



What supports Teaching Assistants' learning and development in Primary Schools?

Christine Chioma Ihenacho

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Disclaimer: I certify that this piece of work is my own and has not previously been submitted or assessed for any other qualification.

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Overarching Abstract

There is increasing focus and mention of Teaching Assistants (TAs) in educational and governmental policies, initiatives and schemes in England. TAs have become synonymous with Statements of special educational needs and disability (SEND) / Education Health and Care Plans and are central to strategies for educating children and young people with such support. There is debate about their effectiveness and how / if they are prepared for their role in supporting children with additional and complex needs. In 2014, the Department for Education (DfE) set out to create professional standards for all TAs to coordinate their practice and professional development (PD) in England but this was not published by the government. The focus of this research relates TAs' perspectives and processes involved in their professional learning.

A systematic review of literature revealed that limited attention has been given to TAs' views about their learning, and how the wider context may impact their practice, learning and development. As such a meta-ethnographic review of current literature exploring TAs' views about impact of PD is presented. From this, efficacy, relationships and identity were highlighted as prominent factors influenced by PD activities. Organisational context played a pivotal role in these three areas, highlighting an interplay between TA and environment. In the studies, there appeared to be a lack of in-depth understanding of what the TAs themselves thought supported their learning and practice.

The aim of the linked empirical research was to explore: "How do Teaching Assistants learn in the workplace?" The research used realist Grounded Theory (GT) to analyse interviews with four TAs working in a mainstream First School and to develop a model. The emergent model highlights that TAs learn and develop in an organisational context with a supportive leader and culture. However, positive relationships appear to be fundamental to their learning and development in primary settings. The research findings are placed within the context of existing research. Implications for schools, policy makers and Educational Psychologists (EPs) are discussed and thoughts for future directions are suggested.

A bridging chapter links the meta-ethnography to the empirical research. It explains my interest and motivations for carrying out this research and explores how my

assumptions, values and beliefs about the world and knowledge influenced the research process and knowledge produced.

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Chapter 1: A systematic review of Teaching Assistants' views on professional learning and development in schools.

Abstract

Large numbers of Teaching Assistants (TAs) work in schools in England despite mixed messages about their role, deployment and impact on outcomes. It is now recognised that contextual factors influence TA effectiveness and practice. Despite TAs being the second largest group of the school workforce, little is known about their preparation and training. There is a fragmented approach to preparing TAs for their role and a lack of comparable statutory standards for all TAs at the national level. A systematic review of the literature revealed that limited attention has been given to the views of UK-based TAs and their experiences, and much less to their Professional Development (PD). As such, a meta-ethnographic review of current literature exploring TAs' views about learning and PD is presented. From this, impact on efficacy, relationships and identity are offered as the most prominent factors influenced by PD activities. Together these highlight the role of the organisational context and the impact of this on TAs' professional learning and behaviour. Consequently, this review recognises the need for a more rigorous insight into TAs' experience of learning in school contexts.

1.1 Getting started

1.1.1 TAs: role and common deployment

In November 2017 there were approximately 263,000 full-time equivalent TAs employed in England (Brown, 2018). Titles used for staff supporting teaching and learning include TAs, Classroom Support Assistants and paraprofessionals, though TAs is commonly used and understood in the UK context (Education Endowment Foundation; EEF, 2018; UNISON, National Education Trust, Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants, National Association of Head Teachers, & Redhill Teaching School Alliance, 2016). TAs work in a range of educational settings, at different levels, and have varied duties from administrative and classroom support, to targeted academic support for individuals or small groups (EEF, 2018). Although their primary role 'is to [raise] learning and attainment of pupils while also promoting their independence, self-esteem and social inclusion' (UNISON et al., 2016, p. 5), TAs have become synonymous with Statements of special educational needs and

disability (SEND) / Education Health and Care Plans and are central to strategies for educating these pupils (Webster, 2014; Webster & Blatchford, 2017).

With average full cost of employment around £18,000 (Higgins, Kokotsaki & Coe, 2012), TAs are substantial school funding investments (UNISON et al., 2016). In terms of impact on attainment, TAs are evaluated as high cost with low impact, but Higgins et al. (2012) suggested this claim is based on limited evidence. TAs have an ethical and moral duty to uphold comparable standards to other education professionals in order to make education of pupils their first concern, but it is recognised that this is inextricably linked to school leaders' decision-making about their deployment (UNISON et al., 2016). This argument is reflected by the 'coherent and empirically grounded explanatory (Wider Pedagogical Role) model' (Webster, Blatchford, & Russell, 2013, p. 78).

