to new problems (1983, p.61). Consistent with this study’s qualitative orientation and its status as reflective practitioner research, this thesis will be written in the first person to emphasise the active role of myself as researcher-practitioner throughout the research process.

1.2.3 Research Design

This research took a pragmatic approach to addressing the proposed research questions in a manner consistent with the Reflective Practitioner framework (Lukenchuk & Kolich, 2013). This allowed for the incorporation of elements from different research designs. The study focused on research activities in two focal schools and adopted a broad case study approach in this regard (Yin, 2018). However, as the study contained some aspects of intervention and field experimentation, it also drew on elements of action research to inform its design (McNiff, 2017). A phased approach is generally key in action research, where methods undertaken by the researcher are organised into a process of sequential stages or steps (Cohen et al., 2018).

1.2.4 Research Method

This research proceeded according to two phases. In the first phase the views of children and young people in each school were sought regarding their most valued capabilities through participatory focus groups. The findings of these focus groups informed the development of a consultation framework: the Capabilities Profile. Phase two was made up of four sequential stages. First the views of EPs were sought as to the potential application of the Capabilities Approach in relation to inclusion. In the second stage two consultation frameworks: the Capabilities Profile and Supporting Capabilities framework were used in consultations in each participating school. Stage three involved a reflective focus group with the members of school staff who had taken part in the consultations, and stage four consisted of a focus group of EPs who discussed the emerging findings of the previous research stages. The sequential nature of phase two allowed me to reflect on the development of the approach through dialogue with key stakeholders during each stage.
Both phases resulted in a number of data sources: focus group transcripts, drawings and diagrams produced by the pupils during focus groups, and annotated documents produced during the consultations. Analysis of these data allowed me to extend the ‘action present’ (Schön, 1983, p.62) to facilitate deeper reflection, allowing me to draw out the contributions and implications of the capabilities-informed approach to consultation. Analyses of data during phase one and after phase two followed a six-phase thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter Two will contain a review of the relevant literature that led to the proposed research questions. In Chapter Three the methodological approach to the study will be set out. Chapter Four will present the development of the two consultation frameworks: the Supporting Capabilities framework and the Capabilities Profile. This will include the analysis of the pupil focus groups that informed the content of each unique version of the Capabilities Profile framework for each participating school. Chapter Five will put forward the analysis of data collected during part two of the study. Finally, Chapter Six will present a discussion and interpretation of the overall findings in relation to the research questions. It will define the unique contribution and strengths of the study, address its limitations, make suggestions for future research, and draw out implications for EP practice.
Chapter Two: Review of Literature

This chapter provides a review of the literature relating to the Capabilities Approach, its relationship to issues in inclusive education, and its existing applications in relevant research. It will include an outline of theory relating to the Capabilities Approach and the literature linking it to issues of inclusion. It will also cover background to the role of the EP in relation to inclusive education, some potential challenges to this role, and the possibilities offered by the Capabilities Approach to addressing these. It will then provide a review of relevant empirical research.

2.1 The Capabilities Approach

The Capability or Capabilities Approach arose in the field of international development as a framework for thinking about and evaluating individual wellbeing and quality of life.

2.1.1 Quality of Life Measurement

The Capabilities Approach was originally put forward by Amartya Sen who defined it in contrast to other pre-existing approaches to measuring the level of a country’s development that faced significant problems in trying to accurately account for individual quality of life. Sen observed that the dependence of such measures, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Average Household Income (AHI), on statistical averages tended to conceal social inequalities (Sen, 1985). So-called utility measures, that rely on an individual’s subjective sense of satisfaction with the life circumstances, suffer from the issue of adaptive preferences, the tendency of human beings to adjust their expectations according to what they perceive as effectively possible (Nussbaum, 2011). A woman living in a country where girls are not routinely educated, may report high levels of satisfaction with her level of education, despite not having reached a basic threshold of literacy and numeracy. These challenges led to calls for a new way of conceptualising human wellbeing and quality of life.

2.1.2 Substantial Freedoms

The Capabilities Approach holds that the key question when evaluating societies on their basic decency or social justice, is, ‘What are people actually able to do and to be?’ (Nussbaum, 2011, p.x). For Nussbaum, capabilities are the answers to this
question. For Sen these are ‘substantial wellbeing freedoms’, a set of interrelated opportunities to think and act, to choose from a range of certain ‘beings and doings’ or ‘functionings’ (Sen, 1995, p.40). Functionings are ‘constitutive of human life’ (Robeyns, 2017 p.39). One cannot be human without having at least a minimum range of functionings, they are what make a human life both human, in contrast to plants or other animals, and lives, as opposed to the existence of inanimate objects.

2.1.3 Functionings and Capabilities
Functionings and capabilities are the core concepts of the approach, and the distinction between them is key. Capabilities are real opportunities a person has, either to be or to do certain things, and functionings are the corresponding achievements of those ‘beings and doings’ (Robeyns, 2017, p.38). So, whilst travelling is a functioning, having real opportunities to travel is the corresponding capability. Individuals may achieve the same functioning but have very different capabilities. The often-quoted example is that of the person fasting. Two people may be hungry, that is to say they have both achieved the same functioning, but one has done so through lack of adequate nutrition, whereas the other has done so by choice, through religious fasting.

To give a more educationally relevant example, two students may both achieve the same functioning: poor performance on a maths test. Whilst one, Marie, chose to spend her after school hours in drama club with her friends, rather than revise, hence the lower mark, the other, Hannah, has caring responsibilities for an elderly relative at home, so did not have time for revision. Marie clearly had the opportunity to revise for her maths test, and chose not to, in favour of a different interest and activity. She did not lack capability to revise and pass the test. Hannah on the other hand, lacked the capability, as the demands placed on her at home did not afford her the time required to revise and improve her performance on the test (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

2.1.4 Choice and Agency
Choice and agency are central to Capabilities Approach. What the notion of capability seeks to capture is whether a person could be well nourished if they wanted to. ‘The distinction between functionings and capabilities is between the realized and the effectively possible’ writes Robeyns (2017 p. 39). It is important to note that both functionings and capabilities are understood as value neutral (Robeyns, 2017), that is not all have a positive value. Some may be neutral, and others may have a negative value. For example, suffering from excessive stress is a functioning, but one that we
are better off without. Applications of a Capabilities Approach depend on specifying which, out of a range of possible wellbeing dimensions, capabilities matter for the particular contexts in which the theory is put to use (Robeyns, 2017).

2.1.5 Diversity in the Capabilities Approach
The Capabilities Approach places human diversity at its centre. Diversity is both a ‘key motivation’ for the approach, and an important ‘conceptual characteristic’ (Robeyns 2017, p.113). Sen has claimed that ‘Human diversity is no secondary complication (to be ignored, or to be introduced “later on”); it is a fundamental aspect of our interest in equality’ (Sen, 1992, p.xi). Human beings are diverse in three fundamental ways for Sen. First, in terms of their personal characteristics, age, gender, talents and so on. Second, with respect to their external circumstances, and third, in their ability to convert resources into valued functionings, via these personal and external factors.

2.1.6 Conversion Factors
Conversion factors is the term given to the differences between individuals in their personal, social, or environmental circumstances that determine the degree to which they can convert available resources into specific capabilities (Robeyns, 2017). The example of a bicycle is often used to illustrate the role of conversion factors.
Conversion factors can be categorised into three groups: personal, social, and environmental (Robeyns, 2017). Personal are those internal to the person, such as ‘metabolism, physical condition, sex or reading skills’ (Robeyns, 2017, p.46). These internal capabilities of the person are not seen as innate faculties, but instead are fluid and dynamic traits or abilities, developed in conjunction with the person’s environment (Nussbaum, 2011). Social conversion factors are factors stemming from society and social context, and environmental conversion factors emerge directly from the physical or built environment in which a person lives (Robeyns, 2017). Both social and environmental conversion factors, and by extension the personal, or internal, conversion factors that a person develops, are shaped by ‘structural constraints’, the institutions, laws, policies and social norms that define a social context (Robeyns, 2017, p.46).

### 2.1.7 The Capabilities Approach as a Theory of Social Justice

As the Capabilities Approach not only set out a theoretical framework for making sense of human wellbeing but also incorporated the importance of individual freedom to achieve that wellbeing, it became associated with the pursuit of the broader value of social justice (Robeyns, 2017). So, not only could it be used to evaluate individual
levels of wellbeing, but it might form the basis for assessing social arrangements or the
design of public policies for their promotion of a socially just society. Critics such as
Thomas Pogge (2002) have argued that despite the broad support the Capabilities
Approach received from both academics and international agencies, it does not offer
an improvement to pre-existing “resourcist” views on social justice. Such views can be
traced to John Rawl’s account of ‘justice as fairness’ which, broadly speaking,
emphasises the just distribution of social goods or resources, as opposed to
capabilities, as the “space” in which wellbeing and therefore social justice should be
evaluated. For Pogge, by focusing on citizens opportunities to function as the main
‘metric’ for evaluative exercises, the Capabilities Approach risks concealing persistent
economic inequalities by failing to focus on resources in the way that the Rawlsian

A further persistent debate regarding the Capabilities Approach, particularly early on in
its development, was whether it was necessary to define a list of capabilities of central
relevance to questions of human wellbeing. Although he acknowledges that certain
capabilities are particularly important, such as health and education, Sen does not spell
out a specific threshold or list of capabilities. Some criticised Sen for not having
specified such a list, nor providing guidelines for how such a list could be selected
(Sugden, 1993; Roemer, 1996; Nussbaum, 2003a). Martha Nussbaum argued that:

Any use of the idea of capabilities for the purposes of normative law and public
policy must ultimately take a stand on substance, saying that some capabilities
are important and others less important, some good, and some (even) bad
(Nussbaum, 2011)

Described by Robeyns (2017) as the ‘strong critique’ of capability theories, this
criticism was addressed by Nussbaum who sought to extend Sen’s original formulation
of the Capabilities Approach to form a theory of social justice based on fundamental
entitlements, allowing it to have greater utility in tackling matters of inequality, human
needs, and human rights (Nussbaum, 2011). Nussbaum sets out a list of ten Central
Capabilities, intended as a minimum threshold which defines areas of freedom which
are so central that without them a human life would fall below a standard
commensurate with human dignity.

Table 1
Martha Nussbaum’s Ten Central Capabilities (2011, p.33)

**Life.** Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one’s life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

**Bodily health.** Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.

**Bodily integrity and safety.** Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

**Senses, imagination and thought.** Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason—and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one’s own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one’s mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid nonbeneficial pain.

**Emotions.** Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one’s emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)

**Practical reason.** Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)

**Affiliation.** (A) Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.) (B) Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.

**Other species.** Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

**Play.** Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

**Control over one’s environment.** (A) Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one’s life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. (B) Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.
2.1.8 Capabilities and Education

Education is central to the Capabilities Approach’s conceptualisation of human wellbeing. For Sen, education is one of ‘a relatively small number of centrally important beings and doings that are crucial to human well-being’ (Sen, 1992). Both Sen and Nussbaum view education as being in itself a basic capability, that in turn affects the expansion of other important capabilities. Having access to education enables and expands a range of other human freedoms. Sen puts forward a number of roles performed by education:

- **An instrumental role;** for example, literacy goes on to foster participation in public debates on crucial social and political matters.
- **A process role;** for example, by expanding the range of people one comes into contact with, thus expanding horizons.
- **An empowering and distributive role;** by facilitating the ability of disadvantaged or marginalised groups to organise politically (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007)

The Capabilities Approach calls on educators to ask:

> Are valued capabilities distributed fairly in and through education? Do some people get more opportunities to convert their resources into capabilities than others, and if so who, how, and why? (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

This is echoed by Hart who argues that the Capabilities Approach provides a conceptual framework for equality in education, by considering the ways that individual freedoms can be optimised ‘both in and through education’ (Hart, 2012, p.276).

Equality is one of the essential values understood to underpin the concept of inclusion as a principled approach to education, as well as wider society (Ainscow et al., 2006).

The concept of inclusion grew to prominence in both international and UK education policy following the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994), the preface of which states:

> These documents are informed by the principle of inclusion, by recognition of the need to work towards “schools for all” - institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs. (p.iii)

Just as the Capabilities Approach was developed by Sen as an answer to his ‘Equality of What?’ question (1979, p.iii), might it also offer a response to the related question of: Inclusion in What? That is, precisely which valued capabilities, which opportunities to function, do we want to maximise for all learners both whilst they are in school, but also as a result of their education?
2.2 Disability in Education

Besides the possibility offered by the Capabilities Approach to more clearly specify the project of educational inclusion, it has been put forward by a number of education theorists as an alternative way of conceptualising individual differences that can respond to problematic issues and debates relating to disability in education (Norwich, 2013).

2.2.1 Warnock Report

Contemporary educational policy and practice in relation to disabled learners has its origins in the reforms brought about by the Warnock report (1978). The 1973 Education Act finally abolished the concept of the ‘ineducable’ child, requiring new principles of universal education to be developed. It was to this end that a committee headed by Mary Warnock was set up in 1974. Its findings inaugurated a number of landmark changes, later enshrined in the 1981 Education Act, that continue to form the basis for the contemporary education system in the UK. Principal amongst these changes was the report’s recognition of the entitlement of all children to be educated in mainstream schools regardless of difference or disability, a policy known at the time as ‘integration’ (Norwich, 2013; Terzi, 2005). Warnock also introduced new educational terminology to refer to disabled pupils or pupils experiencing difficulties with learning, adopting the concept of ‘special educational needs’ (SEN), as a way of classifying such learners (Wedell, 2005).

2.2.2 Debates about Disability in Education

Nearly thirty years on, Mary Warnock called for a radical review of the principles of disability in education on which the 1978 report was founded (Norwich et al., 2010). Her concerns surrounded a lack of conceptual clarity in the terms ‘needs’, as in ‘special educational needs’, and the concept of ‘inclusion’. Writing in 1971, Ron Gulliford coined the phrase ‘special educational needs’, defining it in the following terms:

> We have moved a long way from simple ideas about a few major defects...we think rather of special educational needs, which may arise from personal disabilities or environmental circumstances and often from a combination of the two. (Gulliford, 1971)

The adoption of ‘special educational needs’ in the 1981 Education Act legally replaced the handicap labels that had been in place since the previous Act of 1944. Such labels reflected the traditional ‘psycho-medical’ perspective, locating disability within a person’s impairment or deficits (Hodkinson, 2019, p.23).
Changing understandings of disability that brought increasing dissatisfaction with the medical model are associated with the international disability rights movement. The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), an early instantiation of this movement in the UK, put forth its central views in 1975 as follows:

In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. (UPIAS, 1975, p.4)

This approach to disability was encapsulated by Mike Oliver as the ‘social model’ of disability (Oliver, 1990; 2013). Its basic premise was that an individual may have an “impairment” of some sort, but that this is only transformed into a “disability” through contact with their social environment.

### 2.2.3 Social Constructionism

The social model of disability is a manifestation of a wider trend in social sciences in response to the emergence of poststructuralist philosophy and its critiques of epistemology and the scientific method. The term social constructionism describes the body of work specific to psychology that sought to determine an alternative epistemology, in light of poststructuralism (Burr, 2007; Gergen, 1985; Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). The key assumptions of social constructionism are that the “taken-for-grantedness” of everyday concepts such as disability should be questioned, that all social scientific knowledge is socially, culturally, and historically specific, maintained by social processes and not empirical validation, and therefore reflects power relations within its social context (Gergen, 1985). Following social constructionism, the concept of ‘disability’ is socially constructed in relation to social and cultural norms of the particular epoch. Its status as ‘true’ is not maintained by recourse to any empirically validated fact about a person, for example their impairment, but rather through the language used to define the individual as disabled.

### 2.2.4 Criticisms of SEN Classification

The recommendations of the Warnock report reflected the aims of disability rights activists, not only in its intention to move away from categorising individuals in terms of their deficits, but also in its moves towards full community participation for disabled children through the policy of integration. Although the move to SEN terminology sought to remove the necessity to categorise learners, it effectively replaced the pre-
existing deficit labels with a single 'super category' that continues to attract criticism and controversy (Norwich, 2013, p.17)

It may seem strange today that SEN was intended as a move away from a medicalised discourse of disability, given that it is so often used in professional and policy context interchangeably with terms such as "disorder" "difficulty" "impairment" (Norwich, 2013). Consequently, SEN is accused of being a discriminatory concept (Solity, 1991), sentimental language that reinforces prejudice (Corbett, 1996). This prejudice contributes to negative social effects, including lowered expectations for learners so identified from teachers (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002) lowered self-confidence as a learner (Tomlinson, 1982), and more frequent experiences of bullying and peer rejection (Florian et al., 2006)

The persistence of labelling through the language of SEN is thought to support the creation and maintenance of separate provision, which ultimately facilitates further segregation and potential marginalisation of struggling learners, rather than moving to integrate them (Ainscow, 1991). This may actually serve to reinforce and perpetuate the differences between children that such specialised programmes seek to address (Minow, 1991). Labelling children in this way has tangible, material consequences in terms of where they will be schooled, what professionals they will encounter, and ultimately what life courses are mapped out for them (Florian et al., 2006). Others warn that the expansion of classification practices in special education serves the professional interests of those invested in a separatist and specialist education industry (Norwich, 2013).

The status of SEN as a ‘superordinate category’ into which all other more specific definitions have been folded has led to widespread criticism of the concept as vague and poorly defined (Norwich, 2013, p.17). Current UK legislation upholds the definition of SEN that has been in place since the 1981 Education Act. It states that:

A child or young person has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. (Children and Families Act, 2014, 3.20)

The apparent circularity in this definition has no doubt contributed to the wide variation within both local authorities and schools in the numbers of pupils specified as having SEN found by Ofsted in 2010 (Hodkinson, 2019). This vagueness acts against
consistent accountability across LAs, creating the potential for a ‘postcode lottery’ for children in need of support (Williams et al., 2009, p.19).

In the same 2010 review of special educational provision, Ofsted expressed concern that the term was being used by schools to refer to pupils who simply needed better teaching or pastoral support (Hodkinson, 2019). This seems to support the contention of some that SEN is merely a euphemism for schools’ unwillingness or inability to find ways of educating all pupils (Barton, 1988; Slee, 2010). This is perhaps unsurprising, given that, as Solity points out, this definition can more accurately be described as detailing provision, rather than particular needs of learners (Solity, 1991).

The concept of ‘needs’ has also run into criticism and difficulties. Warnock and her committee’s idea was that, moving away from a normalising, medicalising discourse in education, required an appeal to the common, underlying educational goals valued for all children - independence, enjoyment, and understanding (1978; 2005). Some children may face obstacles on the path towards these goals, and as such they would need help to overcome them. It was in these terms that the concept of needs was understood. However, the broadness of the term, which was intended to be ‘inclusive’, in fact meant, by Warnock’s own admission, that it struggled to encompass such a wide spectrum of types and intensity of needs (Norwich et al., 2010). This has led some to argue that the concept is, in practice, unworkable (Terzi, 2005).

Solity’s analysis of SEN policy documents led him to define needs as ‘the skills, attitudes, knowledge and personal qualities that we wish children to learn’ (Solity, 1991, p.16). He argues for a greater focus on defining what these educational needs of all children are and how they should be met, and less on seeking definitions of what “special” might look like (Solity, 1991). In a similar vein, Norwich has argued that attributing specific individual needs to some cannot be considered outside of the context of human needs for all (2013). He advocates for a deeper analysis of the concept of needs, and its place within wider value-frameworks, that is necessary in order to resolve the difficulties associated with its use in education (Norwich, 2013).

Following Doyal & Gough (1984) Norwich suggests that a need can only arise when a person is prevented from achieving some important or valued goal, leading to their experiencing significant harm as a result (2013). Following this definition, in order to specify a need, it is necessary to: 1) clarify what significant harm is, and by implication what human flourishing looks like; and 2) clarify which goals for human life are so
valued that their absence will cause harm. Thus, statements about needs reveal instrumentality to common, human goals, but this can become obscured by the way the term is used, often implying ‘neediness’ or reference to individual deficits. In setting out a framework for fundamental, universal human entitlements, in terms of functioning goals, the Capabilities Approach may offer the theoretical means to establishing the nature of individual needs, in relation to these goals, in terms of where additional support is needed to achieve them.

2.2.5 Inclusion

As a specific term in UK education policy, inclusion appeared shortly after the election of the New Labour government in 1997, in the green paper, Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs (DfEE, 1997). Although this initiated the longstanding link between inclusion and the education of disabled learners, elsewhere the sense of inclusion as ensuring equal educational access to all was maintained by Ofsted, who defined it as 'more than a concern about any one group of pupils' but rather 'about equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment and background' (Ofsted, 2000, p.4).

The concept of inclusion as “schools for all” is closely linked with the social model of disability, whose proponents clearly advocate for school transformation, to ensure the end of segregated schooling, to be replaced by accessible local schools (Hodkinson, 2019). Such policies had previously been identified by Warnock’s concept of integration. As the influence of the inclusion principle grew, portrayals of integration became increasingly biased towards its locational aspect only (Norwich, 2013). This was despite original intentions that integration might imply either shared location of schooling, functional integration of pupils into common learning programmes, or social integration between disabled and nondisabled pupils (Warnock, 1978). Although some recognised the implications of integration for school reform (Booth & Potts, 1983), the characterisation of integration as educating children all ‘under one roof’ (Norwich et al., 2010) led to critiques that integration failed to account for the complexity inherent in securing optimal education for all children (Lindsay, 1989).

Inclusion, in contrast, stressed the necessity of making environmental changes to accommodate diverse individuals, rather than demanding they “fit in” to existing structures that may in fact be disabling (Barton, 1997; Slee, 2010). As a result, inclusion supplanted the concept of integration, but in so doing lost some of its earlier
associations with wider issues of equal access in response to all forms of diversity, not just disability.

**2.2.6 Critiques of the Social Model**

Despite the social model's considerable utility in lobbying for change and raising awareness of the rights and issues faced by disabled people, and its current position as 'orthodoxy' in the social sciences (Shakespeare, 2006, p.10), it has not gone uncritiqued. Some within the disability rights community have argued that the social model denies the fundamentally embodied nature of the experiences of the individual disabled person, such as those of pain, illness or distress (Morris, 1991). The social model can only provide an incomplete account of difference, setting disabled people up as a homogeneous group, rather than a collection of individuals who reflect many dimensions of diversity beyond and besides disability or impairment (Oliver, 2013).

The distinction between impairments as objective facts and disability as socially constructed is at the heart of the model is argued to lack conceptual clarity (Gallagher et al., 2014). By treating disability as a purely sociological artefact, the social model mirrors the 'simplistic biological determinism', replacing it with a kind of cultural determinism that ignores the biological features of disability (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2012, p.141). Furthermore, critics contend that the model is primarily based on physical disability, and insufficiently generalises to other forms of disability, lacking the grounding to account for these other experiences, notably those of people with learning disabilities (Gallagher et al., 2014). Although the social model provides a useful corrective for medicalising discourse of disability, it presents only a partial view of the relationship between impairment, disability and society (Norwich et al., 2010).

**2.2.7 Dilemma of Difference**

In the UK, the language of SEN continues to be used to designate those children experiencing difficulty in learning. There are many well-intentioned motivations for the use of classification systems to facilitate the fair distribution of finite educational resources. These include ensuring legal protection for classified individuals, as with the statutory SEN assessment process, to ensure accountability on the part of social institutions, and to inform educators as to the appropriate teaching approach or intervention a child might need (Florian et al., 2006).
Two broad stances on classification can be identified; either ‘differentiation’ or ‘commonality’ (Norwich, 2013, p.47). Differentiation rests on values of individual respect and emphasises the need for identification of differences to ensure differentiated provision and support. Commonality rests on egalitarian values and ideas of solidarity, emphasising the need for appropriate ordinary teaching and adaptations at school. Both stances carry risks. Differentiation can lead to stigmatisation, segregation and devaluing of certain groups of learners. Commonality on the other hand risks overlooking the individual needs of children, leading to inadequate provision for them. This has come to be known as the ‘dilemma of difference’, a term first used by Minow, who sums this up when she asks:

When does treating people differently emphasize their differences and stigmatise or hinder them on that basis? And when does treating people the same become insensitive to their difference and likely to stigmatise or hinder them on that basis? (Minow, 1991, p.20).

