



# Changes in demands, new challenges and the use of support staff in education

**Jon Richards, European Public Services Union (EPSU)**

# European Public Service Union (EPSU)

- **Affiliate unions represent public services workers across Europe**
- **Includes education workers, mostly support staff in local government and other education employers**
- **European arm of Public Services International**
- **Two seats on EU education social dialogue**

# OECD Working Paper no 125 (2015)

- **‘Learning Support Staff - A literature review’**

Francesc Masdeu Navarro    EDU/WKP (2015)14

- **Literature Research evidence from across the world and detail from 4 areas: UK (England), Australia, New Zealand, and the ‘nordic approach’**
- **Increasing numbers and ‘Increasing use in pedagogical responsibilities’**
- **‘ may improve teaching and learning as long as adequate strategies for training, deployment and use are implemented.**
- **[http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/learning-support-staff\\_5jrnm39w45l-en;jsessionid=1onse3bo7x6ow.x-oecd-live-02](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/learning-support-staff_5jrnm39w45l-en;jsessionid=1onse3bo7x6ow.x-oecd-live-02)**

# England - Background

**Learning support staff are not a replacement for teachers  
- they add value**

- **England 2003 workforce agreement : release teachers to teach**
- **New work for support staff and new roles including: School Business Managers, Teaching Assistants**
- **By 2016 more than doubled: now 380,000 (many part time)**
- **More Teaching Assistants than teachers in Primary**
- **Costs around £5billion p.a. (EEF estimate) - but poorly paid - €17,000 average. Many part time and term time – disputes Derby/Durham**
- **Largest use of Pupil Premium (funding for disadvantage)**
- **But little spent on training and development**
- **Until recently little research into effectiveness**

# Research on Teaching Assistants (1)

- **Deployment and Impact of Support Staff**  
(Blatchford et al Institute of Education 2009 , and subsequent)
- **TAs: provided good pastoral support, had a positive role supporting teachers, reduced teacher stress, took away admin tasks, helped in classroom behaviour**
- **BUT...**
- **TA support overall was found to have a negligible effect on academic progress in many subjects and a negative one in English, Maths and Science.**
- **Last point was misinterpreted by media - results showed when properly deployed TAs had good results but if badly used could be negative.**

# Research on Teaching Assistants (2)

- **Education Endowment Foundation - new evidence – RCTs**
- **So far 7 projects show clear positive effects of TA impact on achievement : - Catch up literacy; Catch up numeracy; Nuffield early language intervention; REACH; Switch on reading ; Talk for literacy ; Abracadabra. Mix of 1-2-1 and groups of pupils**
- **Particularly benefit low attaining and ‘Free School Meals’ pupils**
- **‘By far the most consistent, positive set of results I have seen ’ Prof J Sharples**
- **TAs need structured setting, high quality support and training**
- **Abracadabra also compared ICT vs non ICT intervention - both versions were successful but paper based intervention was more successful - showed that ICT is helpful but the TA interaction gave added value/flexibility**

# Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants – Recommendations Summary

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE USE OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN EVERYDAY CLASSROOM CONTEXTS

I

TAs should not be used as an informal teaching resource for low-attaining pupils

The evidence on TA deployment suggests schools have drifted into a situation in which TAs are often used as an informal instructional resource for pupils in most need. Although this has happened with the best of intentions, this evidence suggests that the status quo is no longer an option. School leaders should systematically review the roles of both teachers and TAs and take a wider view of how TAs can support learning and improve attainment throughout the school.

II

Use TAs to add value to what teachers do, not replace them

If TAs have a direct instructional role it is important they supplement, rather than replace, the teacher – the expectation should be that the needs of all pupils are addressed, first and foremost, through high quality classroom teaching.

Schools should try and organise staff so that the pupils who struggle most have as much time with the teacher as others. Breaking away from a model of deployment where TAs are assigned to specific pupils for long periods requires more strategic approaches to classroom organisation.

Where TAs are working individually with low-attaining pupils the focus should be on retaining access to high-quality teaching, for example by delivering brief, but intensive, structured interventions.

III

Use TAs to help pupils develop independent learning skills and manage their own learning

New research has shown that improving the nature and quality of TAs' talk to pupils can support the development of independent learning skills, which are associated with improved learning outcomes. TAs should, for example, be trained to avoid prioritising task completion and instead concentrate on helping pupils develop ownership of tasks.

IV

Ensure TAs are fully prepared for their role in the classroom

Schools should provide sufficient time for TA training and for teachers and TAs to meet out of class to enable the necessary lesson preparation and feedback.