Butt and Lowe (2011) described three main models of TA support and commented on the effectiveness of each model using empirical research (see Table 1).

Interestingly, Butt (2016) largely reported positive outcomes where teachers are directly involved, for example in guiding TAs with how to support the pupil.

Table 1: Models of TA support and deployment found internationally in mainstream educational systems.

Model	How is the TA deployed?	Effects found in empirical research reported by Butt (2016)
One-on-one model	TA works in close proximity to one student	<p>Least inclusive of all three models as teachers usually disengage from the pupil.</p> <p>Close TA proximity may result in over dependence on the TA and can interfere with teacher instruction. Other areas such as peer relations, gender identity and self-esteem can also be affected.</p> <p>May lead to micro-exclusion in the classroom i.e. the child is physically in the class but may be doing a wholly different activity to the rest of the class.</p>
Class support model	TA supports a class and a teacher under the direction of the teacher	<p>Considered to be more effective because teachers are more engaged in directing the TA in support activities or behaviour.</p> <p>TA has more opportunity to observe the teacher and during group work they work together to meet individual needs of pupils.</p> <p>Teacher is more likely to provide training to the TA and work more collaboratively with them.</p> <p>TA's skills are used for the benefit of the whole class.</p>
Itinerant model	<p>TA works across several classes with different teachers and multiple students.</p> <p>TA assumes role of primary educator to the pupils whilst the teacher takes on the role of 'host'.</p>	<p>Can result in stigmatisation, marginalisation or isolation of the pupil(s).</p> <p>TA moves from class to class, anticipating when they might step in, as such there is often little opportunity for planning or consultation.</p> <p>When the TA is not present, responsibility for the pupil's learning reverts to the teacher who may not be trained to support their needs, or may not want such added responsibility.</p>

1.1.2 Prevalence - popularity in practice

Despite historical challenges at the national level (e.g. Bassett, Haldenby, Tanner, & Trewitt, 2010 who called for reduced TA numbers), ongoing debate about the evidence-base for TA effectiveness (e.g. Blatchford, Russell, & Webster, 2012; Farrell, Alborz, Howes, & Pearson, 2010; UNISON, 2013; Webster, 2014; Webster & Blatchford, 2013; Webster et al., 2013), and negative discourse in the media,

referred to as 'mums army' (see Eason 2002; TES, 2018), TA numbers increased significantly since 2003 (Brown, 2018). Increases have been attributed to historical policies such as 'The National Agreement' (Webster et al., 2011). Interestingly, between 2015 and 2016, TA numbers increased by 1.8% in the nursery / primary phase and decreased by 4.2% in secondary (Ross, 2017).

The impact of austerity on schools is reported to contribute to recent cuts to TA roles (The Sutton Trust, 2019; Webster & Blatchford, 2017). A survey of 1678 teachers and school leaders found 72% of primary senior leaders, and 70% of secondary leaders cut TA numbers for financial reasons (The Sutton Trust, 2019). As a trainee Educational Psychologist (EP) working in educational settings, I am aware of such issues from placement experiences.

In a White Paper setting out its vision for schools in England in 2016, the government pledged '...a sufficient supply of high-quality CPD provision', and to introduce a Standard for Teachers' PD to help schools enhance the quality and availability of CPD (Morgan, 2016, p. 13). However, despite TAs being the second largest group (27.8%) of the school workforce in England after teachers (47.7%) (Brown, 2018), there is no similar vision about TAs or strategic commitment to their PD.

1.1.3 What is Professional Development?

PD is a complex process and difficult to define (Bond, Hebron, & Oldfield, 2017; Great Schools Partnership, 2018). In education, it can be used in relation to 'specialised training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness' (Great Schools Partnership, 2018). It covers relevant topics and can be funded and delivered in different ways. Mitchell (2013, p. 390) described it as 'the process whereby an individual acquires or enhances the skills, knowledge / attitudes [needed] for improved practice'. Opfer and Pedder (2011) called for a nuanced view, and suggested that PD results from complex interaction of a range of factors including training content, individual educator characteristics, and organisational elements.