2.3 Capabilities as Resolution to Issues in Special Education

Terzi (2005) discerns two interrelated dimensions within the dilemma of difference: a theoretical dimension and a political dimension. She suggests that the Capabilities Approach can provide an innovative perspective from which to re-examine the challenges posed by the dilemma in each of these dimensions (Terzi, 2005). The theoretical dimension concerns the precise way that disability should be conceptualised, either as individual deficits or as limitations in the social and material environment, a dichotomy that reflects ongoing tension between the two dominant discourses of disability (2005). The political dimension more directly relates to questions about the provision required to meet the equal entitlements of all children to education, specifically the need to determine what a just educational entitlement might be (Terzi, 2005). This is consistent with Norwich’s (2013) analysis of the concept of an educational ‘need’ and its hidden dependence on a framework of common educational goals for all children.

Rearticulating the concept of disability through the Capabilities Approach can, it is argued, overcome the schism between social and medical model understandings of the term (Mitra, 2006). This has been shown to be particularly relevant to the issues of educational disability, and special educational needs (Norwich, 2014; Reindal, 2009; Terzi, 2005, 2011, 2014). If functionings are the actual ‘beings and doings’ that make a human life human, then disability occurs when a person is unable to achieve one of these functionings (Mitra, 2006). Difference in functioning is one way individuals differ
from each other; it is one aspect of diversity. Diversity, as discussed previously, is central to the Capabilities Approach, which recognises it as arising from a combination of personal, social or environmental factors. Following this, disability must also arise through an interaction between a person’s individual characteristics (an impairment), social factors (e.g. social stigma), and environmental factors (e.g. absence of Braille displays). These factors on their own do not constitute disability but rather they, both individually and in combination with one another, influence an individual’s ‘conversion factors’, or the extent to which they are able to convert the resources available to them into valued functionings (Mitra, 2006).

A capability framework circumvents the apparently unresolvable tension faced by professionals who want to make reasonable adjustments without stigmatising, by focusing precisely on the relational aspect of how the child interacts with her schooling environment and how she converts resources into functionings, as well as considering how the environment is designed (Terzi, 2005). In concentrating on the interaction, neither within-child, nor social or environmental factors receive any greater emphasis, and no appeal to causal relationships is necessary to establish an individual’s needs or disability.

The bio-psycho-social model of disability is another proposed alternative to either a social or medical model conceptualisation of disability that might reconcile the two (Florian et al. 2006). Although originally conceived of as a model of health that could incorporate biological, psychological, and social factors (Engel, 1980), it has resonated with those seeking alternative approaches to disability in education (Hodkinson, 2019). This model informed development of the International Classification of Functioning (ICF) by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2001). Disability, in the ICF, is an umbrella term referring to impairments of body structures or function, and limitations to activities and participation. The classification system itself consists of numeric codes within each domain relating to hierarchically organised definitions. These are neutral and denote disability only when a severity indicator is applied to indicate the extent of the person’s limitation or impairment (Florian et al., 2006).

The ICF, in its adapted form for children and young people, the ICF-CY, has been proposed as a framework that may provide the means to more adequately represent the complex issues arising from the education of children with educational difficulties (Florian et al. 2006). Research in international contexts has provided some evidence
for the applicability of the ICF-CY to the assessment and advisory activities typical of EP practice (Aljunied & Frederickson, 2014; Gan et al., 2013). Reindal (2008) criticises the ICF on the grounds that it depends on an understanding of disability as disadvantage and loses the sense of disability as an injustice or form of oppression, that is the valuable contribution of the social model. He goes on to suggest that the Capabilities Approach be incorporated with ICF in order to overcome this, and to support the development of a social relational model of disability and difference (Reindal, 2008, 2009).

A social relational model retains the distinction and interplay between impairments and ‘the phenomenon of disability’, but does not appeal either to an essentialist, “medical model” position, or a ‘postmodern social constructionist position’ to do so (Reindal, 2009, p.143). Instead it aims to show how both necessary and contingent conditions affect an individual's functioning, potentially giving rise to disability. So, an impairment would constitute a necessary condition that impacts on functioning in some way, and social or cultural barriers would constitute a contingent condition that might also influence functioning, in certain circumstances. These are contingent precisely because they vary, according to time and context, and can be altered in ways that might affect the functioning outcome, i.e. the disability.
The Capabilities Approach, and particularly the version of the approach developed by Nussbaum (2011), can support the development of a universal framework for human flourishing and basic common needs against which to consider the just educational entitlements of all children (Norwich, 2013). In so doing, it can provide a tool for the measurement of equality in education in a manner consistent with the vision of educational equality enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (Broderick, 2018).

2.4 Educational Psychology and Disability in Education
The profession of educational psychology has long been associated with efforts to accommodate learners designated as disabled (Hill, in Arnold & Hardy, 2013). Cyril Burt was appointed as the first professional Educational Psychologist (EP) to the London County Council in response to the challenges faced by educational authorities
following the expansion of universal education (Arnold & Hardy, 2013; Richards, 2010). His remit was to survey pupils with respect to those who might, or might not, benefit from school admission (Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act, 1914).

2.4.1 Early Educational Psychology
Early psychology was much absorbed with the development of experimental quantitative methods for psychological enquiry (Edgell, 1947). The drive to establish psychology as a science, comparable with natural sciences, led psychologists to draw on the methodologies of biology (May, 2010). Techniques of ‘observation, experimentation, quantification, replication and prediction’ (Maliphant, 1997, p.103) became vital to legitimising the knowledge-claims made by psychology (Ball, 2013). By 1929 the Wood Committee, concerned that considerable numbers of children were going unidentified, advised all LAs that they should seek the appointment of a psychological professional. This was with a view to expanding the implementation of standardised tests of intelligence and attainment to ascertain which pupils should receive special education. Psychometric tests became central to special education. Not only did they assist its development, but it is argued that the measurement techniques they provided made the very existence of special education possible (Quicke, 1982).

2.4.2 Contemporary Educational Psychology
Educational psychology practice diversified through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, as, over time, the shifting requirements of the education system opened up further possibilities for the application of psychology to educational challenges (Hymans in Arnold & Hardy, 2013). At the same time, legislation has played a key role in securing the role of the EP as assessor of children’s educational difficulties. Following the recommendations of the Warnock report, the 1981 Education Act introduced the statutory process for assessing children’s ‘special educational needs’ and made the participation of an EP in this process a statutory requirement. This Act both secured the future of the profession (Hill in Arnold & Hardy, 2013) and cemented the link between EPs, disability, and special education. The statutory role of EPs in this process has remained encoded in each subsequent version of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (CoP) (1994; 2001; 2015).

Individual assessment work, both statutory and non-statutory, has continued to be a dominant feature of EP practice (Fallon et al., 2010; Thomson, 1996). A 2019
workforce survey commissioned by the Department for Education has highlighted the sharp increase in requests for statutory assessments since the reforms of the 2014 Children and Families Act, with 93% of Principal EPs surveyed reporting more demand for these types of services than could currently be met.

2.4.3 Epistemological Privilege and Oppression

Persistent criticisms of SEN terminology as a socially constructed label lacking clear definition which risks marginalising and segregating learners, invite a cautious attitude towards participating in these assessment-for-classification processes amongst EPs. Whilst EPs are not the decision makers in these statutory assessment processes, the weight given to their expertise (Buck, 1999) has led to the perception of the EP as “gatekeeper” to further resources or specialist provision (Fallon et al., 2010, p.2). This is evidence of what is described as the epistemologically privileged position of the EP in the knowledge-constructing process of the SEN assessment (Fricker, 1999; Sewell, 2016). With epistemic privilege comes the risk of epistemic oppression, oppression posed by circumstances in which certain individuals are able to participate in knowledge construction, whilst others are excluded, restricted in their right to take part in creating knowledge (Dotson, 2012). Since it is such a central part of the identity of the EP, both historically and in contemporary practice, it is important to consider how we can make sense of the role of power in psychological assessments.

2.4.4 Power and Professional Practice

Social constructionism has become commonplace in the field of educational psychology and informs us that psychological ‘truths’, including those established through assessments, are in fact socially constructed (Macready, 1997; Moore, 2005; Wilding & Griffey, 2015). Nikolas Rose (1989) argues that there is weakness in the language of social construction, that discovering that a truth previously thought of as “objective” is in fact “socially constructed” leaves other, potentially more useful questions, unanswered. For Rose, these questions concern the precise ways that such truths are constructed:

Where do objects emerge? Which are the authorities who are able to pronounce upon them? Through what concepts and explanatory regimes are they specified? How do certain constructions acquire the status of truth...?

(1989, p.x)

Rose draws extensively on the work of Foucault in considering possible answers to these questions. Amongst poststructuralist thinkers, Foucault’s work most directly addresses itself to the nature of power in contemporary societies. His methods of
'archaeology' and 'genealogy' consider shifts in the operations of power in a “bottom up” manner, taking the perspective of the individual who is subject to those powers, rather than of those exercising it (Butler, 2002).

As Foucault put it in an interview about his work in 1974:

I want my books to be a sort of toolbox that people can rummage through to find a tool they can use however they want in their own domain. (*Prisons et Asiles dans le Mécanisme du Pouvoir*, DE II, 523-4, as translated in Gutting, 2005)

His tools have been indeed taken up and put to a range of uses in education research, including attempts to understanding the experiences of children labelled as SEN in mainstream schools (Allan, 1995, 1996).

Foucault's analysis of the developments of the penal system provide an entry point to his conceptualisation of power in contemporary society. The intention behind the modern practice of incarcerating criminals is, he argues, to bring about an ‘inner transformation’, a reform of the individual, and a change in psychological attitudes (Gutting, 2005, p.80). The disciplinary techniques for achieving this control, says Foucault, are of a tripartite nature; hierarchical observation (surveillance), normalisation, and examination. Although he develops these ideas in relation to institutions of criminal justice, for Foucault these techniques can be identified in all social institutions including schools, hospitals, and workplaces (Gutting, 2005). If traditional, repressive power is top-down and centralised, this form of normalising power, in contrast, is diffuse or “capillary”, an unstable network that serves to control behaviour through the enforcement of certain normalised standards (May, 2010).

The concept of statistical norms was influential in the early development of psychology, and continues to be so today (J. Williams, 2013). May argues this concept has formed ‘the methodological bedrock upon which psychology erects its project’ (2010). Scientific disciplines, such as psychology, have a powerful role in determining these normalised standards, but they also have a particular link with the concept of ‘the examination’ as a feature of disciplinary control.

Examination is the site at which normalising judgment is combined with hierarchical observation, the ‘prime locus of power/knowledge’ (Gutting, 2005). The ‘normalizing gaze’ of the examination (Foucault, 1991) uses the various technologies of clinical tests, reports and other documentation (Rose, 1989), to situate the individual in a ‘network of writing’ (Foucault, 1991). Through the examination the individual is turned
into a “case”, rendered highly visible through the ‘thick dossiers’ that are maintained about them (Gutting, 2005).

The exercise of this kind of power, exemplified in the technique of examination, is encapsulated in Foucault’s notions of ‘biopower’ or ‘bio-politics’, which describes all forms of power directed at humans as living beings. He argues that the main task of governance has come to be construed in these biopolitical terms, as ‘governmentality’, the supervision and maximisation of society (Rose, 1989). Governance of any kind depends on certain forms of knowledge, which in turn depend on processes of ‘inscription’ in which knowledge can be translated into material traces, particularly numbers, on which calculations can be based (Rose, 1989). Psychology, in its examination mode, provides the means for inscribing human qualities in a manner that aids the biopolitical management of social groups, often through the use of psychometric tests (Rose, 1989). Such tests allow for a comparison of the child’s performance on the test against some standardised, statistical norms.

The original proponents of the social model of disability show a sensitivity to the epistemically privileged position of the professional and connect their role in the definition and transmission of norms with the oppression and disempowerment of disabled people (Finkelstein, 1993). Seen in this light, when EPs undertake statutory assessment of children’s SEN they are undertaking an examination in which the child is judged in relation to some normalised standard of the ‘typical learner’. The extent of their deviance from this standard will be ‘inscribed’ in the report of the EP which then carries considerable weight in the decision made to classify the child with a particular identity, that of ‘special needs child’. Designating children in this way is intended as a method for allowing the just allocation of scarce resources and clear identification of needs, but Foucault’s analysis also shows us how such processes of inscription support the authorities in managing children as a population. Children themselves are disenfranchised from the process by which this identity is given them, although it may go on to shape their sense of themselves and their future prospects.

As Foucault writes:

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same thing. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So, my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism (Foucault, 1984, p.343, as quoted in May, 2010)
The intentions of the special education system and the EPs participating in it are based on ethical principles concerned with equal educational access for all children and appropriate adjustments for individual difference. However, there may be unintended consequences for children who are the subjects of such processes that necessitate reflection and acknowledgement of the unequal power balance inherent in such processes. I interpret this call for ‘activism’ as a call for research focused on new forms of professional action (practice) that are sensitive to the subtle dangers of oppression and marginalisation. Critics of SEN terminology has long argued that it is a discriminatory concept that serves to marginalise struggling learners and reinforces prejudice (Solity, 1991; Ainscow, 1991; Corbett, 1996). The statutory system of SEN assessment and classification bears many resemblances to Foucault’s description of the functioning of biopolitical power in contemporary societies, which deploys techniques of surveillance, normalised standards of behaviour and examination to support the management of social groups. Educational psychologists have long been and continue to be integral to SEN assessment systems (Hill, in Arnold & Hardy, 2013; Fallon et al., 2010). Acknowledging the power relations inherent in EP assessment and classification practices entails a recognition of the inherent risks of oppression they carry, and necessitates a search for anti-oppressive forms of practice (Sewell, 2016).

2.4.5 EPs and Social Justice

The critique of science and the scientific method offered by Foucault and other poststructuralist thinkers placed the discipline of psychology in a crisis of legitimation, that requires that it must demonstrate its ‘social responsibility’ in order to maintain credibility (Levin, 1991, p.254). Such concerns for the way power may operate via professional practice to marginalise minority groups have fed into the search for anti-oppressive forms of practice (Dalrymple & Burke, 2006). This primarily originates in social work theory but has been linked with the radical humanistic psychology of Frantz Fanon & David Cooper (Hopton, 1997) and is evident in moves towards service user involvement in the planning and delivery of mental health services (Millar et al., 2016). There is also a growing awareness of the need for anti-oppressive forms of practice in educational psychology (Sewell, 2016). Such developments in this field have largely focussed on developing anti-discriminatory approaches within EP services (Shriberg & Clinton, 2016), and on the EP role in supporting inclusion as central to minimising oppression and marginalisation (Boxer et al., 1998; Gregory, 1993).

The search for ways to address the harmful operations of power that lead to oppression and injustice can be defined as the pursuit of social justice (Bell, in Adams
et al., 2016). Social justice has been put forward as a common value underpinning both education and psychological professions (Gewirtz, 1998). Social justice is also suggested as a potential common framework underpinning international educational psychology practice (Shriberg & Clinton, 2016).

As set out by Bell, the goal of social justice is the full and equal participation of individuals of all backgrounds in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. The process for attaining this goal should itself be participatory and democratic, respectful of diversity and difference, and affirming of human agency (Adams et al., 2016).

Research in the US has begun to explore how social justice is conceptualised and put into practice by educational psychologists (known there as school psychologists) (Moy et al., 2014). In the UK, qualitative research indicated that social justice was defined by EPs as being related to themes of ‘power and privilege’, ‘equality and equity’, ‘action’, ‘vision and values’, and to be ‘context and culture specific’, with manifestations in practice including ‘awareness of own biases and prejudices’, and ‘child-centred practice and advocacy’ (Schulze et al., 2018; Schulze, 2017).

Community psychology as a discipline within the broader field of psychology is largely based on values of social justice and social change (Rappaport, 1977). Community psychologists have long been concerned with reducing inequalities and resisting oppression of marginalised groups (Munger et al., 2016). Some within the EP profession argue for the definition of educational psychology as community psychology, and point to many commonalities of practice and shared values between the two (MacKay, 2016).

2.4.6 The Capabilities Approach for Social Justice in Psychology

The Capabilities Approach offers a framework that can operationalise social justice values in a way that is methodologically well suited to psychology, particularly those identifying as community psychologists (Munger et al., 2016). Researchers in the field of organisational psychology, have also implicated the Capabilities Approach in their calls for a greater engagement with social justice issues in their discipline (Gloss et al., 2017). In work exploring the relationship between psychology and human rights, Hagenaars (2016) argues that as ‘human rights are about human relationships and psychologists are experts of human behaviour and relationships, they have, by their
expertise, special obligations’ (Hagenaars, 2016, p.184). The author makes a case for the need to translate the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) into a ‘social-behavioural approach’ that can be applied by psychologists, and argues for the use of the CA as an appropriate foundation for this (Hagenaars, 2016).

2.7 Consultation
Although assessment may have remained an enduring feature of educational psychology, other forms of practice have emerged. By the early 2000s, Currie could distinguish five core functions of the EP in her review of the state of the profession: assessment, consultation, training, research, & intervention (2002). EP consultation has been identified as having an important relationship with social justice (Schulze et al., 2018). Attention has been drawn to the powerful vantage point of the EP engaging in school-based consultation, from which they are able to consider wider social and societal context of the child, essential for social justice-oriented practice (Shriberg & Fenning, 2009).

Consultation is understood as a collaborative problem-solving process that can resolve the supposed ‘paradox of school psychology’, which requires EPs to work through key adults to address a child’s difficulties (Conoley et al., 1981; Gutkin & Conoley, 1990). The development of consultation in UK EP services, most closely associated with the model put forward by Patsy Wagner, represented an influential mindset shift in the way that EPs delivered psychological services (Conoley & Conoley, 1982; Wagner, 2000).

Wagner’s model of consultation is underpinned by four principles: a constructive principle, which acknowledges the role of language in constructing social realities and seeks to avoid the language of deficit; a transparency principle, that insists on the importance of openness in explaining the consultation process; a self-reflexive principle, which underlines the importance of reflection on practice; and a comprehensive principle, which reflects the view that all aspects of EP work are integrated into the notion of consultation (Wagner, 1995; 2000).

In a review of the literature prior to 2003, Lamey (2003) identified a widespread understanding of EP consultation as an indirect method of service delivery which relies on a trusting, voluntary relationship, and equal power relation, between those involved, during which the consultee plays an active role in problem-solving.
The desire to develop alternatives to assessment was often the primary motivator for local authority EP services seeking to move towards consultation as an approach to practice (e.g. Evans, 2005). Leadbetter (2006) identified three ways that the term consultation has come to be used in EP practice: consultation as a model of service delivery, as in the method through which psychological services are delivered; consultation as a clearly defined task, as in a consultation meeting with a teacher; and consultation as an activity or skill, as in the regular discussion and information sharing between EPs and schools about a concern. As reflected in its comprehensive principle, Wagner’s original conceptualisation of consultation was as a comprehensive model for the delivery of all LA educational psychology services. It is important to clarify that within this research, I will explore consultation as a clearly defined task, the meeting itself between the EP and member of school staff, and not as an overall service delivery model or set of skills.

Wagner (2000) advocates for the use of specific frameworks within these consultation meetings, which, if used in an open-handed manner, can support the accessibility and transparency of the consultation process. Frameworks for consultation are argued to provide a supportive structure that can facilitate creative and collaborative conversations during the meeting. Wagner sets out examples of such frameworks which consist of a series of phases of the consultation, accompanied by prompts and questions to guide the discussion during each phase. Consultation is defined as itself a framework for practice. Its emphasis on systemic barriers aligns it with the pursuit of inclusive settings and ideally positions it to address wider sources of inequality and disadvantage. Consultation’s flexible nature makes it an ideal site for the development and incorporation of new or alternative theoretical models. Indeed, existing research has demonstrated this: some have drawn on narrative therapy approaches and included therapeutic letter writing in consultation work with teachers (Bozic, 2004); others have documented research exploring the use of genograms to structure consultation with families (Tobias, 2018). Hymer and colleagues (2002) adapted principles from dynamic assessment to inform the development of a framework for consultation, consisting of a structure of questions. Consultation may provide the ideal context in which to explore and develop an approach to consultation informed by theoretical ideas from the Capabilities Approach.

**2.8 The Reflective Practitioner**

The development of consultation in the UK context was, at least in part, a deliberate attempt to operationalise the insights of social constructionist epistemology for use in
practice (Wagner, 2000). The rejection of objective ‘social truths’ from the perspective of social constructionism, in favour of a view that language constructs our identities and relationships, was consistent with the possibilities afforded by consultation, in which language might be the ‘crucible’ for change (Macready, 1997, p.131). In contrast, psychological assessment is based on a positivist-empiricist epistemology.

Originating in the work of Comte in the mid-nineteenth century, positivism’s central claim is that valid, true knowledge of the world can only be arrived at through direct sensory experience or by the application of the rules of logic (Cohen et al., 2018). Comte observed the success of natural science’s empirical methods in studying the physical world, and argued such methods ought to be applied to the study of human affairs (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018).

Critics of positivism have long argued that this kind of “scientism” had been raised to a level comparable to religious faith, and that many other forms of knowledge were thus devalued (Habermas, 1972 as cited in Cohen et al., 2018). Donald Schön argued that professional, or practical knowledge, of the kind in use during consultation, was similarly ill-accounted for by the positivist paradigm (Schön, 1983). Although common sense informs us of the truth of practical knowledge, it isn’t possible to reduce it either to descriptive, empirical knowledge of the world, or to knowledge arrived at through the application of logic.

2.8.1 Technical Rationality

Schön (1983) posited that the positivist viewpoint attempts to resolve this puzzle of practical knowledge, by reducing it to knowledge of the relationship between means and ends, what he called Technical Rationality (Schön, 1983). ‘Technical Rationality’, writes Schön, ‘is the Positivist epistemology of practice’ (1983, p.31) in which ‘professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique’ (p.21). Operating within Technical Rationality assumes the desired ends or outcomes of a problem situation are agreed upon, and therefore the professional is faced with the question “How ought I to act” in order to achieve those ends. This is answered by referring to the range of possible means that can be applied to those ends, supplied by existing scientific theory.

2.8.2 Limits to Technical Rationality
For Schön (1983), it is apparent that features such as ‘complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict’ are inherent in real world problem situations encountered by professionals, and are vitally important to understanding how practitioners practice (1983, p.39). If Technical Rationality views professional practice only as a ‘process of problem-solving’, choosing the best means to address the identified ends, it overlooks problem-setting, the process of the defining those ends (Schön, 1983, p.39). In the real world of practice, problem situations rarely present themselves as clearly defined or predetermined. Instead, they must be constructed out of the puzzling and uncertain elements within a problematic situation. Only once the ends, the problems to be addressed, have been named and their boundaries set, can the process of searching for the right means begin. Consultation is itself widely understood as a process of problem solving (Larney, 2003). Researchers exploring the content of EP consultations note that the specific phase of ‘problem identification’, within a problem-solving approach, was one of their most salient features (Kennedy et al., 2008). This mirrors Schön’s emphasis on the central importance of problem-setting for the applied professional.

2.8.3 Model of the Reflective Practitioner


The model is outlined in the following way: a certain ‘kind of knowing is inherent in intelligent action’ (Schön, 1983, p.50). This is what Schön calls knowing-in-action but constitutes ordinary, practical knowledge and know-how, the kind of tacit knowledge individuals have when they engage in an activity in a skilful way without really thinking about it. Reflecting-in-action, on the other hand, describes those times when a person does think about what they are doing, whilst they are doing it, in order to do it better.

When professionals are said to ‘practice’ they are involved in repeated encounters with ‘cases’ of various sorts, that represent the units in which they work, and consist of various types. The professional’s knowing-in-action in relation to those cases becomes increasingly fluent and tacit as they become more familiar with the various types and appropriate responses to them, requiring them to think less about what they are doing.
Over time, there is a risk that the professional will be drawn into patterns of error as a result of a kind of narrowness of thinking (Schön, 1983). Reflection, both in and on practice, can serve as a corrective to this, allowing the professional to bring assumptions to the surface and to criticise them, helping to make new sense of uncertain situations. Schön (1983) argues that this model of reflection-in-action gives a more accurate picture of what professionals do when engaged in problem-solving in the real-life situations in which they practice.

2.9 Capabilities Approach in Research

As this chapter has so far sought to demonstrate, there are compelling reasons for considering the Capabilities Approach as offering useful contributions to the field of educational psychology. It offers conceptual tools for reconsidering the notion of disability, and a social-justice oriented framework for universal human wellbeing that addresses issues of power and inequality. Furthermore, consultation offers a practice framework within which to develop a capabilities-informed approach to psychological practice.