Creatively ways of ensuring teachers and TAs have time to meet include adjusting TAs' working hours (start early, finish early), using assembly time and having TAs join teachers for (part of) Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time.

During lesson preparation time ensure TAs have the essential 'need to know':

- Concepts, facts, information being taught
- Skills to be learned, applied, practised or extended
- Intended learning outcomes
- Expected/required feedback.

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE USE OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN DELIVERING STRUCTURED INTERVENTIONS OUT OF CLASS

V

Use TAs to deliver high-quality one-to-one and small group support using structured interventions

Research on TAs delivering targeted interventions in one-to-one or small group settings shows a consistent impact on attainment of approximately three to four additional months' progress (effect size 0.2–0.3). Crucially, these positive effects are only observed when TAs work in structured settings with high-quality support and training. When TAs are deployed in more informal, unsupported instructional roles, they can impact negatively on pupils' learning outcomes.

VI

Adopt evidence-based interventions to support TAs in their small group and one-to-one instruction

Schools should use structured interventions with reliable evidence of effectiveness. There are presently only a handful of programmes in the UK for which there is a secure evidence base, so if schools are using programmes that are 'unproven', they should try and replicate some common elements of effective interventions:

- Sessions are often brief (20–50 mins), occur regularly (3–5 times per week) and are maintained over a sustained period (8–20 weeks). Careful timetabling is in place to enable this consistent delivery
- TAs receive extensive training from experienced trainers and/or teachers (5–30 hours per intervention)
- The intervention has structured supporting resources and lesson plans, with clear objectives
- TAs closely follow the plan and structure of the intervention
- Assessments are used to identify appropriate pupils, guide areas for focus and track pupil progress. Effective interventions ensure the right support is being provided to the right child
- Connections are made between the out-of-class learning in the intervention and classroom teaching (see Recommendation vii).

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON LINKING LEARNING FROM WORK LED BY TEACHERS AND TAs

VII

Ensure explicit connections are made between learning from everyday classroom teaching and structured interventions

Interventions are often quite separate from classroom activities. Lack of time for teachers and TAs to liaise allows relatively little connection between what pupils experience in, and away from, the classroom. The key is to ensure that learning in interventions is consistent with, and extends, work inside the classroom and that pupils understand the links between them. It should not be assumed that pupils can consistently identify and make sense of these links on their own.

# Associated guidance

- **Education Endowment Foundation**
- **Deployment - Based on Evidence**
- **Supporting materials**

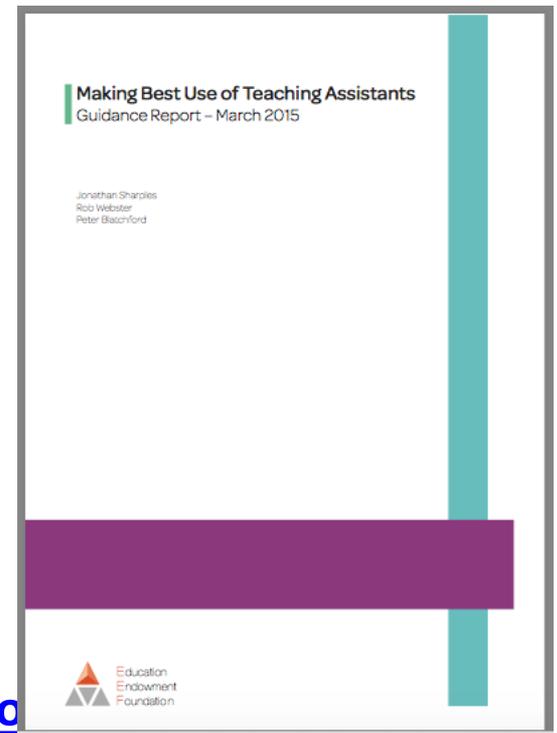
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/best-use-of-teaching-assistants/>

- **Teaching and Learning Toolkit**

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/teaching-learning-toolkit/>

- **TA section of T&L toolkit**

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/teaching-learning-toolkit/teaching-assistants/>



# UNISON's Training and Development website

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# Professional standards for teaching assistants

Advice for headteachers, teachers, teaching assistants, governing boards and employers

June 2016



# Career Framework and Continuing Professional Development for Teaching Assistants



# UNISON guidance

- TA standards
- <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/TA-Standards.pdf>
- UNISON Career Framework and CPD for TAs  
<https://www.unison.org.uk/news/2015/09/teaching-assistants/>
- UNISON general education website:  
[www.unison.org.uk/education](http://www.unison.org.uk/education)
- UNISON : 350,000 members working in Education
- 245,000 in schools - 150,000 Teaching/Classroom Assistants