Research suggests the effects of TA support on pupils' academic progress is not simply about TA and pupil individual characteristics (Cockroft & Atkinson, 2015; Webster et al., 2011). Rather, situational and structural factors influence the ways TAs practise, and can therefore affect their capacity to enhance outcomes (Cockroft

& Atkinson, 2015; Webster et al., 2011). Such findings are replicated in international research (e.g. Butt, 2018), thus representing issues faced by educational systems across the world. These situational and structural factors are presented in Webster et al.'s. (2011) Wider Pedagogical Role (WPR) model (see Figure 1).

1.1.4 Attempts to understand TAs' practice through the WPR model

The model provides a holistic overview of contextual factors affecting TAs' capacity for positive impact on pupils' learning, behaviour and progress (Blatchford et al., 2014). The arrows show the complex interplay of relationships between components and how effects of TA support may be explained and understood. In this model, there is an appreciation that TA effectiveness and practice is influenced by factors over which they have little or no control for example, decisions about preparedness, employment conditions or deployment. They found the greatest effects on TA effectiveness are deployment, preparedness and practice (Blatchford et al., 2012). Preparedness describes two aspects of TAs' work: the training and PD of TAs and day-to-day preparation. Sharples, Webster, and Blatchford (2015) have since echoed the importance of preparedness, offering seven recommendations to schools to maximise TA impact. More specifically, schools should provide sufficient time for TA training.

Webster et al. (2011) suggested that existing research on TAs largely reflects a generally positive view of their function in schools, yet little is known about their preparation and training. Studies have investigated the impact training may have on subsequent professional practice from TAs' perspectives (e.g. Butt & Lowe, 2012; Rose & Forlin, 2010; Tarry & Cox, 2014) and Cajkler et al. (2007) carried out a systematic review, but this was largely about impact of TAs' training on pupil outcomes. Given what is now known about contextual factors influencing TA effectiveness and governing their practice, the impact of their PD, from their perspective is surprisingly unexplored in the UK.