Robeyns characterises the Capabilities Approach, as an open set of general concepts that can be ‘closed’ or specified in many different ways to address different specific purposes (2017, p.29). She uses the terms ‘capability theory’ or a ‘capability application’ to describe these attempts to use the Capabilities Approach in a more clearly specified form. These uses or ‘modes’ fall into several types, some of which relate to theoretical or conceptual studies, and two of which relate to empirical research in the social sciences. These are either: large-scale quality of life assessments, undertaken through quantitative research in the social sciences; or ‘thick description/descriptive analysis’, generally belonging to qualitative social science research strands (2017, p.32).

2.9.1 Children’s Quality of Life at Population Level

Since I am interested in exploring and developing a novel consultation approach, the detailed accounts provided in these descriptive research applications will be most useful to informing my own approach. As a result, although there are a number of studies exploring children’s quality of life at the population level (e.g. D’Agostino et al., 2019; Potsi et al., 2016; Steckermeier, 2019) these will be set aside for the purposes of the present thesis.

2.9.2 Children’s Valued Capabilities
These descriptive capabilities research studies with children and young people have primarily focused on eliciting their perspectives on their own valued capabilities, to obtain a better understanding of what factors contribute to good quality of life during childhood. Many of these use participatory research strategies to engage young participants in the central process of specifying key capability dimensions, in order to develop an application of the approach (Robeyns, 2017). Promoting the participation of potentially marginalised groups or individuals is particularly key for research seeking to use the Capabilities Approach as a framework for basic social justice. In setting out the ten central capabilities, Nussbaum (2011) provides the vital content needed for the Capabilities Approach to begin to form specific theories of social justice. This content provides an essential starting point for studies seeking to operationalise the approach in this way. Researchers argue that combining capability theory and participatory approaches introduces new ways of integrating subjective and objective perceptions, that attend to issues of agency and empowerment that are crucial for human flourishing (Biggeri & Libanora, 2011, p.81).

Ethnographic research with unaccompanied migrant children arriving in the UK from Afghanistan, has explored their valued aspects of wellbeing using capabilities as a conceptual frame (Chase, 2019). Data was gathered through sensitive contact with the young people over a three-year period, this contact was sustained both through digital communication and face to face interactions. The research team included individuals who had themselves been unaccompanied young migrants, and strategies used to engage participants included arts-based methods, such as photography, comedy, music, poetry and painting, all of which were considered less intrusive means of engaging. This prolonged and deep engagement between researchers and participants, supported by their shared life experiences and use of creative activities as research strategies are strengths of this study, and support the credibility of its findings. However, no detail is given about the precise protocol or steps through which the research took place, limiting the extent to which its findings can be seen as dependable. Furthermore, the approach taken to analysing and interpreting the data collected from the young participants was not made visible, making it difficult to confidently conclude that the study’s outcomes are credible. Without such methodological details it is also difficult to understand the true transferability of the study’s findings and strategies to other, similar contexts and participant groups, and how it might inform my own study exploring the application of the notion of capabilities in a model of EP consultation.
Camfield and Tafere (2011) similarly incorporated creative group activities into focus group methods with children to support their discussion of their capabilities, through a group activity they call the ‘Wellbeing Exercise’. Children were asked to draw a child experiencing both a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ life (Camfield & Tafere, 2011). These images were then used as a stimulus for group discussion, during which the researchers wrote a list of capability ‘indicators’ relating to a good or bad life, on a flip chart, reflecting the children’s descriptions (Camfield & Tafere, 2011). By providing a more detailed account of the precise strategies and activities by which the children were engaged in the research the trustworthiness of this study is increased in relation to its credibility and can more usefully inform future research studies such as my own. The transferability of the study’s findings was also supported by the detailed descriptions of the regional community contexts from which participants were drawn. Once the capability indicators had been listed, the children were asked to rank them in order of importance, and these rankings were recorded by the researcher. The re-presentation of these constructions to the participants constitutes a form of member checking, in which the children were able to verify the emerging findings as relevant and meaningful to them. Participants in this study were between 11 and 13 years old, and were perhaps more likely to be able to engage in the abstract task of considering each indicator and ranking them, expressing these rankings (presumably verbally) to the researcher. It is questionable whether younger children, or children with challenges in relation to language, for example, would be as readily able to engage in such a task.

Biggeri and Libanora (2011) acknowledge the lack of any clear frameworks for operationalising the Capabilities Approach for use in studies of children’s wellbeing (2011). They have devised a four-step procedure that can support the determination of children’s valued capabilities using a “bottom up” approach. It was developed through their research conducted with children attending the 2004 ‘Children’s World Congress on Child Labour’ (Biggeri et al., 2006). These four stages make up what the authors describe as ‘a “dynamic” questionnaire’ that can be administered to children individually (Biggeri & Libanora, 2011, p.82).

These are:

1. Let the children conceptualise the capability dimensions without any interference
2. Focus on the personal achieved functionings for each dimension of wellbeing
3. Focus on community capabilities to define the relevance of each dimension
4. Let the children prioritise the different dimensions chosen

(Biggeri et al., 2006; Biggeri & Libanora, 2011, p.84)

Each stage is centred around a particular question. As the researcher progresses through each stage, the child’s answers are used to elaborate the questionnaire, thereby allowing them to participate in its development. It aims to work from children’s views about their own lives to a more neutral perspective about the lives of all children (Biggeri and Libanora, 2011). This approach depends on children being able to engage in verbal description and discussion of abstract and potentially complex concepts.

In interviewing children it is important that researchers take care to make the experience enjoyable and nonthreatening, allowing children time to think by combining methods and activities such as drawing, playing a game, using pictures as well as speaking, and allowing them alternatives to verbal communication (Cohen et al., 2018). Whilst these four broad stages outlined by Biggeri and colleagues (Biggeri et al., 2006; Biggeri and Libanora, 2011) provide a useful structure for eliciting children’s valued capabilities, the precise methods they offer for following them could be criticised as methodologically unsuitable for research with children, particularly research that takes an emancipatory stance towards children.

Biggeri and Anich (2009) adapted the four-step process, combining it with several creative and participatory activities, in a manner that addresses some of these issues in interviewing children. These activities include ‘thematic drawings’, in which children are asked to respond to certain statements or questions, photovoice activities and peer interviews, facilitated by a generic list of suggested themes for discussion (Biggeri & Anich, 2009). Whilst the authors don’t provide a precise protocol that could allow all of these activities to be accurately replicated in future research, the study does suggest that the original four-step process for operationalising the Capabilities Approach is open to incorporating other creative tools for use in research with children.

2.9.3 Capabilities and Education Research

The Capabilities Approach has informed an emerging body of research that has addressed various sources of educational inequality. A significant portion of this research relates to the higher education sector and it will be beyond the scope of this thesis to examine all of these in detail. Instead attention will be paid to those studies
that have sought to apply the Capabilities Approach in primary and secondary education settings.

Some qualitative education research studies have employed the Capabilities Approach as an analytic tool to better conceptualise educational disadvantage. In research by Redmond & Skattebol (2019), the Capabilities Approach was used as an analytic framework to glean an understanding of the impact of material deprivation from interview data gathered from Australian young people. By integrating these qualitative findings with national survey data the researchers gave a convincing account of the connection between inadequate resources in the form of food and clothing, and capability limitation in terms of social participation and educational engagement amongst young people.

Hatakka and colleagues in Sweden (2012) similarly made use of the Capabilities Approach as an analytic tool for making sense of the impact of resources on educational functioning. In this study the approach aided the researchers in illuminating the relationship between providing students with personal laptops for use in school and their range of capabilities and individual agency. Using a capability framework, and the inherent multidimensionality of the concept of capabilities, allowed the researchers to demonstrate the ways that the expansion of the use of such technology in the classroom both enhanced and expanded some capabilities for the students, whilst restricting others.

2.9.4 Capabilities and Disability in Education Research
As demonstrated by the theoretical work of Terzi (2005; 2007; 2014), Reindal (2008; 2009), and Mitra (2006), the Capabilities Approach can make a key contribution to conceptualising diversity and disability in education. In line with this a number of studies have put the approach to use in education research exploring inclusion and inclusive practice. One strand in this research includes studies exploring the potential uses of Capabilities Approach in evaluating arts-based learning activities in terms of their ability to enhance or expand capabilities, particularly for young people with disabilities (Levy et al., 2017; Maguire et al., 2012; Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2013; Watts & Ridley, 2007).

Stella and Corry (2017) have made use of the Capabilities Approach as an analytic framework for a metasynthetic approach to analysing experiences of online education
amongst young people with disabilities. Specifically, the authors gathered concepts from theoretical work on the Capabilities Approach by Nussbaum (2011), Saito (2003), and Terzi (2005) and examined existing research into online education for pupils with disabilities in relation to each conceptual domain. For example, Nussbaum’s concepts of Practical Reason and Affiliation, two of her ten central capabilities (2011), were considered in relation to existing research. In this paper, the Capabilities Approach offers a useful conceptual framework for demonstrating the way that specific changes in provision, such as online learning, can have positive implications for broader quality of life and development outcomes for children and young people with disabilities, beyond more specifically academic outcomes.

As well as being useful in exploring the experiences of disabled pupils themselves, the Capabilities Approach has been shown to have relevance for understanding the influence of attitudes amongst educators towards the inclusion of pupils with educational difficulties. In the USA, research with education leaders suggests that those educational districts deemed to be most inclusive had leaders whose views most closely aligned with theoretical concepts of the capabilities approach (Toson et al., 2013). A Finnish study has similarly employed the Capabilities Approach as a theoretical lens through which to analyse the positive contribution made by the views of mainstream classroom teachers to the inclusion of pupils with disabilities in their classrooms (Okkolin et al., 2018).

Some research has taken the capability of Play, one that is particularly central to children’s wellbeing and development, as a starting point to understanding the experiences of children with disabilities in mainstream UK primary schools (Sterman et al., 2018). Findings from interviews with school staff and playground observations in one school indicated that the children were not valued as playmates or community members; that adults held low expectations for disabled pupils learning and play; and that despite efforts to support access to play, the children did not have meaningful play choices. This study highlights the value of the Capabilities Approach in placing the spotlight on the central importance of choice and agency. The children studied were physically present, but an analysis of their choice-making opportunities revealed that their capabilities to function meaningfully with regards play were subtly limited. Despite the value it places on the autonomy of children with disabilities, this study does not deliberately seek their views or voices. Other research more successfully takes
account of children’s voices on their educational experiences through participatory research.

2.9.5 Participatory Techniques with Children with Educational Difficulties

Pelenc (2017) reports a study in which participatory workshops were held with young people in a French secondary school, aged between 15 and 17 years, identified as having 'social and educational difficulties', in order to develop an understanding of which capabilities they most valued (2017). These workshops used a diagram and prompt words to facilitate discussion amongst the group, which then followed a deliberative procedure in which the group were invited to consider and define each category. The resulting definitions were then used to develop a survey and undertake a comparative analysis between this group and young people not experiencing the same difficulties. The findings suggested stark inequalities in areas of valued functioning between the two groups.

A study by Underwood and colleagues in Canada used several participatory interview techniques to engage very young children with disabilities in a similar discussion about their valued capabilities (2015). The children were aged between three and five years old, the interviews were video recorded, and used large photographs of the children’s education setting, a toy school building with child and adult figures, and drawing activities to facilitate the children’s communication. A thematic analysis approach was then used in analysing the transcripts of the video recordings to identify the children’s valued capabilities. This analysis indicated six broad categories that fit theoretically within a capabilities framework. These were: activities children like; activities children say they can do; social interactions they have had; demonstrations of skills; things they do not know (yet); and knowledge (factual). The authors conclude that these findings suggest that young children can identify valued capabilities within the context of their childcare and early years programmes and that participatory, play-based approaches can be used to assist in this process.

Research in the UK context by Kellock and Lawthom (2011) has adopted a similar participatory approach. Through focus groups with children in a mainstream primary school, the researchers used a range of activities to facilitate the children’s discussion of their valued capabilities specifically in relation to their school experiences. The children and the researcher went on a tour of the school, and photographed parts of it that were important to them. These photographs were arranged and discussed by the
group, used as a stimulus for creating lists of words to describe feelings about different parts of school life, which were then organised by the children into ‘okay’ and ‘not okay’ feelings categories. Again using a thematic analysis approach, the researchers analysed the transcripts and visuals created by the children to uncover four capability areas: being literate, being physically active, being a friend, being creative.

2.10 Summary of the Literature Review

The findings from the literature review demonstrate the promising possibilities offered to educational psychology by the Capabilities Approach. The Capabilities Approach offers an alternative account of human diversity and disability, that can help to overcome theoretical tensions and practical dilemmas in the field of special and inclusive education. Existing research in this area has used the Capabilities Approach to examine the experiences of children with disabilities in mainstream schools, to explore the attitudes of educators towards inclusive education, and to focus on participatory approaches to listen to and incorporate children’s views and voices on their capabilities. To my knowledge there is no existing research that has connected the Capabilities Approach with EP practice.

Consultation is a core function of the EP that has been closely associated with the concept of inclusion (Hick, 2005; Wagner, 2000). As has been argued by Farrell (2006), school-based consultation is the aspect of EP practice that is most fully consistent with inclusive values. Inclusion proceeds from an acknowledgement that educational differences arise as a result of an interplay between the individual and their environment, and in order to understand address learners’ individual difficulties and needs, it is important to take account of the systems in which learning takes place, i.e. the school environment. Farrell (2006) also argues that developing a mutually supportive, collaborative, and trusting relationship with adults within the system around the child, is also key in bringing about a shift towards inclusion. Assessment of the child alone cannot do this. Therefore, I believe that in seeking to investigate the possible contribution of ideas from the Capabilities Approach to the overall project of inclusion, consultation presents itself as a natural practice-context in which to explore the application of such ideas. Kennedy and colleagues (2009) acknowledge the vital contribution that EPs can make to educational outcomes for children through consultation. They call for a renewed emphasis on practitioner research focused on developing applied problem-solving approaches for use in consultation (Kennedy et al., 2009). Consultation’s flexible nature has been shown through some previous research to provide EP practitioners with opportunities to incorporate new theoretical or practical
EXPLORING CAPABILITIES

approaches into educational psychology, to enhance consultation’s effectiveness (Bozic, 2004; Hymer et al., 2002; Tobias, 2018).

On this basis of consultations close alignment with inclusion values, and the flexibility of consultation to accommodate differing theoretical approaches, I chose consultation practice as my focus for an exploratory investigation into the application of the Capabilities Approach to educational psychology.

It is envisaged that this research will lead to the development of a new and unique approach to consultation practice, and that it may encourage further researchers to explore the application of the Capabilities Approach in EP practice, and applied psychology more widely.

2.11 Research Questions

The literature review has provided evidence of the potential theoretical contribution the Capabilities Approach may make to conceptualisations of difference and disability in inclusive education and educational psychology. The absence of any existing research exploring the possible applications of the Capabilities Approach in practice led to my first research question:

RQ1: How can the CA be applied in EP consultation practice?

- How can theoretical ideas from the CA inform EP consultation practice?
- How can children’s valued capabilities inform EP consultation practice?

As explained above, I took the decision to focus on the practice of consultation for two reasons. Firstly, as it offers a flexible practice context in which these novel concepts could readily be explored and developed. Second, since the Capabilities Approach is of interest for it’s possible contribution to dilemmas of inclusion, consultation as a focus makes sense as it is a form of EP practice that is closely linked with inclusive principles. Sub-research question 1a specifically addressed the ways that some of these theoretical concepts could be translated into a format for applied consultation practice.

Through my review of existing applications of the Capabilities Approach in research it became clear that an established thread within these studies consisted of those which sought to use the Capabilities Approach has a framework for exploring children’s views and priorities for their own quality of life. As a result, research question 1b addressed
the possible ways that developing an understanding of children’s quality of life priorities might inform an applied consultation approach.

Existing education research literature reviewed in this chapter has proposed that the Capabilities Approach may support the provision of inclusive education. This led to my identifying the second broad research question.

RQ2: How does taking a CA approach to consultation contribute to inclusion?
   a) How does a CA approach to consultation help to overcome dilemmas in inclusive education?
   b) How does a CA approach to consultation contribute to inclusive teaching practice?

Sub-research question 2a addresses the suggestion made by this existing literature that the Capabilities Approach might resolve professional dilemmas relating to the conceptualisation of difference and disability in education. Since I was also interested in the ways that the Capabilities Approach might be translated into an applied consultation practice that might contribute to inclusion, sub-research question 2b was identified to explore whether the capabilities informed consultation approach would impact on teachers' perceptions of their ability to include struggling learners.
Chapter Three: Methodology

In Chapter Two I outlined the rationale for the research presented in this thesis and the research questions that informed the research process. The aim of this study was to develop and explore the effects of an approach to consultation using theoretical ideas from the Capabilities Approach. I did this by developing two distinct consultation frameworks. The first incorporated theoretical concepts from the Capabilities Approach into a visual structure and series of consultation questions: the Supporting Capabilities framework. The second incorporated children and young people’s views on their most valued capabilities into a separate visual structure and series of questions: the Capabilities Profile framework. I created a unique version of the Capabilities Profile for each of the two participating schools, based on the views of pupils in each respective school. These two frameworks then formed the basis for a series of consultations between myself and members of school staff about pupils of concern in each school. The aim of these consultations was to facilitate greater inclusion of these learners in their school communities. The effects and possibilities of this capabilities-informed approach to consultation was explored through focus groups with EPs and members of school staff.

3.1 Structure of the Chapter
This chapter outlines the methodology used to address the research questions. Firstly, it explores the philosophical positioning of the study and the implications for the research design. Different aspects of the research design will be examined in more detail, in terms of their assumptions, strengths, limitations, and the rationale for their use in this study. Details of the research context will be given in the form of vignettes describing each focal school. The overall approach taken to data collection will be described, and then an overview of each method within each research phase will be given. Next, the chapter will outline the approach taken to data analysis and addressing issues of quality in this research. Finally, consideration will be given to ethical considerations arising from this study.

3.2 Philosophical Positioning
To address the research questions identified through the literature review I adopted a pragmatic approach to the study. This approach is suitable for research which is
practical and action-oriented, focused on “what works” in addressing a particular problem or issue (Cohen et al., 2018). Claims to true knowledge in pragmatic research are not made on a strict epistemological basis, but rather the validity of a piece of knowledge is judged on its usefulness in bringing about some effective action or change (Lukenchuk & Kolich, 2013). The “practice-driven” stance of pragmatic research allows the researcher to select methodological tools based on their usefulness in answering the research questions (Denscombe, 2008; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

3.2.1 Practitioner Research
Pragmatism is closely associated with practitioner research. Pring (2015) makes a strong case for the centrality of practitioner research in education. He argues that education research must examine the complex and dynamic transactions between teachers and learners through which education practice takes place. These can only be properly understood by the practitioner at the centre of them. Consultation practice can also be understood as a transaction, in this case between the EP and the teacher, a conversation which aims to affect some change to the benefit of learners. Some within the EP profession have similarly called for an emphasis on practitioner research to develop consultation practices (Kennedy et al., 2009)

The Reflective Practitioner. In order to more clearly articulate the nature of this study as practitioner research, it was underpinned by Donald Schön’s (1983) theoretical concept of the Reflective Practitioner and the associated model of reflection-in-action as an epistemology of professional practice. This model was adopted for several reasons. Grappling with the implications of the work of Foucault and other poststructuralist thinkers for psychology, Levin is clear that ‘all work in psychology must be self-reflective and self-critical’ and that this ‘self-critical activity must be dialogical or discursive’ (1991, p.265). Therefore, the use of Schön’s model was intended as a way of formalising a self-reflective element within the research design. This was particularly the case as reflection-in-action is a model of thinking about the epistemology of practice, and as such was consistent with this study’s focus on developing an approach to consultation.

3.3 Research Process
The design of this study had two phases. The first phase Exploring Valued Capabilities consisted of focus group with children and young people in each focal school, employing participatory techniques to gain an understanding of their most valued
capability areas. Phase two Capabilities Consultations explored the views of teachers and EPs regarding the use of a capabilities-informed approach to promoting inclusion in schools via consultation. This second phase of the research had four stages. Stage one in which EPs were invited to discuss the theoretical ideas of the capabilities approach and the implications for inclusion. Stage two involved the use of two consultation frameworks developed using theoretical ideas from the capabilities approach and pupils' views on their capabilities in consultations in each school. Stage three invited the school staff taking part in these consultations to discuss and reflect on them. Stage four involved sharing the emerging findings and my own experiences as the researcher with a group of EPs and inviting them to discuss and reflect on the implications for practice.

Table 2
Phases and Stages of Research Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase One)</td>
<td>Pupil</td>
<td>Primary Pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capabilities</td>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>Drawings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diamond Ranking Diagrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary Pupils</td>
<td>Transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drawings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diamond Ranking Diagrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Two)</td>
<td>Stage 1) EP Focus Group</td>
<td>Transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capabilities</td>
<td>Stage 2) Consultations</td>
<td>Annotated Consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Stage 3) School Staff</td>
<td>Frameworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage 4) EP Focus Group</td>
<td>Field Notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Research Design
The pragmatic philosophical orientation of this research allowed for the incorporation of different research designs and methods to address the research questions. This
section will give an overview of different aspects of the research design, the reasons for doing so and the assumptions they carry.

### 3.4.1 Reflection-in-Action as Research Design

Donald Schön (1983) writes:

> When practitioners respond to the indeterminate zones of practice by holding a reflective conversation with the materials of their situations, they remake a part of their practice world and thereby reveal the usually tacit processes of worldmaking that underlie all of their practice. (p. 36)

The design of this study was intended as a structured ‘reflective conversion’ between myself as researcher-practitioner and a particular aspect of my ‘practice world’, namely consultation in schools. Engaging with Schön’s reflection-in-action as a theoretical lens led me to develop a research structure which involved a series of sequential parts and phases intended to facilitate reflection as part of the progress towards the eventual outcomes of the study.

### 3.4.2 Case Study

This study focused on research activity in two focal schools in one LA. This in-depth focus on two “cases” was consistent with aspects of case study research designs. ‘Case study’ has been defined as ‘the study of an instance in action’ (Adelman et al., 1980) or an investigation of a ‘project, policy, institution, program or system’ that aims to capture its ‘complexity and uniqueness’ (Simons, 2009, p.21). Perhaps for these reasons, much research exploring EP consultation draws on case study designs (Dennis, 2004; Dowd & Thorne, 2007; O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018; Tobias, 2018).

Yin (2018, p.15) defines case study research in a two-fold manner, both in terms of its scope, and its methodological features. In terms of scope, Yin (2018, p.15) states that:

1. A case study is an empirical method that:
   - investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when
   - the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.

Relating to the methodological features of case study, Yin (2018, p.15) states that:

2. A case study:
• copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
• benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis.
• relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion.

In its scope, the aims of the present study were consistent with Yin’s definition because it is focused on a particular phenomenon within contemporary EP practice, instances of consultation, taking place in its real-life context, a school. It sought to examine an instance of an innovative approach to EP consultation, in order to understand its uniqueness and possible contribution to future practice. Given that it examined this aspect of practice embedded in context, the boundaries between the phenomena of interest and its context were not clearly distinct. This too is consistent with Yin’s definition (2018).

This study also bore resemblance to some of Yin’s methodological features of case study research (2018). This is due to its use of Schön’s theoretical model of reflection-in-action, to help guide the enquiry to focus on those variables of interest to the issue at hand, namely developing practice, in a context when many possible sources of data may be of interest to a fuller understanding of the phenomena in question.

Many types of case study have been identified for use in educational research (Cohen et al., 2018). The emphasis on ‘how’ in the research questions of this study align it with an explanatory case study model, which entails a focus on “testing” a particular theory or approach (Yin, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018). Its theoretical orientation as a reflective practitioner study was consistent with Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier’s ‘reflexive case study’ type (2013, as referenced in Cohen et al., 2018, p.393). Reflexive case studies deliberately include the personal reflections of the researcher as the practitioner in question.

**Advantages of Case Study.** Data obtained through case studies are often felt to be ‘strong in reality’; their attention to the subtle details of their case and its contexts make them ‘down-to-earth’ and allow them to provide a more natural basis for generalisation (Cohen et al., 2018, p.394). Case studies are also considered a ‘step to action’, a feature consistent with this study’s orientation towards developing practice (Cohen et
This is due to their embeddedness in the real-world of practice, which means they may be readily and easily interpreted and put to use by others.

**Disadvantages of Case Study.** The main criticisms of case study research designs are based on their risk of bias, either through the presence of the researcher as observer and the impact this has on findings, or their openness to personal or selective bias on the part of the researcher in interpreting their findings (Cohen et al., 2018). In an effort to address these limitations, detailed Appendices are provided with this thesis that provide the reader with an indication of how decisions were made throughout the study. Furthermore, as this study is exploratory in nature, examining how theoretical ideas from the Capabilities Approach might begin to be interpreted in EP practice, it is outside its intended scope to generalise beyond my own practice. Instead it is meant to begin a conversation about the application of these ideas in educational psychology and provide a starting point for future research.

### 3.4.3 Action Research

Case study approaches proceed from the assumption that the phenomena of interest cannot or will not be manipulated or subject to the control of the researcher (Yin, 2018). The present study seemed to resist this assumption, as it contained an intervention (the consultation approach) that alters the course of usual events, i.e. day to day life in school and ordinary teaching practice.

This kind of “field experimentation” lends this study some similarity to action research designs, whose aims are largely focussed on bringing about change by improving practice (Cohen et al., 2018; McNiff, 2017). Indeed, action research is also often integrated within a case study research design (Stenhouse, 1985, in Cohen et al., 2018). Action research is usually focused on a small-scale intervention, taking place in the context of real-world practice, and is designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Cohen et al., 2018). Such studies are typically structured in terms of four activities: plan, act, observe, reflect. Despite the similarities between this study and the intentions and methods of action research, it was beyond the time scale of the present study to adhere to the full cycle of activities that is taken to be central to an action research study. Although the phases of the thesis broadly correspond to the plan, act, observe, and reflect phases, there is no formal point at which these phases feed into an ongoing cycle, i.e. informing another plan, to be enacted, observed and reflected upon once again.
McNiff places Schon’s conception of practical professional knowledge at the centre of the need to develop and expand human capabilities (McNiff, 2017; Schön, 1983; Sen, 2001). She argues that this need is also a core motivation for action research, and so this strongly supports the use of such a methodology in this study (McNiff, 2017). Reflection is often thought to be the most critical stage of action research and, in this sense, this study shares the value placed on reflection-in-action for developing practice (McNiff, 2017; Schon, 1983). However, Mc Niff (2017) makes the case for a view of action research that moves beyond reflecting on and improving practice, to an understanding of its value in reflecting on and improving knowledge and theory.

### 3.5 Research Context

Schools across the LA in which I worked were contacted about research participation. This was done via termly multidisciplinary ‘inclusion forum’ meetings. Leaflets were handed out at these meetings, advertising the study and inviting expressions of interest by email (See Appendix 2.). Thirteen schools expressed an interest in taking part in the study (ten primary, three secondary). School information packs were then distributed to each interested school by email giving more detail about the study (See Appendix 3.). My intention was to recruit one primary and one secondary school to provide a sense of how the approach might be developed in these differing contexts.
After receiving the information packs, interested schools were invited to agree a date for an initial meeting. These were allocated on a first come, first served basis, to one primary and one secondary school. All other schools were contacted and offered the option of remaining on a reserve list. Initial meetings were held with the key contact within each participating school to answer further questions about the study, obtain informed consent on behalf of the school, and to arrange dates for the research visits. Background information was collected about each participating school and is presented in the vignettes in Appendix 4 & 5. Each of the schools has been given a pseudonym to protect the identity of the school and its community.

3.6 Data Collection

Pragmatic approaches to research can accommodate a range of different data collection strategies on the basis of their relevance to answering the research questions. Case study research designs generally deploy multiple methods of data collection and analysis (Cohen et al., 2011). The reflective and exploratory nature of this study, and its emphasis on how a capabilities-informed approach to consultation could be developed, supported the use of qualitative data collection methods. Focus group methods were the central means of data collection and were used at a number of points during the research process. However, these methods were supplemented by the use of participatory techniques that resulted in visual materials, i.e. drawings and diagrams produced by pupil participants. These documents, along with the annotated consultation frameworks produced during the consultation meetings, also formed part of the data set.

3.6.1 Focus Groups

Focus group methods are a practical, time-efficient way of gathering data on the viewpoints and opinions of a particular target group (Cohen et al., 2018). Focus groups are thought to be particularly appropriate when the research is attempting to pilot-test new ideas or materials (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Both the EP focus groups and the school staff focus groups during part two of the study had this purpose, as they constituted attempts to seek the views of stakeholders about the potential uses, impact, and experiences of using the Capabilities Approach in consultation.
Mini-focus groups, of between four and six participants, are increasingly popular, partly because they are easier to recruit (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Smaller groups are often thought preferable when the participants are likely to have a great deal to share about a topic due to their lengthy experiences of it, or when the researcher is interested in obtaining more in-depth insights (Krueger & Casey, 2015). This was consistent with the aims of the EP focus groups in phase two, when the participants had extensive experience of EP practice and a range of opinions on issues of inclusion. Furthermore, smaller focus group sizes were deemed appropriate for the pupil focus groups during phase one, as I was interested in obtaining detailed insights from the children and young people into their understanding and interpretation of the ‘good life’ and valued capabilities.

It is important to ensure that focus group participants both have something to say on a topic, but also feel comfortable enough to say it (Cohen et al., 2018). In the case of both the EP focus groups and the school staff focus group, the participants were already well known to each other as colleagues and could reasonably be expected to have a sufficient level of familiarity with one another to allow frank and respectful dialogue. However, it is important to acknowledge that the small size of the group, coupled with their familiarity and personal investment in one another as colleagues, may have impacted on the extent to which divergent opinions could emerge (Cohen et al., 2018). Focus group methods are not recommended when the research is seeking sensitive or personal information which may be harmful to participants if shared in a group (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The EP and school staff focus groups were seeking information on professional practice issues, experiences and values, and as such were not subject to this limitation.

### 3.6.2 Participatory Techniques in Pupil Focus Groups

Visual and participatory methods were used to supplement the pupil focus groups during phase two. Focus group methods are also thought to be useful when the purpose of the research is to obtain insight into a complicated topic which is dependent on opinions and attitudes (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The purpose of phase two was to gain an understanding of children’s views on what the most important capabilities are for pupils like them, and as such focus group methods were deemed appropriate. They are also recommended when the intention is to empower participants to speak out, in their own words, on an important issue, as this phase of the research sought to do (Cohen et al., 2018).
When conducting focus groups, or ‘group interviewing’, with children, it is often thought to be more successful if the participants are already well-known to one another, as they were in the pupil focus groups in this study (Cohen et al., 2018). This supported the decision to draw participants from within a limited range of year groups within the school.

Focus group methods are not recommended when participants are asked to share personal or sensitive information which might be harmful to them if shared in the group (Krueger & Casey, 2015). As the intention in the pupil focus groups was to obtain information about participants' views about what an ideal ‘good life' should look like, i.e. what capabilities are important for all children and young people, they were not being directly invited to share personal information. Any personal information that was shared was done so voluntarily, and no one participant was required to discuss details of their life experiences.

Morrison (2013) notes a number of procedural considerations for a researcher seeking to conduct ‘group interviewing’ with children in schools. These include: choosing a familiar location, putting the children at ease from the start, creating a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, indicating to the children how important they are to the research, taking care with the question structure, making them easy to understand and concrete at the start, to more open ended answers later on.

3.7 Research Process in Detail

This section will provide details on the aims, participants and methods of each phase of the study, alongside my reflections on the process itself. An overview of each phase and stage of the process of data collection, their links to one another and to each research question can be found in the GANTT chart in Appendix 30.

3.7.1 Phase One) Exploring Valued Capabilities

Aims. To develop an understanding of which capabilities might be most valued by pupils in each participating school, and in what terms these capabilities might be defined by the pupils in each school. This understanding could then be used to inform the development of two versions of a consultation framework used in phase two – the Capabilities Profile.
**Participants.** Each school was asked to invite pupils to take part. They were asked to select a broad range of pupils of different genders, social backgrounds, and academic attainments to try to ensure a group that might approximate the diversity of the school community. This may have introduced some bias with regards to which pupils were selected. This could be due to the school’s views about particular pupils, the purposes of research in general or of this project specifically. There may have been a desire to protect the schools’ reputation by selecting those pupils who were considered to represent the school in a positive light, for example. It also relied on the school’s interpretation of the concept of ‘social background’ that may have been highly individual to the person doing the selection. These issues with relation to the sample selection during this phase may have limited the extent to which the findings from this focus group can reliably be said to reflect the views and experiences of pupils within the broader school community. Despite this limitation this process of selection was maintained for two reasons: a) putting more stringent selection criteria in place may have represented a barrier to the recruitment process happening in a timely manner; b) the case study design of the study acknowledges that each school is a unique case, subject to its own cultural norms. Each school was provided with an information pack and consent form to send out to parents of the invited pupil, which included a child-friendly information sheet (See Appendix 6.). Schools were asked to provide brief details about each pupil to give a sense of the diversity of the participant group.

**St Anne’s Primary School.** The school was asked to select pupils from Years Four and Five to take part in this phase. This decision was based on the consideration that younger children may have had difficulty engaging in group discussion on the subject of capabilities. Children from Year Six were not invited to take part due to concerns that the school may be reluctant to release pupils from ordinary lessons due to pressures to prepare children for SATS testing. On the advice of the school’s headteacher and inclusion manager during our initial research meeting, the format of the information pack was changed. They advised that engaging the parents was more likely if the information about the study was presented more briefly, and then more detailed information included in an ‘additional information’ section attached to the brief outline (See Appendix 8.). This allowed parents who wanted to better understand the research to access the information, without overwhelming parents whose literacy or motivation to engage with the school’s activities may be lower. Parents were then contacted about their child’s participation via the school’s inclusion manager using the adapted information pack and consent form. Parental consent was obtained for the participation
of eight pupils in this phase. Pupil participants were invited to give themselves a pseudonym for use in this reporting on the study. Characteristics of each of the pupil participants are given in Table 3.

**St John's Secondary School.** The school was asked to select pupils from Years Eight and Nine to take part. This was based on concerns that the school may be reluctant to release pupils in Years 10 or 11 from ordinary lessons due to pressures to prepare them for GCSE examinations. Pupils from Year 7 were also not invited to take part. This was based on a consideration of the likely experiences of pupils in this age group, particularly during term one of the school year. Pupils in Year 7 would have recently joined the school from primary and could reasonably be expected to be experiencing considerable personal and social upheaval and adjustment to their new environment. It was therefore considered that their ability to comfortably engage in a group discussion on an unfamiliar topic may have been reduced. Student participants were invited to give themselves a pseudonym for use in this reporting on the study. Characteristics of each of the student participants are given in Table 4.
### Table 3

**St Anne’s Pupil Participant Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Year Group</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Background Information from School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Pupil Premium, working below expected in maths and reading, has had some friendship difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skull Trooper</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Behavioural difficulties, school have sought support through specialist teacher service for him,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>academically able, lives with his mother and has regular contact with his father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbide</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Academically on track, has been referred to CAMHS in the past, designated as a young carer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikonic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Designated as a young carer, twin younger siblings one of whom has significant medical problems, in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>receipt of Free School Meals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Academically on track, has some emotional difficulties relating to worries about family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Diagnosed with ADHD and is medicated, academically on track, has had emotional support intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>in school in the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unicorn</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Has an EHC plan related to her speech, language and communication difficulties, has friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>difficulties, part of a large family where other children also have difficulties in learning, including</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ASC, ADHD, and Dyslexia diagnoses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lives within a large extended family, at least a year behind academically, designated as a young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>carer, older sister has an EHC plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4
St John’s Pupil Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Background Information from School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HenHen</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>High prior attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ollie Dooby</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Moderate prior attainment, Pupil Premium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ColSav</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>SEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lower prior attainment, SEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adamski</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Nine was unable to attend the second meeting of the focus group due to his being on an internal exclusion as a consequence of poor behaviour. Repeated attempts to engage him in an individual interview instead at a later date failed due to further sanctions and ongoing difficulties with his attendance at school.

**Methods.** The methods during this phase responded to issues in conducting focus groups with children by incorporating playful, creative, and participatory activities within the procedure (Cohen et al., 2018).

**St Anne’s Primary School, Session One.** The pupil focus groups at St Anne’s took place in a meeting room off the main school reception which is often used for small-group intervention work with the children as well as meetings. Each of the two groups of children was collected from their respective classrooms by the school’s inclusion manager, a familiar member of staff, and brought to the room. On the first meeting, the inclusion manager stayed long enough to get the children seated and introduce them to me.
The focus group was introduced to the children in a manner which emphasised the importance of their views (See Appendix 9. Pupil Focus Group Meeting One Question Schedule). Communicating the particular attitude and role of the researcher as being not like “ordinary” adults is advocated by Solberg as vital part to putting children at ease and rebalancing power in the children’s favour in research (2014).

The group were engaged in a short beanbag throwing game to build rapport and encourage interaction amongst the group through its focus on non-verbal communication. Then pupils were invited to invent a “code name” (pseudonym) for use in the research, and to say it out loud into the Dictaphone. This encouraged everyone to speak early on, and also, along with the beanbag game, introduced a playful element designed to create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. The questioning route adopted through the rest of the focus group was adapted from the four-step approach summarised by Biggeri & Libanora (2011).
### Table 5

**Adapting Biggeri and Libanora’s (2011) Four-Step Process for this Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Four Step Process</th>
<th>Adaption for use in this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Let the children conceptualise the capability dimensions without any interference. Pupils were invited to respond to the question ‘What does a ‘Good Life’ look like for a child like you?’ through both drawing and discussion. This represents an initially ‘bottom up’ approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Focus on the personal achieved functionings for each dimension of wellbeing. Focusing on personal achieved functionings as an explicit step was omitted from the pupil focus group process to avoid risk of distress or discomfort that might be experienced by participants through disclosure or comparison with peers, i.e. making them aware of aspects of wellbeing that they may not currently be achieving in their own lives. Pupil participants were, of course, free to discuss their own experiences where they felt comfortable to do so, but were not asked to do so as part of the questioning route.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Focus on community capabilities to define the relevance of each dimension. Once the pupil participants had an opportunity to define wellbeing dimensions in a bottom up way, free from interference, the questioning route then guided them to consider, define and discuss the relevance of each capability dimension, i.e. each of the ten central capabilities. This represented a shift towards a more ‘top down’ approach.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the second pupil focus group, the participants were invited to prioritise each of the capability dimensions that had emerged from my analysis of Pupil Focus Group One using the diamond ranking activity.

In their research they employ these four stages within what they describe as ‘a “dynamic” questionnaire’ (2011, p.82). Stage one is characterised by the question ‘What are the most important opportunities a child should have during his/her life?’ (Biggeri & Libanora, 2011, p.84). It is designed to allow the children to identify which capabilities are relevant without limiting their possible answers. I adapted this stage with reference to Danby and colleagues (2011) who argue that interviews with children and young people must aim to use straightforward, child-friendly language that is anchored in the here and now, avoiding ‘why’ or ‘how’ questions. Hence, the pupils were asked: ‘What does a “good life” look like for a child like you?’ Research by Camfield and Tafere used similar language, along with a drawing exercise, to elicit children’s views on their capabilities (2011).

**Figure 5**

*Example of Supporting Visual Used in Pupil Focus Groups*

What does a Good Life look like?

Pupils were invited to draw an answer to the question, before being asked to describe what they had drawn, and to answer the follow up, slightly more abstract, question “What are the most important opportunities children should have?” In this way the questioning route was consistent with Morrison’s (2013) recommendation to move from the concrete towards more abstract questions, and their naming of important
opportunities could be undertaken with reference to their drawings as a concrete stimulus.

Whilst the group was encouraged to discuss these important opportunities, I annotated a list of Nussbaum’s ten central capabilities; if any of them weren’t mentioned, I prompted the pupils by saying “What about X, is that an important opportunity for children to have?”. For any capability areas the children mentioned, I used follow-up questioning to encourage them to discuss why that area might be important, e.g. “Why is eating your favourite food important for a child like you?”. This was done in reference to Biggeri and Libanora’s third stage, which is centred around the question, “In your opinion how important/unimportant is being able to have good health for a child of your age?”. Finally, I explained to the pupils when we would next be meeting. I thanked them for their contribution, and escorted them back to their classrooms. The session lasted approximately 45 minutes in total.

St Anne’s Primary School, Session Two. The second meeting of the pupil focus groups at St Anne’s took place in the same room as before, two weeks later on the same day and time. As I expected the participants to be more familiar with me this time, the beanbag game was not used, however they were invited to say their “code names” as before. The list of capability areas derived from the analysis of the transcript of the first focus group session was presented to the group, both in text and read aloud (See Chapter Four for details of how these were obtained). The children were then put into pairs and asked to complete a ‘diamond ranking’ activity in order to prioritise the different capability areas. The use of this activity was adapted from a study by Clark (2012) but has been used in a wide range of research activities with children. Another possible approach to supporting participants’ communication of their views and preferences is the ‘Talking Mats’ toolkit. This is a method of using symbols to facilitate individuals with speech and language difficulties to communicate their views and wishes. ‘Talking Mats’ is oriented towards enabling individuals to group different options into categories, generally positive, negative and in between or unsure. In this study I was less interested in how participants categorised each capability area, i.e. whether they thought some capability area was or wasn’t important, and more in how they prioritised each capability dimension in relation to the others. As a result, the ‘diamond ranking’ activity seemed more appropriate.

Figure 6
Example of Diamond Ranking Activity Template
As a method diamond ranking is associated with the importance of including ‘child voice’ in research inspired by article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is described as a ‘thinking skills’ tool which can elicit constructs and facilitate discussion (Rockett & Percival, 2002). Children are given a number of statements and, in small groups, invited to sort and rank them as in a diamond formation (See Figure 6) according to some criteria, in this case ‘important’ versus ‘least important’. The strength of this technique is thought to lie in the premise that as the children rank the items and discuss their choices, they make explicit the overarching relationships by which they organise the constructs being explored (Clark, 2012). The use of this activity was intended as a correlate with Biggeri and Libanora’s fourth stage, which is focussed on obtaining a sense of the child’s capability preferences by asking the question: “Among the aspects we discussed could you tell me which are the three most important opportunities a child should have during his/her life?”. I encouraged the pupils to discuss and negotiate with their partner where individual capability statements should be placed. They were also gently questioned about their choices. For example, “What makes you think this one is more important than that one?”. Once the activity and discussion were completed, the pupils were thanked for their participation, and escorted back to their classrooms. The session lasted approximately 30 minutes in total.

**St John’s Secondary School, Session One & Two.** The procedure for the focus groups at St John’s Secondary School was the same as that at St Anne’s Primary School except for a few small adaptations. Instead of the word ‘children’ or ‘child’, language like ‘young people’ or ‘young person’ was used, when describing and explaining the research. Furthermore, the focus group took place in a room that was still within the school, but unlikely to be as familiar to the pupils taking part. However, they were similarly escorted by a familiar member of staff, and the same steps were
followed that intended to put them at ease. As one participant was missing from the second meeting of the focus group at St John’s one student completed the diamond ranking activity on his own rather than as part of a pair. Each session lasted approximately one hour.

3.7.2 Phase Two) Capabilities Consultation
Phase Two consisted of a series of four stages, each made up of different participants and data collection activities. An overview of these stages is given in Table 6.

Table 6
Overview of Phase Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 EPs</td>
<td>9 consultations (6 primary, 3 secondary)</td>
<td>5 members of school staff (4 teachers, 1 SENCo)</td>
<td>4 EPs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7.2.1 Stage 1. EP Focus Group

Aims. The aim of this phase was to obtain the views of EPs about the main ideas of the Capabilities Approach and its relationship to inclusion and EP practice.

Participants. EPs who worked in one of the four geographical areas covered by the LA EPS in which the study took place were contacted by email and invited to take part in a focus group discussion. The email provided an information sheet about the research and the consent form (See Appendix 18.). Four EPs agreed to take part, four is considered the minimum number of participants for a viable focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2009)

Methods. The focus group was held immediately before a routine team meeting in the normal office premises in which the EPS is based. The participants were asked to reflect on the idea of inclusion, read some information about the Capabilities Approach (Appendix 19.) and discuss the possible links between the two in relation to EP practice (See Appendix. 20. EP Focus Group 1. Question Schedule). The discussion lasted one hour and was audio recorded for analysis.

3.7.2.2 Stage 2. Consultations in Schools
**Aims.** The aim of this study phase was to put the two consultation frameworks (the *Supporting Capabilities* framework and the *Capabilities Profile* framework) to use in practice in each focal school. More details on the development of each of these frameworks are given in Chapter Four.

**Participants.** The key contact in each school was invited to refer up to six pupils whose inclusion members of school staff had concerns about. The schools were asked to follow their usual monitoring and referral processes for responding to concerns about individual learners, and identify pupils in this way. No specific criteria were given for type or level of concern. This was in order to explore how the consultation frameworks could support a response to the varied nature of real-life school concerns that EPs are presented with during the course of their practice. They were provided with an information pack and consent form to send out to parents of the selected pupils (See Appendix 4. ‘Capabilities Consultation Parent Information Pack’). Parents were invited to attend the consultation if they wished, or simply consent to their child being discussed with the researcher-practitioner by school staff. Parents were free to discuss their consent to their child’s being discussed with the child if they wished.

**Table 7**

*Consultation Attendees in Each School*
Methods. Each of the consultations were held in a meeting room within the school, except the meetings with the Year Two class teacher which took place in her classroom. The consultations began with me giving a brief overview of the purpose of the research and the aims for the consultation, i.e. to understand how to include a child better. Following a brief description of the main concerns for the child, one or both of the two consultation frameworks and accompanying questions were used to structure the consultation. More details on the development of these frameworks and accompanying consultation questions are given in Chapter Four. The frameworks were used to structure discussion during the consultations and were annotated as way of documenting this process. These annotated frameworks were kept as a source of data for later analysis.

3.7.2.3 Stage 3. School Staff Focus Group

Aims. The aim of this study phase was to explore the experience and impact of the consultations from the perspective of the teachers who took part in them.
Participants. The member or members of staff who were most familiar with the pupil and the presenting concern were invited to attend the consultation meetings during stage two. As a result, in stage three it was these same members of staff who were invited to join the focus group. An information pack and consent form were sent out by email via the key contact in the school to each member of staff who had taken part in the consultations (See Appendix 21. ‘School Staff Focus Group Information Pack and Consent Form’). All members invited members of staff agreed to take part. The school’s SENCo also requested to take part in the focus group. Due to difficulties setting a suitable date for the phase four School Staff Focus Group in St John’s Secondary School, and the subsequent school closures due to the covid-19 pandemic in the UK, it was only possible to complete this phase in St Anne’s Primary School.

Methods. The focus group was held in a classroom at St Anne’s Primary School at the end of a school day at a time when staff members would normally be taking part in a whole-staff meeting. All members of the group signed a consent form at the start of the focus group discussion. The participants were provided with a copy of the annotated consultation frameworks (See Appendix 13, 14, & 17.) that were completed during each of their consultations to remind them of the discussion and aid reflection. A focus group question schedule was developed for both EP focus groups and the school staff focus group using guidance set out by Krueger & Casey (2015). They advocate a questioning route that uses five categories of questions to facilitate the flow of the focus group: opening, introductory, transition, key, and ending (See Appendix 22.)

Steps were taken to make it clear to school staff participants that the consultations they took part in differed from typical consultation approaches in that they incorporated ideas from the Capabilities Approach. This was done as part of my introduction to each of the consultation meetings, during which I used a specific script to briefly explain the nature of capabilities and the reason for my interest in researching them in the context of consultation (See Appendix 31). This emphasis on the specificity of the consultation during this research, alongside other measures, helped ensure that comments and discussion during the school staff focus group reflected this specificity and not experiences of consultation in general.

To begin the focus group, I gave a short introduction reminding participants that the consultation they took part in was based on the Capabilities Approach, a novel set of ideas for educational psychology, and that I was interested in their experience of that
specific type of consultation. The below quote is taken from the question schedule used for this focus group (See Appendix 22):

As you know, you all have taken part in a consultation with me surrounding a child in your class/who you work with. In these consultations I was exploring how ideas from something called the Capabilities Approach might be helpful or useful. These ideas are not widely used by educational psychologists, and as much of our work takes place alongside teachers and school staff, I am interested in what your experiences of these consultations were.

The group was then asked to bring to mind and freely reflect on their memory of the specific consultation they had with myself, through the opening question ‘Tell me a bit about what you remember about the consultation we had’. All members of the group were encouraged to comment on their memory of the consultation to encourage a focus on that specific experience and not others. Each member was provided with the relevant annotated consultation framework from their individual consultation to aid them in this exercise of remembering and reflecting. As the discussion progressed, one of the key questions put to participants was ‘How does this consultation compare with other consultations you have had with EPs in the past?’ This question was intended to draw out specific distinctions between the consultation approach used in this study, and other forms of consultation. Furthermore, and also during the main part of the discussion, follow up questions were used to focus on how specific aspects of the consultation were experienced by the participants, language was used such as ‘which parts’ or ‘which questions’ did participants find helpful or unhelpful, again to try and focus on the specific and unique aspects of the consultation approach. Participants were then prompted to discuss how it felt to take part in the consultation, and to comment on whether anything had changed as a result of it. The discussion lasted approximately 45 minutes and was audio recorded for later analysis.