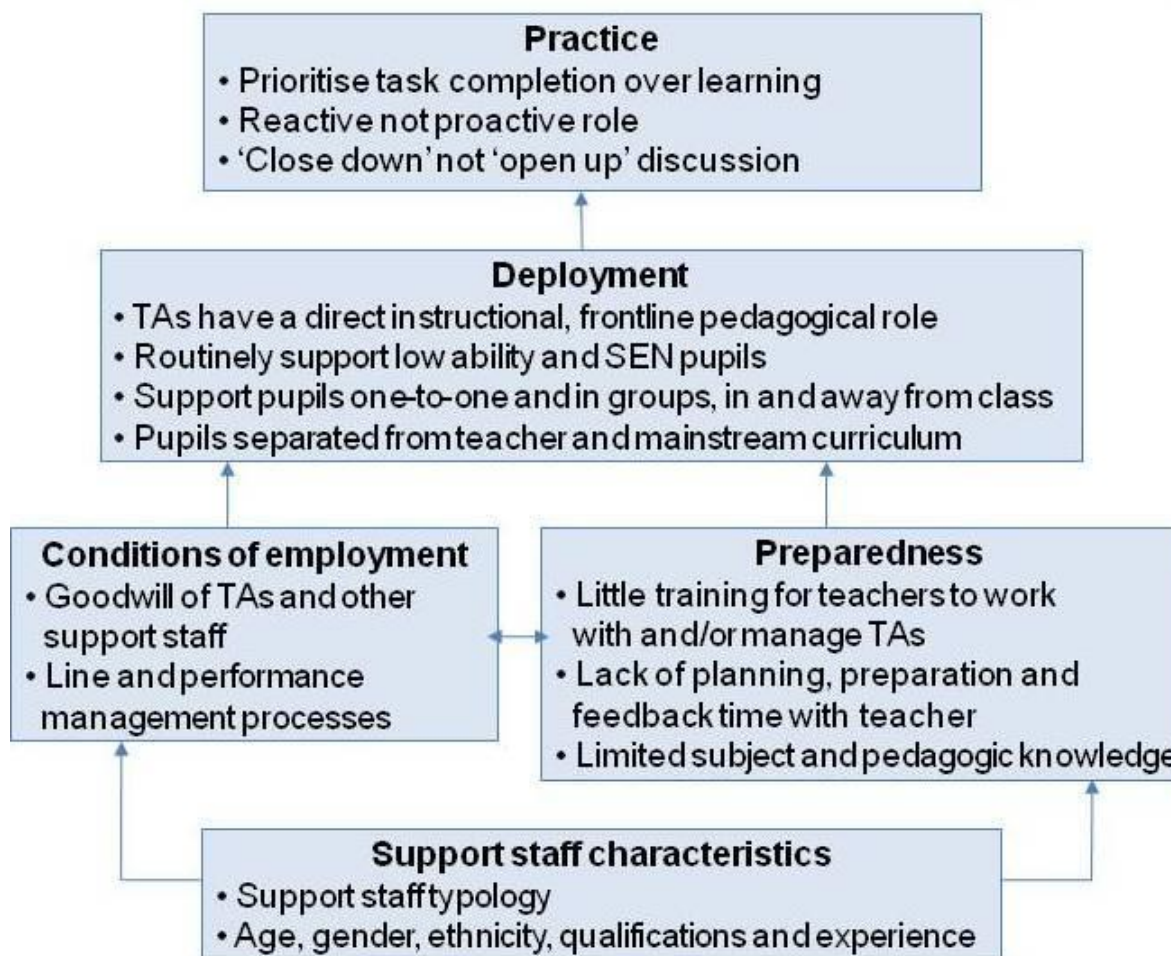


Figure 1: The wider pedagogical model (Webster et al., 2011).

1.1.5 Fragmented national approaches to Professional Development in England

Considering TA numbers, increasing concerns about their effectiveness and it being a role which is typically carried out by individuals with little or no training or qualifications, the government attempted to create professional standards for TAs to coordinate their practice and PD in England.

In 2014, the DfE launched an independent review to replace standards, which only applied to Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA), with a version that reflects the diversity of existing schools and systems, and is applicable to all TAs (Laws, 2014; UNISON et al., 2016). The standards were never published by the DfE.

In 2016, organisations interested in promoting the work of TAs were granted permission to publish the standards on the basis it was clear that the DfE were no longer involved (UNISON et al., 2016). The Standards are based on 'best available evidence' (p.5) and complement HLTA standards which sit alongside statutory

standards for teachers and head teachers. The Standards are set out in four themes:

1. Personal and professional conduct;
2. Knowledge and understanding;
3. Teaching and learning and;
4. Working with others.

1.1.6 Focus of this review

Considering issues explored above, a literature review focused on how to understand and support this group's learning and PD was deemed appropriate. School staff development is relevant to EPs and is a key requirement of the role (Bond et al., 2017; Fallon, Woods, & Rooney, 2010; Scottish Executive, 2002). With a focus on TAs' perspectives and an understanding of the wider context to their practice, learning and development, it is hoped that this review may offer a new interpretation of existing research.

1.2. Systematic review methodology

1.2.1 Approaches to systematic analysis and synthesis of qualitative research

Qualitative papers and a qualitative synthesis were chosen because qualitative frameworks place emphasis on *how*, rather than *what*, in research (Willig, 2008). However, qualitative methods vary across methodological, conceptual and epistemological positions, therefore researchers are encouraged to consider the type of product they want and select their method accordingly (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009). For example, ecological triangulation (Banning, n.d.), a qualitative meta-synthesis approach, unpicks mutually interdependent relationships between behaviour, persons and environments, whereas meta-ethnography (Noblit & Hare, 1988) focuses on analogies between qualitative accounts and results in new interpretations. As the aim is to present a new interpretation of established research, and not to report on mutually interdependent relationships within existing research, meta-ethnography was selected to synthesise findings of relevant studies. Meta-ethnography explicitly acknowledges the interpretive paradigm in which it is based (Noblit & Hare, 1988). This paradigm reflects the qualitative studies under review. Meta-ethnography, one of the first and most commonly used approaches to qualitative synthesis, is an effective method for rigorously synthesising qualitative research (Cahill, Robinson, Pettigrew, Galvin, & Stanley, 2018). Whilst it is

acknowledged to be a highly interpretative method (Campbell et al., 2011), there is research which guides (Britten et al., 2002) and evaluates (Cahill et al., 2018; Campbell et al., 2011) the process. It is argued that meta-ethnography can generate theories with more explanatory power than is possible through narrative reviews, may provide clearer, succinct findings for practitioners and policymakers than is possible in individual studies or traditional narrative literature reviews, and that it can lead to significant new insights and theoretical advancements (Britten et al., 2002; Pound et al., 2005).

1.3 Meta-ethnography

Noblit and Hare (1988) described seven stages in their approach. Schutz's (1962) idea of first, second and third order constructs was used to support and clarify the stages; this is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Noblit and Hare's (1988) stages, supported by Schutz's (1962) constructs.