3.7.2.4 Stage 4. EP Focus Group

Aims. The aim of this stage of the study was to present the emerging findings and progress of the research and seek the views and reflections of EPs as to the possibilities and potential limitations of the capabilities-informed approach to consultation developed in previous research phases.

Participants. EPs from within two of the four geographical areas covered by the LA EPS were contacted in the same manner as recruitment during stage one. Four EPs
agreed to take part, the minimum needed for a viable focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

**Methods.** The focus group was held immediately after a routine team meeting in the normal office premises in which the EPS is based. The first part of the discussion centred around a presentation and discussion of the resources and materials produced during the research and the emerging findings and experiences during the study up to that point. The participants discussed their reflections on the research activities and materials and the possible implications for future practice they might envisage, both in terms of opportunities and limitations of taking a capabilities approach. The discussion lasted approximately one hour, due to a technical fault with the recording device, the audio recording was lost. Instead I recorded all that could be recollected about the discussion in writing within a couple of hours of the group ending.

**3.8 Data Analysis**

**3.8.1 Thematic Analysis**

A thematic analysis (TA) approach was taken to analysing the various sources of data in this study. TA is a qualitative strategy that was first explicitly described and named by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a ‘method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (p.6). Since this publication, TA has grown in popularity to become a widely used and discussed method in psychological research (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Furthermore, a TA approach has been used in a number of studies exploring children’s valued capabilities included in my literature review (e.g., Sterman et al., 2018; Underwood et al., 2015; Kellock and Lawthom, 2011).

It is unique among qualitative analytic methods in that it constitutes a method of data analysis only, and does not prescribe methods of data collection, theoretical positions, or epistemological or ontological frameworks (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This ‘theoretical freedom’ and its applicability to many forms of data makes TA a highly flexible approach, one of its main strengths (Nowell et al., 2017, p.2). In this way, TA can be modified for the needs of different studies, whilst still providing rich, detailed accounts of data. This flexibility was my main motivation for selecting it as an analytic approach to the data collected in this study, allowing me to combine different forms of data, including transcripts and visual material, into a single analysis. TA has been successfully used in previous research to analyse visual material such as photographs, as well as text-based data (e.g. Shanahan et al., 2019). Advocates of TA have argued
that it is useful when examining the perspectives of different research participants, allowing researchers to highlight similarities and differences across groups (Braun and Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). This was another reason for its use in this study, which comprised data collection activities with a range of stakeholders, i.e. teachers, pupils and EPs. Although the principle of flexibility is valued in qualitative research, it carries with it a risk of inconsistency in methodological applications, or of incoherence in the themes arrived at (Holloway & Todres, 2003). It follows, then, that the flexibility of TA can disadvantage it as an analytical approach. Coherence and consistency can be supported by making the epistemological positioning of a study clear, and by applying this position in order to underpin the study’s claims to knowledge (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Braun and Clarke (2013) acknowledge a risk that TA may result simply in descriptions of participants concerns, if it is done without reference to some theoretical framework.

In the case of the present study, I adopted a theoretical stance based on pragmatism, in which knowledge claims made as a result of research findings are not based on strict epistemic bases, but rather on their usefulness in bringing about action or change in the world of practice (Lukenchuk & Kolich, 2013). This is addressed in more detail in section 3.2. Essentially, my use of TA was founded on an intention to understand how the views of participants could answer “practice-driven” research questions about the potential applications of the Capabilities Approach in EP work.

Unlike others form of data analysis, such as content analysis or discourse analysis, TA does not allow the researcher to draw conclusions about the way language is used (Novell, et al. 2017). Given my interest in questions of practice and practical application of theoretical concepts, rather than, for example, a phenomenologically oriented interest in participants’ construction of experience through language, this limitation of TA did not carry much risk for this study.

To further address this issue of potential inconsistency in the use of TA, Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012; 2013) have outlined a series of six clear phases through which the analytic process should proceed. These phases are set out in Table 8.

Table 8

Six Phase Thematic Analysis Approach
### Overview of Thematic Analysis Phases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase of Thematic Analysis</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1. Familiarising yourself with the data</td>
<td>The researcher immerses themselves in the data in order to become familiar with it. For example, this might be done by reading and rereading textual data. It is often helpful to make initial notes at this stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2. Generating the initial codes</td>
<td>The researcher begins a systematic analysis of the data through coding. This means assigning labels to small portions of the data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3. Searching for themes</td>
<td>The researcher starts to reduce the number of codes by organising them into higher level codes or themes, in relation to the research question(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 4. Reviewing potential themes</td>
<td>The researcher then reviews the developing themes in relation to the coded data and entire data set. This stage is about quality checking the themes to see that they make sense and accurately reflects the data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 5. Defining and naming themes</td>
<td>The researcher then defines and names the themes in a way that clearly states what is unique and specific about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 6. Producing the report</td>
<td>The researcher produces a report that provides a compelling story about the data based on the analysis. This must go beyond description to make an argument that answers the research question(s).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.8.2 Overview of Thematic Analysis Phases

**Phase 1. – Familiarising yourself with the data**

TA begins with the researcher “immersing” themselves in the data and taking steps to begin noticing things that might be relevant to the research questions (Braun and Clare, 2012). I listened back to each of the audio recordings, and made some brief handwritten notes as a method of recording my initial ‘noticings’ about the content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 204) (See Appendix 32). Then I transcribed verbatim each recording into a Microsoft Word document. Participants were asked to identify themselves at the start of each session, and I used a diagram to note down
where each participant was sat in the room, to help me identify them when transcribing. The children identified themselves using their ‘code names’, i.e. pseudonyms, the EPs used their first names, and the school staff by the classes they teach or role in the school. The transcripts were then uploaded to Nvivo for the next stage of the analysis. Visual data were collected during both phases of the study. In phase one this was the drawings produced by pupil participants, and in phase two this was the annotated consultation frameworks from the consultation meetings with school staff. I reviewed the drawings whilst listening to the audio recordings from phase one as part of familiarising myself with the data. I examined and reread the annotated consultation frameworks in order to familiarise myself with their content also. Both types of visual data were scanned and converted into pdf. documents that were then also uploaded to Nvivo.

**Phase 2. – Generating the initial codes**

Braun and Clarke define coding as ‘a process of identifying aspects of the data that relate to your research question’ (2012, p.206). Within the overarching TA approach, differing approaches to coding were used in phase one and phase two of this study, in line with the differing research questions addressed by each phase. Data was collected during phase one of the study to address research question 1b: *How can children’s valued capabilities inform EP consultation practice?* This meant that my focus in analysing the data from phase one was on which capabilities were being talked about by the participants and how did they describe and define them. The transcripts and drawings produced by participants in phase one of this study were initially coded using a set of predetermined codes based on Nussbaum’s ten central capabilities. This type of ‘selective’ coding involves identifying a set of ‘instances’ of phenomena of interest, in this case instances of participants talk about or depictions of any of the ten central capabilities. For an example of this selective coding, see Appendix 10. My familiarity with the capabilities research literature gained through the literature review provided me with the required pre-existing theoretical knowledge needed to identify the concepts of interest. Selective coding is often considered a pre-analytic process, a means of pragmatically selecting relevant sections of the data. Extracts from the transcripts at the whole sentence level were coded according to which of the ten central capabilities the aspect of quality of life being described was most closely aligned. Similarly, sections of participants drawings were coded according to which of the ten central capabilities they seemed to relate to.

**Table 9**
### Example of Selective Coding in Phase One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript – St John’s Pupil Focus Group One</th>
<th>Selective code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RP:</strong> Okay, do you want to talk amongst yourselves, maybe to the person next to you, what have you written about? What have you drawn?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ColSav:</strong> Well, I put, go on holidays, ride a bike, a responsible family.</td>
<td>Travel; Play; Affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RP:</strong> Responsible family.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ColSav:</strong> A big enough house for, like, family members. Be happy, get gifts and presents, have toys, go out with mates, enjoy being with your family and have pocket money.</td>
<td>Control over one’s environment; Emotions; Affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RP:</strong> Wow. What do you think about that, do you agree with those? What’s anybody else got? Go on.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OllieDoobie:</strong> You can go first.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jay:</strong> Alright, I put family, loved ones. Happiness, having friends, loyal friends. Memories and mistakes.</td>
<td>Affiliation; Emotions; Practical Reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RP:</strong> Memories and mistakes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jay:</strong> I put mistakes so you can learn from them. Because if you don’t make any mistakes in your life, you’ll never learn from them.</td>
<td>Practical Reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RP:</strong> Go on guys, anybody else?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OllieDoobie:</strong> I put being a little bit minted, like rich.</td>
<td>Control over one’s environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RP:</strong> Just a little bit minted.</td>
<td>Control over one’s environment; Affiliation; Senses, imagination, and thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OllieDoobie:</strong> Having a nice car, a massive house so you can have parties, and then education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I adapted the first step of Biggeri and Libanora’s (2011) four-step procedure for determining children’s capability priorities through the development of a “dynamic” questionnaire, and integrated it within this phase of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) TA process. In step one of Biggeri and Libanora’s procedure children are asked to name what they believe the most important opportunities are for children, if the child suggests a capability that is not already included in the list of ten central capabilities, it is added to the questionnaire. In so doing the children help to elaborate on the contents of the researcher’s “dynamic” questionnaire (Biggeri & Libanora, 2011, p.84). Similarly, when
coding data from phase one of this study, if pupil participants talked about or drew an element of quality of life that did not seemed to fit within any of the predetermined list of ten central capabilities, the data was ascribed a separate code. Full details of how Biggeri and Libanora’s (2011) process was adapted for this study can be seen in Table 5.

Once the data from phase one had been selectively coded it could be organised into categories based on these codes using the query function in Nvivo. The contents of each category could then be re-coded to discover how participants defined each capability area, i.e. which specific capability areas were specified as important within the overall frame of the ten central capabilities. What Braun and Clarke (2012) describe as a ‘complete coding’ approach was taken in coding these categories (p.206). Complete coding involves coding ‘anything and everything’ of relevance to the research question, within the entire dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.206). Such codes consist of a word or brief phrase which provides a label for a feature of the data that might potentially be useful for answering the research question. These codes go on to provide the ‘building blocks’ of analysis.

**Table 10**

*Example of Complete Coding of Selective Coded Categories in Phase One*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selective code: Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A responsible family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go out with mates, enjoy being with your family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alright, I put family, loved ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having friends, loyal friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A massive house so you can have parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have friends black and white.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And nice family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having friends black and white.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s like, you can accept people that are black. That have a different ethnicity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like Hannah said, like being loyal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Having a happy family.

You need a responsible and caring family.

You have to, like, enjoy being around them as well.

And when you’re older you can make your own family.

Yes, meet a girl. Or a boy.

Meet a soul person.

Soulmate.

Babies.

Being happy for your family as well.

Being able to accept other people that are, like, transgender. Because there was a boy that used to be in my primary school, he wanted to be a girl. And he bought a load of girl’s stuff and, like, wished to be a girl. So, but it’s still fine with me. It’s just like, why would you want to be a girl?

Accept people.

Also, going back to your family, you want to be happy for what your family does. Like, about a week ago, my nan and grandad, well about two days ago, my nan and grandad moved to Spain. You have to be happy for them, for what they do. Even though it is upsetting.

Oh, and never let people bully you.

Never being bullied.

You shouldn’t be judged if you’re fat or something. If people who are obese, they are sometimes judged. If you’re happy with how you look, then you shouldn’t be ashamed.

The various forms of data collected during phase two of the study was intended to address research question 2: How does taking a Capabilities Approach to consultation contribute to inclusion? This meant that I was open to and interested in all the possible ways the consultation approach developed in the study might, or might not, contribute to inclusive practice. As a result, all data from phase two was coded using a complete coding approach from the outset. Each item of data was examined in Nvivo. Focus group transcripts from phase two were read through chronologically, and paragraph by paragraph, examining the utterance of each speaker one at a time. Each sentence or phrase of relevance to the research question was assigned a code using the ‘code’ function in Nvivo. Annotated consultation documents were read through, and each separate note or comment on them was also given a code (See Appendix 33)
Table 11

**Example of Complete Coding in Phase Two**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript – School Staff Focus Group (SENCO)</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I think, as well, like looking at these and it’s more about, like, the whole child.</em></td>
<td>Looking at the whole child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sometimes I think we’re quite focused as teachers, because of, obviously what we get told, quite focused on the assessment data and everything.</em></td>
<td>Teachers are focused on assessment data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>By the looks of it, it’s a bit more about the whole child,</em></td>
<td>Looking at the whole child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>like how we can do a bit more of emotional literacy and how they’re responding.</em></td>
<td>Children’s emotional literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rather than just being like, ‘They’re just not going to make it’ but thinking of them more of the child as a whole child,</em></td>
<td>Looking at the whole child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>rather than just be like, ‘They’re just enough piece of data’.</em></td>
<td>Not seeing the child as data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sometimes I think that’s hard sometimes for teachers, because we are judged on the data rather than ‘Are they happy?’</em></td>
<td>Teachers are judged on data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Whereas in this school I think that’s a lot of wellbeing that we have to do as well as all the data stuff,</em></td>
<td>Additional work as well as data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>because of the catchment area and the lives that they have.</em></td>
<td>Children’s emotional needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>So, we can’t even do like the assessment or the real work really until they’re in the right place to learn.</em></td>
<td>Catchment area means more wellbeing work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>Emotional needs come before learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of Nvivo allowed me to accurately keep track of all the codes assigned and be able to easily review them as a list of ‘Nodes’ within the software. These coded sections of data selected varied between whole sentences to short phrases of one or two words. Where necessary extracts of data were assigned more than one code, this is consistent with Braun and Clarke’s suggestion that this is a permissible practice and simply represents a more detailed form of coding (2012, p.210). Anything not relevant to the research question was left uncoded. All complete coding was carried out using a combination of descriptive and in vivo coding approaches, using participants own language where possible and attempting to summarise or describe the main content of each extract (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2020).
Phase 3. – Searching for themes

A theme is defined by Braun and Clarke (2013) as a ‘central organising concept’. So, whilst codes generally relate to one idea, each theme will be made up of lots of codes, i.e., lots of different ideas or aspects, that all relate to this central concept. This should go beyond representing just a feature of the data, to reflecting something meaningful in relation to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Once I had identified codes for each dataset, I adopted a “macro level” perspective and began examining the codes both by reading through them as a list, and using the ‘query’ function in Nvivo, searching for similarities and patterns. Where there was significant overlap between two codes, they were combined to reduce the overall number of codes. Where I began to observe patterns, codes were grouped together into “parent codes” using the ‘nodes’ function in Nvivo to begin to identify possible themes and subthemes. Once a potential theme structure began to emerge, I reread extracts of data to confirm their consistency with the theme. This was aided by the ‘highlight’ and ‘nodes’ function of Nvivo which allowed me to reread extracts of data in the context of the full transcript, with the codes and themes visible alongside the text. Where consistency with the theme was not in evidence, I either reworked the theme or removed the data extract.

Figure 7

*Example of Codes and Themes within Selective Coded Category: Affiliation*
Phase 4. – Reviewing potential themes

This phase of TA involves checking the candidate themes from Phase 3 work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A visual thematic map can be a useful aid in reviewing themes that can help to explore the relationships between themes and subthemes (Braun and Clarke, 2013). I used on paper visual mapping techniques in reviewing the theme structure of data from phase two, which included different participant groups and sources of data. Examples of this visual mapping can be seen in Appendix 34. I reviewed and refined the themes from both datasets, to ensure that each theme was clear and distinct from others. Using the ‘explore’ area within Nvivo, I reproduced the theme structure for the phase two data from my on paper visual maps into a thematic map. I then reviewed the data itself alongside the thematic map, to ensure that themes cohered meaningfully with the data.
Phase 5. – Defining and naming themes

This phase of TA involves ‘defining and refining’ the themes which will form the final outcome of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.92). This means identifying the essence of each theme and its implications for the research question, and encapsulating this in its label. In the case of themes within phase one, this entailed capturing the essence of the theme in terms of a “capability statement” (e.g., Having a loyal, trustworthy group of friends) a sentence summing up the aspect of quality of life the theme reflected. For phase two, this mean naming the theme in relation to what it had to say about the contribution of the Capabilities Approach to inclusion in schools.

Phase 6. – Producing the report

The crucial role of this final phase of TA is to present a concise, coherent, and logical account of the ‘story’ told by the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.93) Chapter Five presents the final thematic map (See Figure 20) and description of each theme from the phase two data set. These descriptions are supported by illustrative quotes throughout and provide a narrative account of the relationship between each theme and the research questions. The themes identified in the phase one data set, in the form of “capability statements” were sorted and prioritised by pupil participants during the second round of pupil focus groups, and then formed the basis for a visual consultation framework, the Capabilities Profile, and accompanying consultation questions, unique to each participating school. Details of these outcomes can be seen in Chapter Four.

3.9 Quality of the Research

The present study employed qualitative data collection strategies to explore the research questions. Guba & Lincoln (1994) propose two primary criteria for assessing qualitative research; trustworthiness and authenticity. This section will describe the ways the present study addresses these two principles.

3.9.1 Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln set out four criteria within the principle of trustworthiness in qualitative research:

1. Credibility
2. Transferability
3. Dependability
4. Confirmability

Credibility. The criterion of credibility relates to the extent to which a study can demonstrate that it has been conducted with a view to principles of good practice in research, but also that its findings can be validated by referring to more than just the researcher’s perspective. This is often done through a process of respondent validation, a process by which the subjects of the research are provided with an account of the findings and asked to corroborate whether the findings are consistent with their perspectives and experiences. Inviting the pupil participants to review the themes emerging from the first pupil focus group and to reorganise them to reflect their priorities was one form of member validation that meant the valued capability areas that emerged were relevant to the participant group. It could be argued that the use of a predetermined coding scheme limits the extent to which findings from the pupil focus group can be said to truly reflect participants views. However, I would contest this on the following basis. The predetermined codes were used only as part of an initial, selective coding process to identify sections of data of relevance to the research question. The resulting sections of data were then recoded using a complete, i.e. more inductive, coding approach, that stayed close to the views and words of the participants.

Triangulation is another strategy suggested by Guba and Lincoln that can support the credibility of qualitative research (1994). This refers to a practice of using more than one source of data to examine a particular phenomenon. The use of pupil’s drawings within the focus groups in phase one was one form of triangulation that developed a credible understanding of their valued capabilities. During phase two, annotated documents from the consultations were combined with the views and reflections of EPs and the views of school staff who had taken part in the consultations, to provide multiple perspectives on the capabilities-informed approach to consultation.

Transferability. Transferability in qualitative research refers to the extent to which findings from such a study can be said to have meaning and implications for others beyond the research participants or in other, wider contexts. A number of criteria have been put forward as considerations for the qualitative researcher in relation to the issue of transferability (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2019). Key amongst these is the suggestion that researchers should provide full and detailed descriptions of their samples to allow adequate comparisons with other similar persons, settings, processes
and so on. In this study I have included vignettes describing each focal school in which
the study took place, including geographical information, demographics and
performance data relating to the school, details about the school staffing structures,
and relationships with the EPS and other external agencies or services. I have also
included information about the characteristics of the children and young people taking
part in the focus groups during phase one to support comparisons. To ensure
transferability qualitative researchers are also encouraged to provide ‘thick
descriptions’ (Geertz, 1973), that is rich, detailed accounts of their findings. I have
aimed to do this by providing detailed descriptions of themes emerging from the
findings of this study supported by carefully chosen extracts from the data. With
regards the findings from the pupil focus groups, detailed descriptions of the valued
capability areas that emerged from the findings can be found in Appendices 11 & 12
and includes excepts from both the transcripts and participants drawings.

**Dependability.** Dependability in qualitative research is demonstrated by maintaining a
clear audit trail documenting all phases and stages of the research process, and that
this audit trail might be subject to review by others. In the present thesis, a detailed
Appendix is included which contains many examples and documents which can help to
ensure a clear audit trail of the stages of planning and various decision points during
the study.

**Confirmability.** This criteria for assessing qualitative research may present a particular
challenge for the present study. The purpose of the study was to explore the ways in
which certain theoretical ideas from the Capabilities Approach could be incorporated
within professional practice. I pursued this end, using a pragmatic, reflective
practitioner model of research, by developing and testing unique approaches within my
own professional practice. As a result, it is difficult to separate my personal values,
which both motivated the research interest and underpinned my approach to practice,
from the findings of the research. One way this is mitigated is through the use of focus
group sessions with professional EP colleagues, which ‘book-ended’ the other
research activities of the study. This helped to confirm whether the assumptions and
implications being drawn from the study with regards future practice were shared or
reflected in the views of other practitioners.

**Authenticity**
Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) principle of authenticity addresses wider concerns relating to the political impact of qualitative research (Bryman, 2016). The criteria of authenticity they suggest are: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity. All are focused on the practical implications of a study, and therefore have an affinity with action research methods. The present study embodies the authenticity criterion of fairness in relation to the central role played by the viewpoints of children and young people in informing an approach to professional practice between teachers and EPs in consultation. In a similar way the study has some educative authenticity with respect to the anticipated better understanding, on the part of school staff, of the perspectives of the pupils they work with, through engaging in the consultations. Finally, in its aim to develop professional practice, and particularly practical tools and approaches for use in professional practice, the study meets the criteria of catalytic and tactical authenticity, which questions whether research has provided members, in this case EPs, with both the impetus and empowerment to take action to change their circumstances.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

All social research must ‘strive for the highest ethical standards’ (Yin, 2018). Careful consideration was given to the ethical issues arising from this study. This consideration was undertaken in reference to the ‘Accepted Standards’ of the UCL Ethics Research Committee, the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2018) and the BPS guidance on Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014). Ethical approval for this study was obtained via the UCL Institute of Education Ethics Committee.

3.10.1 Informed Consent

All adult participants in this research were provided with information about research participation a minimum of two weeks before the scheduled data collection date (See Appendix 6, 7, 8, 18, 21). Parents of pupil participants during phase one, or of children referred by school as the focus of the consultations during phase two, were also provided with similarly detailed information packs and accompanying consent forms. Consent forms for participating children were returned via the school key contact, on the scheduled date of data collection. Pupil participants during phase one were provided with information about the study via the ‘Information for Kids’ section of the parents information pack and consent form (See Appendix 6.). Schools were also provided with this child-friendly information to support discussion of research participation with the children. At the start of each pupil focus group, I explained or
reexplained the purpose of the group. Care was taken to make it clear to the children that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to go back to class at any time if they wished (See Appendix 9).

3.10.2 Benefit Not Harm
The aims of this study were explicitly concerned with maximising benefit for children experiencing difficulties in learning by supporting teachers through consultation, and to expand the ways that the Capabilities Approach, as a universal framework for wellbeing and quality of life, can apply to educational psychology. This reflects the concern for social responsibility in the BPS Human Research Ethics. Steps were taken to avoid any potential harm to research participants that might arise through the study.

Risk of Anxiety or Distress. Children and young people may find it difficult to communicate in a focus group situation due to anxiety. In order to minimise anxiety participants were put at ease by explaining that their views and opinions are important and valued, by playing an ‘ice breaker’ game at the start of the focus group, and by using practical and participatory activities to facilitate the discussion. Discussing what a ‘good life’ looks like for a child and what kinds of life opportunities the participants valued has the potential to cause emotional distress. As a trainee EP, I was experienced in carrying out interviews and discussions with both children and adults about personal or emotional matters, and therefore experienced in handling these sensitively and with regard to the importance of compassionate care and distress tolerance in the BPS Code of Ethics (2018, p.5).

3.10.3 Confidentiality
Confidentiality is an important aspect of the BPS ethical principle of respect which calls on psychologists to attend to the privacy and right to confidentiality of individuals. The data collected during the focus groups were anonymised or pseudonymised at the earliest possible opportunity. It was made clear to all research participants both verbally and through the information sheets and consent forms that they would remain unidentifiable. This concept was made explicit to the pupil participants through the invitation to give themselves ‘code names’ (pseudonyms) for use in the research. Parents of children who were the focus of consultation meetings during phase two of the research consented to their name and personal details being shared and included in a written summary report for the school and parents. This is a typical aspect of EP practice. Children were identified by initial only in the notes and annotated consultation
frameworks used in phase two. The transcripts and other sources of data were kept on my own encrypted, password protected laptop.
Chapter Four: Developing the Consultation Frameworks

This chapter will outline the development of each of the consultation frameworks used in this study: the *Supporting Capabilities* framework and the *Capabilities Profile*.

4.1 *Supporting Capabilities* Framework

The development of this framework began with Robeyns’ (2017) visual structure for conceptualising the relationship between capabilities, functionings, an individual’s resources, and their conversion factors (See Figure 2). I initially translated this into a graphic format:

**Figure 8**
*Supporting Capabilities Framework*

I took this to a supervision meeting with my professional supervisor during which we discussed the framework and used it to role play a series of consultation scenarios to aid my reflection on the possible uses of the framework.

I also reflected on the discussion during the first EP focus group. In particular, parts of the discussion that focussed on the varied meanings and interpretations of inclusion,
and the implication drawn from this that it is often necessary to clarify what it means for each individual child, in their unique context.

‘What are we looking to include this child in, what do we want to see happen? What do we want to see him do differently or what needs to change to accommodate that?’ (EP1)

These reflections supported me in devising a questioning route that could accompany the visual structure of the Supporting Capabilities framework.

**Figure 9**
*Supporting Capabilities Framework with Consultation Questions*

Questions one and two: ‘What do you want for this child?’ and ‘Specifically, what would you like them to be able to be or to do’ are consistent with the language of the Capabilities Approach, e.g. ‘beings and doings’, but are also intended as a tool to develop the focus for the consultation discussion on some positive, hoped-for outcome for the child, moving from something broad towards something more specific.

For this reason, I decided the framework should be followed from right to left, working from the broad outcome to the specific resources needed for the child to achieve it.
This was also informed by the emphasis on ‘problem setting’ in reflection-in-action, as a fundamental part of the problem-solving work of professional practice.

The question: ‘What do all children need for this?’ was designed as an attempt to specify the individual children’s needs in relation to the needs of all children. This was informed by the issues raised by Norwich (2013) and others relating to the lack of clarity surrounding the concept of “needs”. By explicitly referencing personal, social and environmental factors in turn, the intention was to guide the discussion to consider the range of contributing factors and their interaction with one another. A copy of this framework could be used to structure the consultation and be annotated to document the discussion.

Figure 10
Example Annotated Supporting Capabilities Framework

4.2 Capabilities Profile Framework
Analysis of the pupil focus group transcripts and documents led to my identifying a number of valued capability areas for each group within each school, that could be used to develop the Capabilities Profile framework. These valued capability areas are presented in the table below.
Table 12

Valued Capability Areas for Each School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>St Anne’s Primary School</th>
<th>St John’s Secondary School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Friendships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-belief</td>
<td>Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>Following Interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voicing Opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More detail on each of these capability areas is provided in Appendices 14. & 15. The stages of the analysis through which I determined these valued capability areas for each school is set out in the following sections.

4.2.1 Focus Group Session One

I analysed the first session of each pupil focus group using a thematic analysis (TA) approach (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2016). This process is described in detail in Chapter Three (Section 3.8) The children’s drawings were scanned and translated into digital images so they could then be coded alongside the focus group transcripts using this coding scheme in Nvivo. This allowed me to then analysed the resulting categories, containing both extracts of text and images, to identify themes within each one.
My initial selective coding of the data from the first session of the St Anne’s Primary School focus groups identified six initial categories within the data: Bodily Health, Bodily Integrity and Safety, Emotions, Affiliation, Play, Control Over One’s Environment (Braun and Clarke, 2013). I then recoded the data in each of the resulting six categories using a complete coding approach to identify themes in the form of a series of “capability statements” (Braun and Clarke, 2013). An example of these themes alongside extracts from the data from the category Affiliation is shown in Table 12. This process resulted in 17 themes. These are presented in Table 13.
### Table 13
**Themes in Selective Category: Affiliation – St Anne’s Primary School**

**Affiliation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ![Image](image1.png)  
*At the moment, I’m drawing a picture of my mum because she really helps me out and I love her*  
*If you didn’t have a family, you probably would have been living out on the street* | Having a family that helps you |
| ![Image](image2.png)  
*Playing with your friends* | Having friends to play and who will help you with things |
| ![Image](image3.png)  
*I've been bullied, like, thousands of times*  
*A girl in the class that everybody thinks she smells, not very nice if you ask me*  
*She got bullied, and when I came to the school I told the teacher* | Not being bullied by other people |
| ![Image](image4.png)  
*She was my teacher last year, she says stuff like ‘stupid’, and ‘idiots’.* | Having teachers who talk nicely to you |
| ![Image](image5.png)  
*Our teacher’s actually really, really strict.* | |
Table 14

*Initial Selective Codes and Themes from St Anne’s Pupil Focus Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Selective Code</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BODILY HEALTH</td>
<td>Being able to eat your favourite things sometimes. Having plenty of sleep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BODILY INTEGRITY AND SAFETY</td>
<td>Being able to go out by ourselves sometimes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMOTIONS</td>
<td>Being brave and believing in yourself. Being able to feel sad when we lose a person or pet we care about. Having other people to love and care about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFILIATION</td>
<td>Having a family that helps you. Having friends to play with and who will help you with things. Not being bullied by other people. Having teachers who talk nicely to you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAY</td>
<td>Being able to laugh and have fun. Being able to play outside. Playing and supporting sports teams. Having technology to play with. Being able to laugh and play at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL OVER ONES ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td>Having your own bedroom or space at home. Doing some jobs to help out at home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*St John’s Secondary School.* My initial selective coding of the data from the first session of the St John’s Secondary School focus group identified eight initial categories within the data: Bodily Health, Bodily Integrity and Safety, Emotions, Affiliation, Play, Senses, Imagination and Thought, Practical Reason, and Control Over One’s Environment. I then analysed each of the resulting categories to identify themes within each category. This resulted in 18 themes. These are presented in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Selective Code</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BODILY HEALTH</td>
<td>Having a house big enough for all the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BODILY INTEGRITY AND</td>
<td>Being safe from being hurt by other people or in an accident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFETY</td>
<td>Being able to travel to explore new places or other countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMOTIONS</td>
<td>Being able to be happy for yourself and with yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being able to experience all the different emotions that give life meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFILIATION</td>
<td>Having a loyal, trustworthy group of friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having a nice, responsible, caring family that you enjoy spending time with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being friends with and accepting other people who are different from yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not being bullied or judged by other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being able to socialise with your friends in school and outside of school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAY</td>
<td>Being able to play different sports to have fun, i.e., riding bikes, football, climbing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENSES, IMAGINATION</td>
<td>Being able to get a good education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND THOUGHT</td>
<td>Being able to improve and get better at things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being able to do things you are interested in, passionate about, and aspire to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRACTICAL REASON</td>
<td>Being able to make memories and mistakes you can learn from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being able to make some decisions about your life for yourself, and to rely on our parents to make some decisions for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being able to have a job in something you are interested in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having the freedom to voice your opinions and be listened to.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2 Focus Group Session Two

I presented these themes to each of the focus groups during session two in the form of lists of statements that I also read aloud. I asked the participants to work in pairs to complete the diamond ranking activity using the lists. They were encouraged to discuss and agree with their partner where each statement should be placed.
These diamond ranking activity diagrams were used to define a number of valued capability areas. Biggeri & Libanora’s four step approach to obtaining the views of CYP about most valued capabilities focuses on asking for participants ‘three most important’ capability areas (2011). As a consequence, I focused on the top three levels of each diamond as being the most highly valued by the participants. I then examined these with the original coding scheme in mind and organised them into categories on this basis.

**St Anne’s Primary School.** My analysis of the diamond ranking activity diagrams from the second session of the St Anne’s focus groups suggested that five capability areas
(the initial selective codes) were valued by the participants: Affiliation, Play, Bodily Health, Emotions, and Bodily Integrity & Safety.

Figure 13
St Anne’s Themes Related to Affiliation

Figure 14
St Anne’s Themes Related to Play
Figure 15
St Anne’s Themes Related to Bodily Health

Figure 16
St Anne’s Themes Related to Emotions
I examined each of the resulting categories in order to define and name a list of priority capability areas. Some categories were renamed either to reflect the participants language or make the language more accessible for use in consultation. These are shown in the table below alongside examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Selective Code</th>
<th>Valued Capability</th>
<th>Example Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFFILIATION</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Having a family that helps you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAY</td>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Having technology to play with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BODILY HEALTH</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Having plenty of sleep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMOTION</td>
<td>Self-Belief</td>
<td>Being brave and believing in yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>Being able to feel sad when we lose a person or pet we care about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BODILY INTEGRITY AND SAFTY / CONTROL OVER ONES ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Being able to go out by yourself sometimes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite my intention to focus just on the top three levels, it was apparent that similar themes relating to the category of ‘Independence’ were present in the level immediately below, (i.e. ‘Having your own bedroom or space at home’, ‘Being able to
go out by yourself sometimes’, ‘Doing some jobs to help out at home) and therefore were treated as important and incorporated into the category. Themes within the ‘Emotion’ category seemed to differ from each other considerably, and so this was separated into two capability areas to be explored in consultation.

These valued capability areas formed the basis for the development of a resource, which I named the Capabilities Profile, intended for use as a framework for consultation.

The participants in the first EP focus group had described the CA as being very ‘strengths based’ and described this as a possible benefit of the approach. One participant commented that:

‘As soon as you’re starting to say, what can they do, what do you think they are able to achieve? What are your hopes, then? Then you’ve got a kind of turn and something that’s a bit more positive.’ (EP2)

When I started to develop the Capabilities Profile I considered these comments and sought ways of integrating this emphasis on strengths, which originates in positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), into the consultation approach. I concluded it would be important to structure the approach to focus on those valued capability areas the child being discussed might be doing well in, where their strengths might lie, before moving on to areas where they may be experiencing difficulty. Furthermore, I decided to incorporate language such as ‘What are your hopes for the child?’ as a more positive form of words for discussing areas where they may be experiencing more difficulty.
Reflecting on the draft format of this Capabilities Profile in supervision with my professional tutor, revealed its connection with person-centred planning (PCP) approaches (Murray & Sanderson, 2007). I designed the Profile so that the name of the child could be written at the centre, the first concentric ring of shapes was for recording positives and strengths relating to each capability area, and the outer ring for recording hopes or areas of difficulty.

Each valued capability area was associated with particular statements (themes), and so I used these to develop sets of questions for use in structuring the consultation alongside the Profile (See Appendix 15 & 16).
**Table 17**

**St Anne’s Consultation Questions for the Capability of Relationships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valued Capability</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary Codes</strong></td>
<td>Having a family that helps you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having other people to love and care about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having friends to play with and who will help you with things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not being bullied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having teachers to talk nicely to you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Consultation Questions**

- *Who are this child’s most important relationships with?*
- *Do they have opportunities to spend time with these people?*
- *Do they have opportunities to show their love and care for these people?*
- *What are circumstances like for the child’s family?*
- *Are the family able to provide help and support for the child at the moment?*
- *Does the child have friends in school?*
- *Do they have opportunities to play with their friends, both in school and outside it?*
- *Do the other children at school help and support the child?*
- *Does the child have the opportunity to be safe from bullying?*
- *How is the child’s relationship with their class teacher?*

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**St John’s Secondary School.** I repeated the same process of analysis on the diamond ranking documents from the second session of the St John’s focus group. My results suggested that five capability areas (the initial codes) were valued by the participants: Affiliation, Practical Reason, Emotion, Control Over One’s Environment and Senses Imagination and Thought.
Table 18
St John's Valued Capabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Selective Code</th>
<th>Valued Capability</th>
<th>Example Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFFILIATION</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Having a nice, responsible, caring family that you enjoy spending time with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Having a loyal, trustworthy group of friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Being friends with and accepting other people who are different from yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRACTICAL REASON</td>
<td>Mistakes</td>
<td>Being able to make memories and mistakes you can learn from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMOTION</td>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>Being able to experience all the emotions that give life meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL OVER ONES</td>
<td>Voicing Opinions</td>
<td>Having the freedom to voice your opinions and be listened to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENSES, IMAGINATION,</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Being able to get a good education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND THOUGHT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I noticed that the capability of Affiliation contained several different distinct aspects that were all ranked as important by the participants, for this reason I decided to separate these out into three different capability areas: Family, Friendships, and Acceptance, to best represent the groups priorities. As with the results of the focus group at St Anne’s I used these valued capability areas to inform another version of the Capabilities Profile for consultations at St John’s, and associated consultation questions (See Appendix 16.)
Figure 18
St John's Capabilities Profile framework
Chapter Five: Analysis

This chapter outlines the themes emerging from my analysis of the focus group discussions with EPs and school staff who took part in the consultations during phase two, and the annotated consultation resource documents also from phase two. These were analysed using a thematic analysis approach (Clark & Braun, 2012; Bryman, 2016). 337 codes were identified, forming a network of 21 sub-themes and six themes. This theme structure is set out in the theme map in Figure 20.

Figure 19

Example of Annotated St Anne’s Capabilities Profile framework

5.1 Summary of Themes

The theme of ‘Working with Education Experts’ captures the portrayal of the role of expert advice giving in inclusive education, that could manifest in either a collaborative or more dictatorial form. The professional experiences of EPs and teachers when attempting to promote inclusion that were described by participants is reflected in the theme ‘Being Inclusive’. This encapsulates the role of interventions, data collection and monitoring, the need to manage opposing views and the emotional demands of inclusive practice. ‘Being Inclusive’ related to the behaviours and activities of the
professionals, i.e. what the adults do and experience when they attempt to include. This reflects a definition of inclusive practice as being about making changes to the context in which learning takes place in order to better accommodate diverse learners (Barton, 1997; Slee, 2010). That is to say that it is what the adults around the child do to adapt the environment and their own behaviour that influences the extent of inclusion. Whereas ‘Inclusion Factors’ are those aspects of the child and their circumstances that impact on the extent to which they are able to be meaningfully included in the classroom and in learning. This is modelled on the idea of conversion factors, those personal, social or environmental factors that individuals use to convert resources into functionings (Robeyns, 2017). Similarly, Inclusion Factors encompassed those factors personal to the individual, such as skills or life experiences, as well as social, classroom and structural factors that influence educational functioning, and the extent of the learner being included in classroom learning. The theme of ‘Focusing on the Individual’ captures perceptions of the various effects of using a capabilities-informed lens to analyse the individual child. This included the importance of focusing on strengths and individualised goals that acted to bring about a change in understanding about the individual. The intensive focus on the individual was found to be in tension with the competing need to consider and meet the needs of the class as a group, and potentially risked being too individualistic, overlooking important social or community priorities. Similar challenges to the use of the Capabilities Approach in EP practice were contained in the theme of the ‘Difficult Issue of Choice’. This reflected both the perceived value and importance of individual choice and agency, alongside concerns surrounding the constraints on individuals’ ability to exercise their agency and make meaningful choices and particular worries about the risks associated with the use of the concept of choice in relation to children. Finally, ‘Practical Implementation Issues’ as a theme reflects a number of considerations and predictions made by EP participants relating to the application of the Capabilities Approach. This included its links to existing psychology, the need to develop further the specific tools used in this research, and the possibility that the conception of human wellbeing offered by the Capabilities Approach might be overwhelming broad and therefore practically unmanageable in day to day practice.
Figure 20
Theme Map

- Focusing on the Individual
  - Individual Strengths
  - Balancing Individual and Group Needs
  - Too Individualistic
  - Individual Goals
  - Thinking Differently About Individuals

- Working with Education Experts
  - Collaborating
  - Dictating
  - Data
  - Managing Opposing Views
  - Interventions
  - Emotional Demands

- Being Inclusive

- Inclusion Factors
  - Structural Constraints
  - Personal Factors
  - Social Factors
  - Classroom Factors
  - Children's Choice-Making
  - Shades of Choice
  - Choosing A Life We Value
  - Developing the Approach
  - Linked to Psychology
  - Overwhelmingly Broad

- Difficult Issue of Choice
  - Family Relationships
  - Relationships at School

- Practical Implementation Issues
  - Skills
  - Emotional Life
  - Life Experiences
  - Physical and Sensory
5.2 Description of Themes

5.2.1 Theme: Working with Education Experts

This theme explains the portrayal of experiences of working with external professionals or ‘outside agencies’ to support inclusion. Experiences of consultation during this research were contrasted with teachers’ other experiences of working with external education professionals. EPs discussed the function of professional expertise in society generally, and the function of their own expertise in responding to disability. These descriptions fell into two broad types and were defined by the two sub-themes of Dictating and Collaborating.

The sub-theme of Collaborating explores the ways all participants described the consultation process. For teachers they were less ‘formal’ (T3) than other meetings, and more like ‘coaching’ (T2) or a ‘conversation’ (T2).

‘We were able to share ideas and just feel like you can actually open up and say, ‘Well, look, this is what’s actually happening, this is how I feel about it, but I don’t know how to sort it’ and just sharing ideas and feeding off each other’ (T1)

EPs observed that annotating the consultation frameworks during the meetings helped make the process more accessible to those participating in it, referring to it as a form of ‘joint formulation’ (Field Notes).

The sub-theme of Dictating relates to more negative aspects of working together with professionals or experts, whose knowledge and advice was often cast as exercising an oppressive or ‘dictating’ (T1, EP1) function. Schools staff felt dictated to by professional reports, written by external professionals who often didn’t meet them or ask them questions about the child, instead providing more generic advice that rarely focused on the child’s strengths.

‘Normally we just get sent reports from them meeting the child, or they’ll meet the parent and the child, but still not meet the teacher.’ (SENCO)

‘They don’t necessarily ask you about the child that they’re looking at.’ (T1)

These reports, and the rare times when they did meet external professionals, were felt to generally present the child in an entirely negative light ‘Saying your child can’t do this, they can’t do that, they can’t do that’ (T2). Teachers perceived these encounters as being ‘Made to feel like “You’re doing this wrong, you need to do this”’ (T3). This negative emphasis had the effect of making them feel ‘a bit rubbish as a teacher’ (T2).
There was awareness amongst EPs of the risk of dictating via their own professional expertise. Either by enforcing their own values about education or inclusion onto others, or by labelling children’s deficits. Labels were recognised as serving a function in allowing communities to ‘keep themselves safe… from gossip, from judgement’ (EP3), from problems that are ‘too difficult to deal with’, (EP2) perhaps thereby ‘excusing’ (EP2) them from responsibility or guilt for children’s difficulties. Concerns were raised that the concept of capabilities might come to form another type of deficit labelling with negative consequences.

‘I also wondered about the capabilities, whether they’re fixed or not as well…there’s always that question of are we putting this down and then that’s their fixed label… and then they present themselves in that light forever and it kind of creates their identity.’ (EP2)

5.2.2 Theme: Focusing on the Individual

This theme describes the focus on the individual that emerged through the capabilities-informed consultation approach and the ways this focus was characterised by participants, both as something positive and helpful, but also that might bring challenges. The sub-theme Individual Strengths captures the many ways that a picture of children’s capability strengths was developed in the consultations, and to the important function this had for the teachers.

‘You, kind of, asked what his strengths were, what he likes doing, as opposed to saying, “What can and can’t he do?” And obviously, I suppose these children were picked, because there’s probably a number of things that they can’t do as well as other children, but rather than going straight in with that, it was “Oh, so what did they do well in? What do they enjoy doing?”’ (T3)

The ‘strength based’ (EP2) nature of the CA was also noted by the EP participants. Who felt that this would be likely to ‘help the conversation to shift to something that’s more positive for the child’ (EP2).

The sub-theme of Individual Goals relates to the positive portrayal of the time spent crafting a specific and individualised ‘end goal’ (T3) for the child in question.

‘And it was that ideal world question. In an ideal world, what would this child be like for you? And then you kind of got everything centred around sort of that one area.’ (T2)

These factors contributed to the teachers’ sense that their thinking was changed as a result of the consultations, as encapsulated in the sub-theme Thinking Differently.
**About Individuals.** Teacher participants described the process of *‘digging deeper’* (T3) to understand the *‘whole child’* (SENCO) through the consultation. This revealed aspects of the child and their experiences that might usually hidden or go unconsidered, giving a *‘different perspective’* (T3) on their needs. This helped to remove their assumptions about the children’s life experiences, that might impact on their ability to learn.

‘I wouldn't say a lot has changed other than the fact that I'm not assuming, not just for Tom, but for the whole class, I'm not assuming any more that they would have experienced things that I've done with my kids.’ (T1)

This shift in perspective was felt to have led to a shift in attitude *‘subconsciously’* (T2) that meant they altered the way they interacted with children at times of difficulty. The possibilities for changing thinking about individuals was echoed by the EPs, who suggested that the Capabilities Approach might offer a broader perspective on children, beyond a narrow focus on learning.

‘And with the traveller families or these different cultures what’s the purpose of their education… We sometimes get fixed on, “How’s their learning in Year 3? Are they going to meet their levels? Let’s focus on their reading.” But what’s the ultimate purpose.’ (EP3)

For teachers the intensive focus on one individual, whilst helpful, was in tension with their need to balance individual needs of the class group as a whole. This tension is contained in the sub-theme **Balancing Individual and Group Needs.**

‘You do have to, as hard as it is, think of them all as individuals and when you’re planning a lesson.’ (T3)

‘You can't physically just focus on one child at a time, you have to focus on the whole.’ (T1)

There was a sense of the class group being on a journey, and the teacher’s role being to monitor where each learner is in relation to the others, how fast they are moving, and whether any are *‘lost’* (T4). Some learners *‘coast along’* (T3) and others might *‘get further behind’* (T4).
EP participants portrayed this emphasis on issues at the level of the individual as something potentially problematic. The sub-theme **Too Individualistic** captures some concerns that the Capabilities Approach, as a model is ‘very individualistic’ (EP2) being ‘about me and my’ (EP2) or seeing wellbeing from ‘an egocentric point of view’ (EP2). They worried that the individualistic nature of the concept of a capability might negatively affect an individual.

‘And then does that become a pressure, another thing in life that has to be achieved?’ (EP3)

This was felt to be particularly difficult as many of the capabilities in Nussbaum’s ten central capabilities list were viewed as being beyond an individual’s control, ultimately being linked to cultural or political circumstances, that might be beyond the scope of applied psychological practice.

**5.2.3 Theme: Difficult Issue of Choice**

This theme explains both the importance of individual choice and agency that emerges from a capabilities-informed approach to consultation but also some problematic issues associated with the concept of choice, particularly in relation to children’s choice-making. EP participants felt the Capabilities Approach supported an understanding of the way individuals differ from each other in their conceptions of “the good life”, in terms of their capabilities, and therefore have different motivations for behaviour. This is encapsulated by the sub-theme **Choosing A Life We Value**.

‘So, you’re exploring, not only what are they able to do, and what are we hoping that they can achieve or do, but also what’s their desire, their drive, their motivations about.’ (EP2)

However, the concept of choice was portrayed as problematic by some of the EPs, and this is described by the sub-theme **Shades of Choice**. The various ways in which choices are ‘situated’ (EP1) and therefore limited by a person’s context was an important issue for the group. This meant that whilst choice was seen as important, in terms of motivation, it was problematic when it came to issues that were beyond an individual's control or restricted by social or environmental factors. The question of whether choices were made ‘consciously’ (EP3) was important for some, who suggested that valid choice-making depended on a person having their ‘full capabilities’ (EP3) and being free from ‘coercion’ (EP3).
The sub-theme of *Children’s Choice-Making* also suggests a tension inherent in the portrayal of choice, particularly in relation to children. Incorporating children’s views during consultation was seen as valuable by the EPs, and children’s choices, particularly in terms of their friendship choices, were a feature of the consultation discussions with teachers. However, concerns were raised about the misuse of the concept of choice, where choice might be attributed to children as a way of attributing blame for difficult behaviours that might not truly be within their control.

‘I’ve heard it in a meeting, “Oh he chooses”, you know, this four year old chooses to not engage... so often I'll just find they put the emphasis on that word ‘choosing’ and I wonder if it’s because it's pushing it back into a within-child model.’ (EP3)

### 5.2.4 Theme: Inclusion Factors

This theme explains the range of different factors that were identified through the consultations as important contributing factors to children’s inclusion and participation in the mainstream classroom. A number of these factors related to the concept of personal conversion factors, from the CA, and are reflected in the sub-themes of: *Skills, Emotional Life, Life Experiences*, and *Physical and Sensory*. The sub-theme of *Life Experiences* describes the prevalent role that children’s personal history and day to day experiences were felt to have on their educational capabilities.