Meta-ethnography stage (Noblit & Hare, 1988)	Constructs (Schutz, 1962)	Explanation
1 Getting started 2 Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest		
3 Reading the studies 4 Determining how the studies are related	1st Order Constructs	Metaphors or key concepts reflect research participants' understandings as reported by the authors.
5 Translating the studies into one another	2 nd Order Constructs	Interpretations of the first order constructs are made.
6 Synthesising translations 7 Expressing the synthesis	3 rd Order Constructs	First and second order constructs are synthesised to develop a new interpretation or idea.

1.4. Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest

Noblit and Hare (1988) suggested this 'involves knowing who the audience for the synthesis is, what is credible and interesting to them, what accounts are available to address the audience's interest, and what your interests are in the effort' (p. 27). I

was interested in Cajkler et al's. (2007) review, but their scope was too broad for my proposed synthesis. I clarified my focus - a specific part of their review which looked at how perceived meanings of training affect TAs' practice and interaction with others. I used similar inclusion criteria to locate relevant papers (see Table 3).

Table 3: Inclusion criteria.

Criteria	Justification linked to criteria
<p>SCOPE</p> <p>To be included, a study had to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) about TAs b) about any type of formalised or non-formalised TA development c) focused on TAs working with school-age children (4-18 years old) in England 	<p>My interest developed from working as a TA myself and working with them as a Trainee EP.</p> <p>There is much research conducted in the United States and other countries but their perspectives seem to be underrepresented in UK-based literature.</p> <p>There is a focus on studies which took place in England, rather than the UK because Education systems differ between England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.</p> <p>Finally, most TAs are employed to work with school-age children and young people in England.</p>
<p>TIME AND PLACE</p> <p>To be included the study had to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) reported and published in English b) published between 2010 and 2016. 	<p>The search initially included studies from 2006 to 2016 but was restricted to studies from 2010 onwards because this covers a period when schools were impacted by austerity measures. This left a manageable number of studies for qualitative review.</p>
<p>STUDY TYPE</p> <p>To be included, a study had to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) be based on primary empirical research (e.g. evaluation studies of training; surveys of training and development activities; case studies, reporting of perceptions through questionnaires, interviews and focus group meetings); b) contain descriptions of the impacts of training and development activities on TAs, and / or their practice involving others (e.g. other TAs, parents / carers, pupils, teachers, other professionals) c) qualitative studies focusing on the views, perspectives, experiences, attitudes or beliefs of TAs in relation to training and development activities 	<p>I am interested in understanding TAs' experiences of professional development activities therefore there was a focus on purely qualitative studies.</p>

1.4.1 Locating relevant studies

As PD is not clearly defined, I searched widely using synonyms (see Table 4).

Synonyms were also used for outcome (evaluation) and target population (TA). I searched the following electronic databases between 1 October 2015 and 16 April 2016: EBSCO databases (British Education Index, Child Development and

Adolescent Studies, CINAHL, Education Abstracts, Educational Administration Abstracts, ERIC, Medline and Teacher Reference Center), EMBASE (Excerpta Medica dataBASE), PsychINFO, JSTOR and ProQuest.

Table 4: Search terms.

<p>("teaching assist*" OR "teacher aid*") OR ("classroom assist*" OR "HLTA*") OR ("paraeducator" OR "instructional aid*") OR ("instructional assist*" OR "learning support assist*") OR ("specialist teaching assist*" OR "special needs assist*") OR ("support staff OR bilingual teaching assist*") OR ("paraprofessional" OR "bilingual aid*") OR ("welfare assist*" OR "auxiliar*") OR ("ancillar*" OR "foreign language assist*") OR ("paid aid*" OR "special assist*") OR ("integration assist*" OR "non-teaching assist*") OR ("TA OR TAs") OR ("class aid*" OR "classroom aid*") OR ("teaching aid*" OR "curriculum support") OR ("teaching coach" OR "psychoeducator") OR ("bilingual assist*" OR "helper") OR ("learning mentor" OR "facilitator") OR ("special educational needs assist*" OR "educational therapist") OR ("volunteer" OR "nursery nurse") OR ("education assist*" OR "adult support staff") OR ("paid adult support" OR "classroom-based support staff") OR ("pupil-based support staff" OR "higher level TA") OR ("classroom based paraprofessional*" OR "pupil based paraprofessional*")</p>
AND School
AND training and development
AND (impact of training or outcome of training) OR (evaluat* of training OR effect of training) OR (influence of training)
NOT UNIVERSIT*, COLLEGE*, MEDICAL SCHOOL*, HIGHER EDUC*

Boolean terms such as AND / OR¹ linked the sections for specific searches. Where possible, key terms were set to search 'Full Text' to identify relevant articles that may not have key terms in the title or abstract. This search strategy yielded 100 studies initially and after de-duplication 61 studies remained, in the following databases:

¹ The search string could be used in some databases but not all. Similarly, inclusion criteria could be applied in some databases but not all. I adjusted search terms to include 'AND' and included exclusion terms based on scope e.g. 'NOT UNIVERSIT*', 'COLLEGE*', 'MEDICAL SCHOOL*', 'HIGHER EDUC*'.

Table 5: Number of studies found in each database.

Database	Number of studies
British Education Index	3
Child Development and Adolescent Studies	2
CINAHL	2
Education Abstracts	10
ERIC	39
PsychINFO	4
ProQuest	1
TOTAL	61

I screened article titles and discarded irrelevant papers. This reduced the number of studies to 41. Next, I read Abstracts and excluded 30 further articles based on inclusion criteria. I hand-searched journals containing the 11 remaining studies and key publications within Educational Psychology and located four potentially relevant studies. Fifteen papers were read in detail and five peer-reviewed studies selected due to their relevance to the review question (Table 6).

Table 6: Relevant studies.

Brown, J. and Devecchi, C. (2013) The impact of training on teaching assistants' professional development: opportunities and future strategy. *Professional Development in Education*, 39(3), 369-386.

Cockroft, C. and Atkinson C. (2015). "Using the Wider Pedagogical Role model to establish learning support assistants' views about facilitators and barriers to effective practice." *Support for Learning* 30(2), 88-104.

Higgins, H. and Gulliford, A. (2014) Understanding teaching assistant self-efficacy in role and in training: its susceptibility to influence. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 30(2), 120-138.

Houssart, J. and Croucher, R. (2013). "Intervention programmes in mathematics and literacy: teaching assistants' perceptions of their training and support." *School Leadership & Management* 33(5), 427-439.

Morris, T. M. (2010). "Is It Worth It? An Examination of How Teaching Assistants Experience and Perceive Their Foundation Degree Study." *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 62(4), 481-494.

1.5 Reading the studies.

Noblit and Hare (1988) suggested that this phase is not as clear as it may be in other research synthesis, which usually 'move quickly to analysing the characteristics of the study relevant to the topic of interest' (p.28). In meta-ethnography, synthesis is dynamic and results from repeated readings of studies and noting of interpretative metaphors.

Long and Godfrey (2004) suggested that 'interest lies not just in whether the study is of high quality, but also whether its findings have relevance to the cultural and organizational context ...' (p.181) and thus developed a tool for critically appraising the quality and potential contribution of qualitative studies. Studies included in the in-depth review were systematically described and evaluated using Long and Godfrey's (2004) tool, Yardley's (2000) criteria for assessing the validity of a qualitative analysis, and appraisal questions and quality indicators from the EPPI-Centre weight of evidence (WoE) framework² (EPPI-Centre, 2007; Spencer, Ritchie, & Dillon, 2003) (see Appendix 1, p. 111). The evaluation of each of these papers is

² WoE criteria are referenced in Table 7 using the same number / letter system in Appendix 1 (i.e. N1 - N12). The authors provide quality indicators to guide the researcher in the process. Such quality indicators were used to support 'non-review specific' judgements about whether each study is fit for purpose in a generic way (see Gough, 2007).

located in Table 7. I simultaneously recorded key interpretative metaphors (i.e. phrases, themes, concepts as reported by the author) and further repeated readings of the studies added to the list (Lee et al., 2015).

1.5.1 Assessing the WoE

Three criteria (WoE A, WoE B and WoE C; see Appendix 2, p.114) decide overall transparent quality and relevance (WoE D) of each study to the review question or as Gough (2004) suggests, however well executed, does the study help to answer the review question?

- A. generic and non-review specific judgment about **coherence and integrity** of the study in its own right.
- B. a review-specific judgement about the **appropriateness** of the research design and analysis used for answering the review question.
- C. review-specific judgement about the **relevance** of the particular focus of the study (e.g. sample, measures for collecting data/analysis) for answering the specific systematic review.
- D. an **overall judgement** (rated high, medium, low) based on A, B, C which summarises the extent to which a study contributes evidence to answering a review question.