‘We identified that actually it’s her home life and her life experiences that are impacting on her abilities in school.’ (T1)

As well as relating to the child’s having relevant life experiences in order to contextualise their learning, this sub-theme also describes the impact of adverse life experiences and their impact on wellbeing and educational capability.

‘I know home life is awful. I honestly understand, with the amount of things they tell you, and the amount of CP cases and everything.’ (T3)

*Skills* relates to children’s need to develop some specific skills to be able to achieve the hoped-for educational functioning arising from the consultation. These skills were most often related either to literacy or to skills of social interaction.
Children were often felt to rely on certain emotional conversion factors for educational functioning, as encapsulated in the *Emotional Life* sub-theme. As well as having the language and sense of emotional safety to express their feelings to those around them at times of difficulty, children were believed to need to experience enjoyment and ample self-confidence to learn.

‘Particularly for Anna who spoke about, making her more aware of her emotions, because that was that main target that we came up with for her, was handling challenge.’ (T2)

The sub-theme of *Physical and Sensory* describes those medical or sensory impairment factors that were identified through the consultation as impacting on the children’s functioning in the classroom. Other sub-themes were related to the concept of ‘social conversion factors’ and fell into two broad types: *Relationships at School*, and *Family Relationships*.

*Relationships at School* reflects the relevance of both peer relationships, which were often viewed as a challenge for children with difficulties in learning, as well as the need for caring and consistent support from adults at school to function well. The children focused on in the consultation were often described as lacking friendships or other children to play with, or as finding it difficult to get along well with other children, who might be overly dominant towards them or lead them into trouble. The attitude of all school adults towards children experiencing difficulties in learning was felt to be important by the EPs who characterised inclusion as being ‘loved’ by their school.

‘They might know that they are part of that school and that they are, ultimately, loved by that school, as who they are.’ (EP2)

The sub-theme of *Family Relationships* describes the various ways that family relationships and circumstances were perceived as important conversion factors for children’s educational capabilities. This included parents’ own academic abilities or attitudes to schooling that support the child’s learning.

‘They need to go home with homework every day. But we know that won’t happen.’ (SENCO)

‘Bring your child to school. Give them a chance.’ (T3)
The nature of relationships within the family was also a feature of consultation discussions that was perceived to influence children’s availability for learning.

**Classroom Factors** is a sub-theme that relates to the way aspects of or exposure to the physical environment of the school or classroom that influence educational functioning. It included the actual amount of time spent in the classroom, and the impact of missing out on this, either through school absence or being withdrawn for educational interventions.

‘I’ve got one in the class at the moment who comes in for a day then off for four days, comes in for two days and off for three days and, and then obviously she gets frustrated and I get frustrated because I can’t physically bring them to school?’ (T3)

It also describes the kind of practical and material resources needed to support the learning of diverse learners. This was a conversion factor that was particularly visible to the EP participants.

‘Sometimes you’ve got the will there, but not the means, the resourcing, because actually it does take a lot of time for the teacher to plan, a lot resourcing to make that work.’ (EP2)

The sub-theme of **Structural Constraints**, again, a concept borrowed from capability theory, describes those aspects of education policy, local educational systems and cultural norms related to schooling and inclusion that impact on the child’s educational functioning. This sub-theme emerged mainly from the EP focus groups, who noted the lack of ‘accountability’ (EP2) for the inclusion of struggling learners resulting from the change to academies.

‘I think also the changes to academies and difference in the allocation of resources has meant inclusion now isn’t a priority for a lot of education settings.’ (EP1)

There was a sense that inclusion was a kind of ‘virtual word’ (EP1) or ‘zeitgeist’ (EP3) in the local area, that was often name-checked in changes to job titles, for example, but didn’t translate into tangible practices.

‘There was a big push in the county on inclusion a few years or a number of years ago now, and there was inclusive practice, and there was inclusive
EXPLORING CAPABILITIES

practitioners and there was inclusive schools, you know, and it was like an award that you got.’ (EP1)

Other cultural or systemic factors specific to the local area were cited as relevant structural constraints on inclusion. These factors included the presence of selective schools in the region.

‘I think selective system in (the county) makes inclusion extremely difficult’ (EP4)

The influence of attitudes and whole school culture were also portrayed as making a significant contribution to the educational inclusion of individual pupils.

‘What you do end up having is, some schools have a really positive ethos, trying desperately, get a reputation, and then parents will then know, “Oh that’s the school that really wants to try and, you know, support my child the best”’ (EP2)

5.2.5 Theme: Being Inclusive

This theme explores the aspects of the professional practice of both teachers and EPs that were significant in relation to the inclusion of learners with educational difficulties. The sub-theme of Emotional Demands explores the ways that teachers related emotionally to their pupils, especially those who may be struggling.

‘I think there’s quite an emotional kind of tie here with them. Because there’s quite a lot of emotional things that go on in their lives. So sometimes they’ll just have to offload that onto us. And then you’ve got to be like, obviously, we deal with that type of thing. But at the end of the day, we’re still there for learning as well. So sometimes you’re a little bit torn’ (T3)

They described their efforts to manage the dilemmas posed by these emotional challenges by considering and clarifying their role as a teacher. The participants made many references to the role interventions played in meeting the needs of struggling learners. The sub-theme of Interventions explores a tension in how these were perceived by the school staff, who at times acknowledged the ways they helped learners to progress, but at other times felt that interventions took children out of the classroom and actually increased the gap between them and their peers.

‘With all the interventions that are given, that creates more gaps.’ (T1)
The large volume of interventions expected to be in place for certain children was linked with the role of professional expertise, whereby one of the dictating functions of such expertise was to insist on long lists of interventions that school staff felt were unmanageable, as well as potentially unhelpful for the child.

‘You can’t feasibly fit all of the recommendations in, there’s just not enough hours in the day. Not enough strength in the human body.’ (T1)

In contrast, participants felt the consultations helped to identify ‘things you could do’ (T3) to help the child that were more ‘manageable’ (SENCO), feasible, and therefore more achievable, than interventions received through professional reports. The recommendations in such reports were often felt to fail to take account of the teacher’s perspective on the child, or the specific circumstances and resources available in the particular school or classroom, leading to situations where ‘wires might possibly get crossed’ (SENCO), or to be exclusively based on expertise and not be specific to the child in question.

‘Professionals are coming across as, like, they’ve just got a job to do, to tick boxes or, you know, “in my professional knowledge, I know these interventions have worked in the past for other children”, but they don’t necessarily ask you about the child that they’re looking at. (Year 5)

The sub-theme of Data explains the emphasis given to the role of data collection and reporting in teachers’ professional experiences and particularly in relation to their efforts to support children with educational difficulties. There was a resistance towards a tendency to perceive children as data or to judge children’s educational wellbeing and therefore teacher’s performance based on data outcomes. Teacher’s described their role in defending children against the ‘data drivers’ who insist ‘that we have to hit targets’. Children with educational difficulties were associated with large volumes of data collection demanded of the teachers. This kind of data collection was seen in an ambivalent light by participants as being somehow necessary to meeting their needs but also at times irrelevant or unhelpful to them as teachers.

‘You’re ticking a box, aren’t you… although we are doing it because we care about the child, but you’re doing it because you’ve been asked to do it, there’s a deadline.’ (T3)

‘You just send all your information off, thinking, ’What’s happened?’ … You think actually, what was all that work for. Has it made a difference, or has it not made a difference?’ (T1)
The sub-theme of **Managing Opposing Views** describes the EP participants accounts of conflicting or ‘clashing’ views about issues of disability and inclusion that they encounter during their professional practice, and their positioning of their role as one of responding to and managing these opposing views in the pursuit of inclusion.

### 5.2.6 Theme: Practical Implementation Issues

This theme describes the possible limitations or considerations raised by the EPs surrounding putting the Capabilities Approach into use in their practice. The participants connected some of the CA ideas and concepts to existing psychology (sub-theme **Linked to Psychology**), specifically the needs-based approach of Maslow, assessments of adaptive functioning, and existing frameworks used in educational psychology work. The sub-theme **Overwhelmingly Broad** relates to the sense in which the broad perspective offered by a Capabilities Approach might actually be too broad, and too overwhelming to be manageable in educational psychological practice that is, in general, addressing school-related issues.

‘I’m just feeling overwhelmed.’ (EP3)

The sub-theme **Developing the Approach** describes the various ways put forward by the EP participants for building on the consultation approach developed through this study. These were around altering the language to make the consultation approach more accessible, considering the kinds of presenting concerns the approach might be useful for, and matching the approach more closely to concerns about learning.
Chapter Six: Discussion

In this study I have explored the ways that theoretical ideas from the Capabilities Approach can inform the development of two frameworks for use in EP consultation: the Supporting Capabilities framework and the Capabilities Profile. Through analysis of data collected from the consultations themselves, as well as reflective focus group discussions with EPs and teachers, I aimed to develop an understanding of how the use of these frameworks in consultation can address issues in inclusive education practice. This chapter presents a discussion of the themes arising from this analysis in relation to the proposed research questions.

6.1 Research Question 1: How can the Capabilities Approach be applied in EP consultation practice?

To address this research question, I will examine how the two consultation frameworks developed in this study relate to existing methods of EP practice.

6.1.1 Supporting Capabilities Framework

The Supporting Capabilities framework draws on the conceptualisation of diversity and disability in the Capabilities Approach, to form the basis for a model of consultation. This framework provides a structured problem-solving approach that can guide the discussion of specific concerns during consultation.

Analysis of the language in use during EP consultations suggests that problem-solving talk makes up the greatest proportion of their content (Kennedy et al., 2008). Teachers value consultation most as a problem-solving process (Nugent et al., 2014). Developing alternative consultation approaches must focus on how new models can facilitate the process of problem solving. The Supporting Capabilities framework constitutes a clear structure, both visual and in the form of a questioning route, that can guide the discussion from the identification and clarification of a hoped-for outcome (in terms of specific functionings and capabilities), through a consideration of the needs (necessary conversion factors) of all children to achieve that outcome, and onto the individual needs (absence of conversion factors) of the child, helping to reveal a picture of what support may be needed. Time spent identifying and clarifying the hoped-for outcome for a child is viewed as the most useful aspect of consultation (Wood, 2006). Donald Schön emphasises this ‘problem-setting’ as the most essential aspect of problem-solving activities undertaken by professionals, who often find themselves in
situations which are ‘confusing “messes”’, where the parameters of a problem situation are unclear (Schön, 1983, p.42). The main task of consultation, seen in light of this, is the clear and successful identification of a problem, as the first step towards resolving it. Focusing on these individualised goals was noted by participants in this study as a key strength of this capabilities-informed consultation approach. They described this emphasis on what was termed the ‘ideal world question’ as a key part of what helped shift their thinking about the individual child being discussed. Setting the problem in terms of a hoped-for outcome is reminiscent of elements of Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), of which a crucial focus is the establishment and detailed description of the clients ‘preferred future’ that then provides the momentum for the intervention (De Shazer et al., 2007). Principles of SFBT are prominent amongst the range of theoretical approaches described by EPs as underpinning their consultation practice (Kennedy et al., 2008).

The British Psychological Society places problem-solving at the heart of effective educational psychology practice (BPS, 2019). In particular the society requires EPs to be able to ‘demonstrate the use of a transparent, systematic-problem solving approach’ in consultation practice (BPS, 2019, p.17). Executive frameworks aim to provide a structure for professional problem solving. Such frameworks have a long history in educational psychology, those most well known in contemporary practice are the Problem-Analysis cycle (Monsen et al., 1998; Monsen & Frederickson, 2008), the Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action (COMOIRA) (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008), and the BPS Division of Educational and Child Psychology’s Framework for Assessment and Intervention (1999). These executive frameworks are often an integral part of EP training courses, and are intended to assist the EP to work in a manner that acknowledges the complexity of children’s situations seen through the lens of social constructionist epistemology and ecological systems theory (Wicks, 2013). Such frameworks are in a sense “owned” by the practitioner, they help to structure and guide their information gathering, decision-making, and intervention, and can be applied to any aspect of practice, not merely consultation.

The Supporting Capabilities framework developed in this study is, in contrast, a more specific tool. It is designed as a shared, collaborative approach, specifically for use in consultation discussions between EPs and teachers. It is highly transparent and follows a systematic process. It is more a prescriptive framework for use within the consultation itself, than a professional framework that can encompass consultation as one of a number of practices or functions. This is consistent with Wagner’s contention
that consultation practice is strengthened by the use of frameworks than can assist the process and also serve as a record of the discussion (Wagner, 2000).

Other specific problem-solving strategies used in EP practice have been explored through previous research. The Circle of Adults problem-solving model is intended for use with a group of adults concerned about a child’s emotional wellbeing, which is designed to harness multiple perspectives in order to seek possible solutions (Wilson & Newton, 2006). The Circle of Adults is reportedly experienced by school staff as cooperative and collaborative, similar to the reflections of participants in this research on the experience of capabilities-informed consultations (Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015). The Circle of Adults model consists of a series of ten clear stages. Unlike other models it does not rely on extensive theoretical knowledge and is therefore more accessible and widely applicable (Bennett & Monsen, 2011). The Supporting Capabilities framework also contains a series of clear stages to the problem-solving process, accompanied by supporting questions, and so shares something of this quality of accessibility in terms of process. However, the contribution made by theoretical concepts from the Capabilities Approach to the model, and the novelty of these ideas within educational psychology may present a barrier to its wider applicability as those using it may require familiarity with capabilities concepts that are as present largely unknown.

The Supporting Capabilities framework offers a problem-solving model that can be used in consultation with an individual teacher, rather than requiring a group. Therefore, in its current form, it lacks the benefits of explicitly group-based problem-solving models such as the Circle of Adults, or the similar Solution Circles model (Forest & Pearpoint, 1996). These are thought to offer social support to those taking part in tackling difficult issues and help to create a sense of shared focus and cohesive group identity which contributes to a ‘ripple effect’ beyond the meeting of the group itself (James & Leyden, 2010, p.61). However, convening groups of staff members or multi-agency professionals for problem-solving discussions can often present a challenge in the busy day to day life of schools and local authority work.

As demonstrated in this study, the Supporting Capabilities framework can be used within EP consultations with individual members of staff and as such may offer a practical means for shifting perspectives that does not rely on bringing together a large group of adults.
Coaching approaches are receiving increasing attention as an approach relevant to educational psychology (Adams, 2016, Fanshawe, 2019). Coaching offers a problem-solving model that can also be used by EPs with individual members of school staff. Specific models such as the ten-phase coaching model proposed by Monsen and Cameron (2002) are thought to be easy to understand and implement (Bennett & Monsen, 2011). Monsen and Cameron provide a prompt sheet summarising each phase for use by both coach and coachee (2002). The use of a shared visual structure such as the Supporting Capabilities framework during the consultations in this research, similarly promotes understanding and ease of implementation, as well as facilitating a sense of cooperation and collaboration, thought to be an important aspect of EP problem-solving approaches (Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015). Coaching depends on developing longer term relationships between coach and coachee over multiple sessions in order to address professional problems and issues faced by the coachee (Adams, 2016; 2017). Coaching models are therefore less suitable for shorter term or even one-off consultation meetings than the frameworks developed in this research, and are more focused on professional problems and development of the staff member, than issues surrounding a specific child.

**6.1.2 Capabilities Profile Framework**

This study has presented a method by which children’s views on their valued capabilities can contribute to a model of consultation – the Capabilities Profile framework. Each unique version of this framework, created for each participating school, provided a structure for consultation meetings that may shed light on important aspects of quality of life in terms that are potentially reflective of the views of a group of pupils drawn from within the school community.

Affiliation emerged one of the most valued capabilities across both sets of pupil focus groups and is reflected in the capability areas of: Family, Friendship and Acceptance for the secondary aged group, and Relationships for the primary aged group. Nussbaum cites Affiliation as one of two central capabilities she describes as ‘architectonic’, by which she means they underpin and are woven through many other capabilities (2011, p.39). She argues that relationships of many kinds – family, friendships, communities – play a key role in structuring decisions made about public policy. This, and the centrality of Affiliation amongst the pupil participants, suggests that considerations of the nature of an individual pupil’s relationships, within the family, amongst peers at school, and with the school adults, may be essential to and adequate
understanding how other capabilities may be expanded in and through education. It is of particular note that the capability of ‘having a family that helps you’ was ranked as highly important across nearly all participants in the primary aged group. This may have significance for EPs and other school practitioners as it seems to foreground considerations of family circumstances and relationships when seeking to promote optimal educational outcomes and wellbeing for children in this age group. It also highlights the necessity for collaborative working partnerships between families and school professionals in promoting these outcomes.

The other ‘architectonic’ capability is Practical Reason. This is defined by Nussbaum as ‘Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s life’ (2011, p.34). Being able to voice opinions, make one’s own decisions, and follow one’s own interests were centrally important capabilities for the secondary-aged participants, all of which reflect the overarching capability of Practical Reason. Nussbaum argues that Practical Reason pervades many other capabilities as essential to human dignity amongst adults. She gives the example that being well-nourished but not empowered to plan and make decisions about one’s health is not commensurate with human dignity and amounts to being cared for, as if an infant and not an autonomous adult.

The importance of capabilities associated with Practical Reason amongst this older pupil participant group suggests that this adult capability is beginning to emerge as centrally important for the wellbeing of secondary aged pupils. This is consistent with existing developmental theory, specifically separation-individuation as a key task of adolescent development, i.e. a young person’s need to begin to operate with increasing autonomy and self-determination, whilst maintaining supportive bonds with family members (Noller et al., 2015).

EPs participating in this study identified the possibilities offered by the Capabilities Approach for conceptualising individual choice and autonomy. They suggested that supporting individuals to be able to choose a life they have reason to value, by interpreting each of the capabilities for themselves and choosing which they value, and are therefore motivated towards, as part of the good life, could contribute to applied psychology.

The growing recognition of person-centred planning approaches in education reflects the capability of Practical Reason and the individual’s need to engage in reflection on
and planning for one's positive quality of life. Person centred approaches are a family of techniques and strategies that aim to support individuals by eliciting their views on what is important to them in order to facilitate their inclusion in society (Murray & Sanderson, 2007). The 2015 SEND Code of Practice puts person-centred approaches at the heart of meeting the needs of pupils identified with SEN. Having the necessary agency to choose a life one values is an essential part of the Capability Approach. This is evident in Nussbaum’s specific capability of Practical Reason but is also an integral part of what distinguishes capabilities from functionings (Robeyns, 2017).

The Capabilities Approach gives weight to the importance of including young people in planning and decision making as an essential aspect of inclusion and good quality of life. This was supported by the emphasis given to various aspects of Practical Reason by young participants in this research. The Capabilities Approach may also offer methodological tools for eliciting and including young people’s views and voices in education.

Making Action Plans (MAPs) and Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) are two widely used person-centred planning techniques that have been applied and researched in education contexts (Wood et al., 2019). These each consist of a structured series of stages for a group-based planning meeting involving the child or young person, and the use of graphic recording as well as discussion. Both include eliciting “the dream” as the essential first stage of the process. A key motivation for the Capabilities Approach is an attempt to overcome the issue of adaptive preferences faced by other evaluative frameworks for human wellbeing (Robeyns, 2017). This issue is focused on the observation that individual preferences are not innate but rather develop in response to social conditions. When these conditions put some things out of reach for some people, they learn not to want those things, and adapt their preferences and perspectives on what a good life should entail. This presents a problem for the idea of “the dream” as a guiding principle for person-centred planning. By setting out a list of basic entitlements in the form of the central capabilities, Nussbaum aims to provide the tools for communities to establish a threshold level of wellbeing rights for all its citizens, to avoid basic evaluations of the wellbeing of individuals on subjective levels of satisfaction of preferences (Nussbaum, 2011).

These issues seem to relate to concerns that eliciting and including pupil views in EP practice runs the risk of becoming “tokenistic”, a gesture without clear content or meaning (Aston & Lambert, 2010; E. Harding & Atkinson, 2009). The Capabilities
Profile may provide a structured content framework for exploring the valuable aspects of wellbeing for the individual child, from a child’s eye perspective, that moves beyond asking them about their preferences or hopes for the future, to addressing specific functionings and capabilities.

In the Capabilities Approach it is acknowledged that different capabilities will be differently interpreted and differently valued by different communities. This is another way, besides the concept of conversion factors, in which diversity forms an integral part of the Capabilities Approach. It is therefore essential that any use of the Capabilities Approach is adapted to suit the particular community and purpose it is intended for.

In developing the Capabilities Profile framework in this study I have attempted to find a method for adapting the consultation framework to reflect the priorities of pupils in each school community through participatory activities with children and young people, thus enabling consultation attendees to explore the overall wellbeing of the child from the perspective of children in general, that is likely to have led to a more comprehensive understanding of the child’s overall wellbeing at school.

Listening to pupil views has been acknowledged as having an important contribution to make to developing teaching practice (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). Some research has begun to show how listening to pupil views and voices can become part of a model of EP practice in supporting schools (Pearson & Howe, 2017).

6.1.3 Capabilities-Informed Report Writing Formats

Each framework offered a useful structure for consultation discussions, both in terms of a questioning route and a graphic format for notetaking during the discussion. In addition, it was also possible to use each framework as the basis of a format in which to record the consultation in a report afterwards. In both participating schools, I was able to use the frameworks used in each consultation to create a simple report for each child or young person discussed, that summarised the main points of discussion and any actions identified. These can be seen in Appendix 25. These were sent out to the key contact in each school as a more formal record of the consultation. My hope had been to evaluate the impact of these through a further school staff focus group. Such a focus group had been scheduled to take place at St Anne’s Primary School at the time the covid-19 pandemic had begun to have implications for school visits, and was subsequently cancelled by the school. Despite this, it is worth noting that the informal
feedback on this capabilities-informed form of report from the key contact at St Anne’s was overwhelmingly positive.

Thanks for the reports - I love the layout, so easy to interpret. The recommendations are excellent & some really simple things to do that we wouldn’t have thought of that will make a real difference - thank you.

– Inclusion Manager at St Anne’s Primary School

The resulting reports enabled me to provide formal, written advice, in a manner that stayed to some extent true to the principles of collaboration and transparency that underpin consultation. The need to stay close to the content that was generated during the consultation itself, and recorded as notes on each framework, meant that the report stayed focused and relevant, whilst also being time efficient to produce.

6.2 Research Question 2: How does taking a Capabilities Approach to consultation contribute to inclusion in schools?

Through this research the views and reflections of key stakeholders regarding the possibilities offered by a Capabilities Approach to consultation for promoting inclusive practice in schools were gathered. In addressing this research question, I will explore how the consultation approach developed and used in this study can respond to or resolve existing issues of inclusion and inclusive practice.

As identified through the literature review it is important to acknowledge and consider means of addressing power imbalances inherent in the knowledge-producing activities of professional EP practice (Sewell, 2016). Incorporating pupil perspectives into a context-specific, capabilities-informed consultation framework, the Capabilities Profile, offered some means for redressing this imbalance.

Sewell (2016) draws on Harding’s standpoint theory (Harding, 1991) to argue for the crucial importance of including the potentially marginalised voice of the child in EP work. Standpoint theory holds that epistemologically oppressed individuals hold a reverse advantage in that they see the social world as it really is, as they stand outside the dominant epistemic thinking that pervades the professions (Harding, 1991). The approach taken to developing the Capabilities Profile framework capitalises on this reverse advantage, making use of children’s views on the “good life” for all children, to
refine our understanding of how education in each school can promote quality of life and positive functioning for individual children.

Len Barton has described inclusion itself as being about ‘listening to unfamiliar voices’ (Barton, 1997, p.233). In a review of their own research over many years, Ainscow and Messiou argue that children’s views are an often-overlooked resource for addressing the inclusion agenda in schools (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018). They argue that facilitating engagement with pupil views in schools can provide ‘interruptions’ in teachers’ day to day professional practice that legitimately challenge the status quo and generate new ways of working that benefit all students (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018). These interruptions are much like the ‘experience of surprise’ on which reflection-in-action is argued to depend (Schön, 1983, p.56). Disrupting taken for granted assumptions and practices by listening to and reflecting on the views of children through the use of the Capabilities Profile framework may help to develop teachers’ inclusive practice.

The approach to consultation taken in this study may address unequal power dynamics between EPs and members of school staff, by constituting a more collaborative way of working, which was contrasted by participants with their other, more directive, interactions with external education professionals.

Such interactions typically took the form of receiving somewhat generic advice in the form of a report, that fails to take account of the child’s strengths, teacher knowledge of the child, of the possibilities or limitations of the school contexts. Teacher participants suggested the specific type of questioning used, and the informal quality of the capabilities-informed consultations supported them to feel they were not being ‘grilled’ and could instead ‘open up’ to sharing ideas. Furthermore, reflections from EP participants indicated that the use of visual consultation frameworks, as a shared focus for the discussion, might also serve to build rapport and support a sense of collaboration.

Farrell (2006) argues that inclusion in schools is dependent on developing such collaborative working relationships between EPs and teachers, or other education professionals. By taking a collaborative approach the consultations described in this study enabled the development of intervention plans that were felt to be more ‘feasible’, than those received through professional reports, matching the recommendations for supporting the child with the resources and limitations of the learning environment of the school. These were contrasted with school staff’s
perceptions of the long lists of interventions received in professional reports about individual children, many of which they felt weren’t possible to implement, nor were they specific to the child in question. Taking account of the systems and environmental contexts in which learning takes place, in this way, is an important component of inclusive thinking. Furthermore, by supporting teachers to devise adaptations to educational provision for children with barriers to learning that can easily and manageably be implemented within their school context is likely to have a more immediate, and potentially effective, impact on inclusive practice.

Key to the development of these more tailored intervention plans appeared to be the attention given to defining individualised capability goals for the child of concern. By establishing the direction they would like the child to go in, and what small steps of progress would look like, teachers were better able to attend to their specific developmental or learning needs outside of the context of the overall learning journey of the whole class, and the measurement of progress according to curriculum assessment data.

It would seem that the concept of Capabilities itself and adopting a structured approach to thinking together about what specifically it is hoped the child will able ‘to be or to do’ was a unique contribution to existing consultation approaches. This extends the emphasis on the ‘preferred future’ in solution-focused practice, an existing approach that is prevalent in EP consultation work, to highlight and more clearly develop a sense of what actual functioning adults around the child would like for them to achieve. In so doing, the consultation process sets up a ‘goal’ the barriers to which enable us to specify a ‘need’ that can be addressed.

The results of this study suggest that those teachers taking part in the consultations did experience a change in their thinking. Having the opportunity to dig deeper into the details of a child’s circumstances helped teachers to see the ‘whole child’ and removed their assumptions both about the child in question, and about learners in general. As a result of the consultation they reported an increased awareness of the individual needs of all pupils, and of their role in balancing these individual needs with the needs and requirements of the whole class group. Florian highlights that accommodating individual differences of all learners as part of ordinary teaching practice is an essential element of inclusive practice amongst mainstream teachers (Florian, 2012). This is in
contrast with an exclusive emphasis on the individual needs of particular named
groups of pupils, e.g. those identified with special educational needs.

Findings from this study also suggested that attempting to include struggling learners
can place an emotional demand on teachers. The more informal, conversational nature
of the capabilities consultations allowed teachers to reflect on their emotional
responses. Inclusive classrooms have the potential to contribute to teacher stress and
burnout, research has suggested that the more positive a teacher’s attitude to
inclusion, the more likely they are to experience workplace stress (Talmor et al., 2005).
Other research suggests that not all teachers in inclusive classrooms experience
similar levels of stress, and advocate for the need for ‘micro-contextual’ solutions, at an
individual school level, and deemphasises measures for reducing stress across the
profession as a whole (Weiss et al., 2019). Individual consultations with an EP may
provide just such an individual school level approach to promoting inclusion whilst also
attending to the emotional demands of teaching in inclusive classrooms.

Conceptualising difference in school consultations using the Supporting Capabilities
consultation framework provided an understanding of individual needs that takes
account of conversion factors that are both contingent and fixed, and at the personal,
social, and environmental level. In so doing, it provides a single framework which can
articulate educational inequality that does not overly emphasise causality either at the
level of individual deficits or social circumstances, integrating social and medical model
conceptualisations of difference and disability.

Despite this apparent utility of capabilities constructs in avoiding exclusively using
language of within-child deficit, EP participants did raise concerns about the possibility
that capability terms might come to form yet another version of deficit labels.
Describing an individual child as “lacking such-and-such capability” does seem to
imply, by virtue of the way in which the word “capability” is generally used, that the
child has an absence of some essential ability or characteristic. This risk cannot be
easily dismissed. As can be observed in the history of the SEN term which when
originally coined was intended to signify both disabilities and environmental
circumstances that can call for additional educational support, subtleties and subtle
intentions behind the use of certain language can shift over time in response to social
forces. I would contend that one possible safeguard against this slippage would be to
maintain a primary emphasis on outcomes, on the hoped for ‘beings and doings’, the
actual, valuable functionings that are wanted for the individual, clarifying this ahead of
seeking to ascertain the presence or absence of capacities of the individual to achieve that functioning.

As defined by the theme of Inclusion Factors, a range of factors influencing inclusion, were identified both at the level of personal characteristics as well as social and environmental circumstances. Although greater number of these factors were at the personal level, and included skills the child needed to develop, medical and sensory related issues, and emotional factors impacting learning, social and environmental factors also emerged from the consultations, and included the nature of the child’s relationships at school, both with peers and adults, the child’s family circumstances and relationships, and factors relating to the classroom environment itself. These frameworks therefore present a possible operationalisation of the social relational approach to disability put forward by Reindal (See Figure 3) (2008; 2009).

EPs identified managing opposing views relating to the concept of disability and the definition of inclusion as a key part of their role in working with schools and families. Ainscow and colleagues (2006) outline the many ways of defining and using the concept of inclusion, from a focus on learner characteristics (deficit categories), through broader characteristics (e.g. those ‘vulnerable to exclusion’) through to an even broader focus on ‘education for all’. The potential to accommodate differing views on the nature of difference and disability, either as medical matters or matters arising through contact with the social environment, using the capabilities-informed frameworks in this study, may provide EPs with tools that can support them in reconciling potentially opposing perspectives. The emphasis on defining what each valued capability area “looks like” for the individual child, and on defining hoped-for outcomes for each individual child, can respond to challenges faced by EPs negotiating differing understandings of what it means to include or be included.

Data collection and monitoring was referred to by participants as a dominant feature in the professional life of the teacher, especially related to children with educational difficulties. Teachers described the way that data mediated their typical interactions with external agencies and professionals, through the completion of forms and assessment paperwork. They also communicated a resistance to the tendency to reduce children to data points, and how demoralising this can be for teachers, especially in relation to struggling learners. The emphasis on individual strengths and developing a picture of the ‘whole child’ through the Capabilities Profile framework was viewed as a positive counterpoint to the overwhelming role of data in schooling.
EP participants echoed existing criticisms of the Capabilities Approach, that suggest that its specific analytic focus on the individual, rather than communities or other social units, makes it an overly ‘individualistic’ account (Robeyns, 2017). Such critics argue that the Capabilities Approach leads to conception of society as comprised of ‘autonomous individuals whose choices are somehow independent of the society in which they live’ (Deneulin & Stewart, 2002, p.66). It follows that applications of capability theories risk overlooking the socially embeddedness of human lives and the importance of being connected to others within communities (Robeyns, 2017).

Robeyns defends the Capabilities Approach against this critique by pointing out the necessary distinction between ethical individualism, which makes a claim about who or what should count in evaluative exercises, and ontological individualism, which claims that all social phenomena can be explained in terms of individuals and their properties (2017). She suggests that those who critique the Capabilities Approach on the basis of its individualism, fail to make a clear distinction between these two forms. The Capabilities Approach does make a commitment to ethical individualism, in assessments of wellbeing and quality of life it is the experience of the individual that counts, not the family as a whole, for example. However, it does not need to accept ontological individualism to do this, it is still able to acknowledge that social relations and the socially embeddedness of individuals are an essential part of human experience. For EPs who may be committed to a social constructionist account of social reality and phenomena, the Capabilities Approach can still provide tools for an analysis of the experiences of the individual child, the valued capabilities and functionings available to them as an individual, without falling back on claims that all such capabilities rest purely on individual level factors, detached from social circumstances. Educational disadvantage is experienced at the level of the individual, it is the individual that is affected by this disadvantage, so any analysis of this experience of disadvantage must, I believe, begin at the individual level, and take account of social circumstances. Furthermore, deepening the participating teachers’ understanding of an individual, led to considerations of the “individualness” of all their learners, and a shift in their manner of thinking about all learners. This suggests that individual level analysis may also benefit the teachers’ practice and therefore many other learners, indirectly.

The graphic format of both profiles was contrasted by school staff participants with the kinds of formats used during other forms of external professional advice-giving and support; specifically, they were ‘not boxes you have to fill’. Although seemingly a small
point, the particular structure and look of the framework resources may have powerfully contributed to the collaborative nature of the meetings, as well as allowing for a more holistic and detailed understanding of the individual child. This is consistent with the reported benefits of the use of graphic approaches in other manifestations of EP work. For example, person-centred planning techniques such as PATH or MAPS (Woods et al., 2019), or through the use of Rich Pictures within Soft Systems Methodology (Checkland, 1999).

Norwich has argued that the concept of needs itself requires greater analysis and clarity of conceptualisation (2013). He suggests that individual needs can only be understood in relation to the educational needs of all children. The Supporting Capabilities framework provided a structure for consultation meetings that allowed for a specification of the child’s individual needs in relation to the educational needs of all. Asking ‘What do all children need to be able to do this?’ acted as a prompt to consider the necessary conversion factors needed to have the capability chosen by the consultee as the hoped-for outcome for the child. During the consultations I found this question naturally led to discussion of conversion factors the child may be lacking, and therefore where further support or intervention might be needed, confirming Norwich’s analysis of the concept of needs.

The concept of Nussbaum’s ten central capabilities was linked by EP participants with the hierarchy of needs, a theory of human motivation proposed by Abraham Maslow (1943). Maslow’s hierarchy sets out various needs which are believed to motivate human behaviour, arranged in levels from the both basic to the most complex, each level depending on the one below. This conceptualisation of needs differs from the ten central capabilities in the way it stratifies the various types of needs and accords them differing levels of necessity. In contrast, Nussbaum’s ten are all held to be equal in importance, each have intrinsic value and are irreducible to one another. Situations in which one or other may be in competition with each other, or where it may seem necessary to choose between satisfying one capability over another, are described as ‘tragic’, situations in which any course of action leads to harm (Nussbaum, 2011, p.37).

These so-called ‘tragic dilemmas’ which occur when two valuable capabilities appear to conflict (Nussbaum, 2011) resemble the dilemma encapsulated in the notion of the ‘dilemma of difference’ (Minow, 1991; Norwich, 2013). When an education professional finds themselves facing the choice between differentiation and commonality, wanting to
identify needs but also to avoid stigma, this can be viewed as a conflict of capabilities. On the one hand, appropriate identification of individual differences in order to inform differentiation, will access a wider range of capabilities in and through education. On the other, labelling or singling the child out for different treatment risks a number of negative consequences that might ultimately impact on valued capabilities of self-respect and positive self-regard, amongst others.

Nussbaum argues that when we face such tragic choices we must think:

This is very bad. People are not being given a life worthy of their human dignity. How might we possibly work toward a future in which the claims of all the capabilities can be fulfilled? (Nussbaum, 2011, p.38)

This speaks to Norwich’s characterisation of two perspectives on educational inclusion using Berlin’s hedgehog-fox distinction (Berlin, 1978; Norwich, 2014). Hedgehogs have a single, universal vision which acts as an organising principle, whereas foxes pursue many ends, some which may be connected and others contradictory (Norwich, 2014). Advocates for a radical form of inclusion, who in viewing it as an essentially political and ethical project, call for a reform of ordinary schools to accommodate all forms of learner diversity, are aligned, according to Norwich, with the hedgehog perspective (2014). They have one “big idea” that guides thinking. Norwich connects the work of Roger Slee (2010) and Julie Allan (2008) with this kind of view of inclusion. Their kind of ‘ideological purity’ is contrasted with the fox perspective, which, on the other hand, takes a pluralist view. It does not try to fit varied experiences and values into one unitary vision, instead such a perspective accepts that there may be some ‘irreparable loss’ when faced with tragic choices or tensions between important values.

Nussbaum’s articulation of a response to such tragic choices would suggest that whilst a fox position, in practice, may be necessary, conflicts between equally important and valued capabilities may occur, and some choice required, but these situations are always tragic and ‘very bad’ and must not be accepted. Instead the proper response is to work to consider how such tragic conflicts may be avoided in the future, so that all individuals can meet the minimum threshold of capabilities needed for a life worthy of human dignity.

The inherent multidimensionality of wellbeing in the Capabilities Approach, emphasises the way an individual may be motivated to pursue different important capabilities simultaneously or in their own unique pattern of priorities. EPs in this study translated the issue of choice and agency into an issue of differential motivations, and suggested
that motivation towards a particular capability was the key factor in transforming it into a need for that individual.

“When I read that paragraph about agency, I did wonder about people having different motivations… What motivates someone to be or to do can be different. They might be motivated to socialise for a variety of reasons, that’s a need that they are driven to.”

This suggests a possible strength of a Capabilities Approach in its ability to leave space for individuals to specify what constitute needs in their own lives, i.e. what capabilities do they value the absence of which would constitute a clear need, and therefore what may motivate them to act.

However, the concept of choice within the Capabilities Approach was not seen by participants as unproblematic. These misgivings about the various shades of choice and the extent to which individuals’ choice-making might be limited by personal experiences, or social and political circumstances, reflects existing criticism of the approach. Some theorists have argued that the Capabilities Approach fails to adequately take account of power relations and social constraints on choice (Hill, 2003). They argue that its concepts do not readily provide tools to analyse the social institutions in which power is invested and which have an influential bearing on individual opportunities and choices (Robeyns, 2017). This criticism is of particular relevance for EPs whose practice is located within such social institutions, i.e. local authorities and the wider school and SEN system.

Robeyns contends, and I would agree, that one possible response to this apparent limitation is to make greater use of the concept of structural constraints in considering the possibilities of choice, opportunity and inclusion for pupils with educational disadvantages (2017). The concept of structural constraints in capability theory captures this idea of wider systemic or structural factors that influence the capabilities of individuals (Nussbaum, 2011). Structural constraints are defined as ‘the institutions, policies, laws, social norms’ that individuals face in their contexts (Robeyns, 2017, p.65).

Various forms of structural constraint did indeed emerge as important for EPs when considering questions of inclusion through the lens of the Capabilities Approach in this study. The EP participants identified a number of such systemic, structural factors, either of whole school culture, or practices across the local authority, that were captured within the theme of structural constraints. For example, the presence of
selective schools in the area was considered to indirectly effect the inclusion of struggling learners in ordinary mainstream classrooms, due to the established culture in the area of organising schooling according to ability.

Whilst the capabilities-informed consultation approach developed in this study provided a scaffold for considering the factors affecting the inclusion of individual learners in collaboration with members of teaching staff, the incorporation of the concept of structural constraints into future versions of the frameworks could provide a further meta-level of reflection for EPs to consider systemic or structural factors affecting inclusion. Gathering these reflections within a capabilities-framework may usefully support EPs in discussions with school leaders and local authorities, guiding them towards possible systems level interventions. Although the notion of structural constraints does seem to provide some conceptual tools for clarifying how social and political contexts constrain individual choice-making, further development of the consultation approach presented in this study is needed for this to be fully articulated and put into practice.

6.3 Implications for Practice
The findings of this research suggest that the Capabilities Approach may have much to contribute to educational psychology. The consultation frameworks developed in this study offer two specific methods of putting the Capabilities Approach to use in practice. These frameworks have been refined as a result of my reflections on the findings of this study and on the research process overall. These refined versions of the two consultation frameworks are presented in Appendix 26. These can be taken up by other EPs and applied in future practice.

More broadly, this study indicates the possibilities for drawing on diverse theoretical and practical approaches within a consultation approach, to develop new ways of working with children and schools.

This research has demonstrated the power and possibilities of listening to children’s views to inform inclusive practice. In particular the findings of this study suggest that children’s perspectives can be drawn upon in practice to develop a context-specific consultation approach for individual schools. The Capabilities Pupil Voice Toolkit presented in Appendix 27 sets out a sequence of stages and accompanying resources
that can be used by other EPs to adapt the Capabilities Profile framework to reflect the views of pupils in a specific school.

The use of the Capabilities Profile framework could be further developed to provide a method for incorporating the individual child’s views into a consultation meeting about them. This could be done in a number of ways. The framework could be completed together, in consultation, as was done in this study, with the child participating alongside key adults. Or else, it could be completed prior to the consultation by the EP with the child, and then be brought to the consultation meeting either to support the child in representing their own views, or to communicate views on their behalf if they are absent.

6.4 Strengths & Unique Contribution
Through a critical engagement with the literature relating to inclusive education and educational psychology I have shown the ways that the Capabilities Approach might contribute to resolving issues arising in both fields. To the best of my knowledge there are no previous studies linking the Capabilities Approach with educational psychology, nor is there any existing research that seeks to operationalise theoretical ideas from the Capabilities Approach into practice tools for use in applied psychology. Therefore, the focus of this research is highly original and unique in both its exploration of the links between these largely unfamiliar theoretical ideas and the profession of educational psychology, as well as its attempt to translate these ideas into an applied consultation approach.

Through this thesis I have attempted to address this apparent gap in the research through the use of an ambitious research design of several phases and stages, which relied on the participation of multiple stakeholder groups across two separate school settings. Within the time constraints of this doctoral research this multi-faceted design allowed for valuable exploratory work to take place on the various possible applications of the novel ideas of the Capabilities Approach in educational psychology. Not only this, but its action research-informed focus on developing tools for consultation practice means that this study potentially has direct implications for practice and on a personal level can significantly inform both my own future approach to practice, as well as potentially influencing that of other educational psychologists through its dissemination.
Furthermore, little research has sought to develop specific frameworks, such as those presented in this thesis, for use within a consultation approach, and no existing research has attempted to use pupil views to develop a context-specific approach or framework for use in EP practice, unique to an individual school. The present study has charted the development of two novel consultation frameworks: the Supporting Capabilities framework and the Capabilities Profile. These drew on theoretical ideas from the Capabilities Approach, strategies used in previous capabilities-informed research, views of children and EP colleagues, and personal experiences of practice as a trainee EP, to inform their development.

This study has put forward a robust, action research-informed, reflective practitioner approach to exploring new consultation practices in the context of two case study schools. This was achieved by following a rigorous methodology that incorporated a sequence of clear phases and stages which facilitated reflection on both practice and existing theory.

Triangulation is important to ensuring the quality and credibility of research. This research sought the views and voices of a range of participants on a possible capabilities-informed approach to educational psychology, including those of pupils, EPs, and school staff. Deliberate attempts were made to include a diverse group of pupils during phase one of the research. Providing pupil participants with different means of expressing their views during focus group sessions, including drawing, talking, and the diamond ranking activity, both promoted accessibility and participation, but also provided a method of triangulating findings specifically related to pupil views on capabilities.

During phase two adult participants both provided vital data for understanding the developing practice approach, but also acted as critical friends, helping me to reflect on the contribution to theory and practice made by the study. For example, sharing and discussing ideas with EP participants led to the identification of the ways that the Capabilities Approach connects with existing psychological theory, such as positive psychology, Wagner’s model of consultation, Maslow’s theory of human needs and motivation, or person-centred approaches, as well as suggesting ways of developing the consultation approach in the future, or possible barriers to implementing it. Furthermore, by meeting with the school staff who had participated in consultations with me for a later focus group discussion, I not only learned about their experiences and impact of the consultation approach, but their questions and engagement with me
facilitated further reflection on how the consultation frameworks might be refined or developed, and, by their questioning, allowed me to reflect on the decisions I had made, or approaches I adopted, during the consultations that might have otherwise gone unquestioned.

6.5 Limitations and Future Research
The main limitations of this research are its small sample sizes and its status as reflective practitioner research. In essence the consultation approach developed in this study has been explored in the context of only two schools, and within the professional practice of only one practitioner. This means it may be difficult to generalise beyond my own professional practice and those two school contexts to the professional practice of other EPs in other school contexts. It is also the case that any approach developed in this research and its effects are unavoidably influenced by my personal investment in the research, as well as my own personality, values, and interactional style. However, the intention of this study was exploratory. It aimed to explore how certain theoretical concepts from the Capabilities Approach could be applied in practice. It was beyond the scope of this study to both develop a picture of these possible applications and test them in a variety of contexts with a range of practitioners. Future research should build on the approaches I have proposed and attempt to show their applicability in a wider range of contexts.

Some methodological issues pose other limitations to the conclusions of this study. The loss of the audio recording of the second EP focus group during phase two of this study is one such. Relying on my own transcriptions of the key discussion points from memory limits the credibility of the data relating to this focus group and necessitates caution in interpreting the findings obtained for this group of participants. In addition, there are possible limitations to the extent to which the feedback and reflections of the school staff participants also during phase two can be confidently attributed to their experience of the specific capabilities-informed consultation approach. Although steps were taken in developing the question schedule for this focus group to try to guide participants to discuss and comment on the specific consultation approach used, there is an extent to which the findings from this group may reflect the experience and impact of consultation in general, and not exclusively relate to the unique approach developed and adopted in this study.

It may have strengthened the findings of this study had the consultation meetings themselves been recorded, as with other consultation research studies (Kennedy et al.,
2008). In designing this study I decided to omit this source of data in part due to the limited time frame of the research and also due to the possibility that recording these conversations may have reduced their authenticity or that parents may have been reluctant to have these potentially difficult conversations about their children recorded. Future development of this approach through research would benefit from this kind of analysis to understand its effects in more detail.

Larney (2003) has critiqued much of the research evaluating consultation on the basis that it tends to focus on the impact of consultation on the consultee, rather than on the children who are ultimately the “clients” on which the consultation is focused. Although teachers participating in this research reported a change in their thinking and attitudes towards learners as a result of the consultation approach, data was not systematically collected regarding the impact of these changes on outcomes for pupils themselves. Whilst this study offers a potentially promising novel form of consultation practice, this criticism limits the extent to which this research can show tangible impact of the approach. Future studies would benefit from collecting data to evaluate the impact of a capabilities-informed consultation approach on outcomes for pupils.

Some barriers to successfully implementing the capabilities-informed consultation approach in future were identified through this research. These included the need to change some of the language to be more accessible to school staff, and the concern that learning or education might not be addressed as a specific capability through the existing frameworks. Some EPs felt the comprehensive nature of the concept of capabilities represented a very broad perspective on children’s wellbeing and quality of life that might be difficult to manage or simply overwhelming in practice. I feel one possible way of managing this issue would be to use the two frameworks in connection with one another, as the Capabilities Profile provides a more comprehensive and broad consideration of many aspects of the child’s life, whereas the Supporting Capabilities framework allows for a narrowing down of focus onto the key priority areas of need for that child.

Given the grounding of this study in values of equality, and its intended focus on issues of social justice, it is likely that more truly participatory methods could have been employed during part one to strengthen the study. Hart’s (Hart, 1992) ‘ladder of participation’ provides a model for evaluating the extent of children’s meaningful participation in research and decision making.
The approach to engaging pupil participants during part one of this research barely meets the threshold for participation, according to Hart's model. Although pupils had some say in how they expressed their views, they were deliberately selected to take part in the adult-directed project, and although every effort was made to ensure they understood their participation was voluntary, the opportunity to volunteer for the study wasn't opened up to all. Nor was the ultimate purpose of the project explained to children fully. To more fully address unequal power relations through the development of the Capabilities Profile framework it would also have been beneficial to include a further stage of member validation, i.e. an opportunity for the pupil participants to review the Capabilities Profile framework developed for their school and comment on and refine its contents.
Another potential limitation to the consultation approach developed in this study surrounds the acknowledgement that children who were the focus of capabilities consultations were not asked for their views on their valued capabilities. Instead the views of a small group of pupils were used to inform the development of the Capabilities Profile framework which could then serve as a discussion tool for consultation with a member of school staff to consider their perspective on the child’s capabilities. The consultation approach might more meaningfully have addressed the need to account for power imbalances between children and professionals by obtaining and communicating the views of children on their capabilities.

6.6 Conclusion
This study has provided a unique contribution to the field of educational psychology. This contribution has taken the form both of bringing new theoretical ideas to the attention of EPs, and of adding to the emerging literature exploring the application of these ideas in the fields of psychology and education. It also contributes to issues of professional practice by putting forward strategies and tools for applying these theoretical ideas in the context of EP consultation, in the hope of better facilitating equality in and through education. It is my hope that this thesis will inform the work of other EP practitioners and stimulate future debate within in the profession.
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EXPLORING CAPABILITIES


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