Table 8 (p.39) shows the overall weight for each study. This process involved rating each criterion (WoE A, WoE B, WoE C) high, medium or low. Each rating was based on information in Table 7. The ratings were then combined to make an overall judgment (high, medium or low) for each study.

Table 7: Evaluative overview of relevant studies.

Study	Purpose	Key Findings	Evaluative Summary	Setting Rationale	Appropriateness of sample	Adequacy of description of fieldwork	Adequate evidence to support analysis
<p>Brown, J. and Devecchi, C. (2013) The impact of training on teaching assistants' professional development: opportunities and future strategy. Professional Development in Education. 39(3), 369-386.</p> <p>This paper focused on a</p>	<p>Focus: how best to define development in relation to training, condition of employment and career progression.</p> <p>Aims: Make explicit a deeper understanding of what being a TA involves.</p> <p>Research questions:</p>	<p>TA deployment was highly variable - compounded by job title variation. Most TAs deployed for classroom help, then support for individual pupils.</p> <p>However, individual TAs could be deployed to a range of roles.</p> <p>A complex and varied picture of how TAs supported school, children and curriculum delivery.</p> <p>199 out of 243 TAs (81.9%) had training</p>	<p>TAs' experiences explored using surveys and semi-structured interviews. These measures were also used to gather CPD managers' views. Some reference is made to these.</p> <p>Writing indicative of pragmatism and methodology is congruent with this.</p> <p>Terms used in the survey (e.g. 'little' / 'no impact') are subjective.</p> <p>Potential agenda(s) reflected in choice of survey</p>	<p>The study occurred in UK; conducted in response to Local Authority's (LA) interest in evaluating impact of training provided to schools and their TAs; to develop further policy and practice based on</p>	<p>243 TAs and 23 CPD managers from maintained schools, including academies in the LA.</p> <p>Most were white British (63.8%) or Asian (27%) and aged 40-49 (38.7%).</p> <p>Effort to ensure as many TAs as possible could participate to address perceived unrepresented</p>	<p>Two-phased approach to gathering contextual information and views is described to an extent. For example, questions from survey were designed to gather data on 'perceived' impact as a direct result of training rather than other methods of measuring effective impact but the authors did not</p>	<p>Difficult to ascertain whether evidence is adequate: it is unclear how the themes were developed.</p> <p>Presented quotes are detailed and informative.</p> <p>Although the focus is on TA perspectives, voice of the CPD managers is informative and convincing.</p>

<p>study into the impact of training for TAs in an urban local educational authority in England. It is a relatively large study which sought the views of 243 TAs and 23 CPD managers in relation to training and professional development for TAs, barriers and its impact on children's achievement to inform future strategy for the content and delivery of</p>	<p>What does a TA do? How to evaluate impact? Impact on whom and on what?</p>	<p>opportunity since starting job. No relationship between specific roles and length of employment. Trained in various ways (e.g. school or TA workshops, independent study, mentoring / coaching). Most important reasons for taking up training: Supporting children in their learning; Support received in school; Improving knowledge and skills and Personal achievement. 171 out of 243 TAs (84.2%) reported training had great impact on their ability to support learning; 153 out of 243 TAs (75.4%) perceived training had great impact on supporting and</p>	<p>findings presented – mainly areas where TAs reported that training had 'great' impact (e.g. on ability to support children's learning, supporting and managing children's behaviour and supporting children with SEN). In some instances, difference between ratings are small, for example 38.9% of TAs said training had a 'great' in terms of the impact on relationship with colleagues, whilst 42.4% said it had 'little' impact, but this is not addressed. Evidence of the following EPPI WoE criteria: N.1, N.3, N.4, N.5, N.6, N.7, N.8, N.12. For example, the authors: - reported how research was presented to participants (N.3);</p>	<p>evidence collected.</p>	<p>experiences of this group in literature.</p>	<p>provide questions for transparency. Online and postal survey sent to all TAs (1,600) and CPD managers (173) in the LA, and semi-structured interviews with TAs and CPD managers. This approach was chosen because it seemed to be the most appropriate to acknowledge both general practices shared across all schools and the unique characteristics of each school and individual TA's experience.</p>
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<p>continuing professional development for TAs.</p>		<p>managing children's behaviour and supporting children with SEN. CPD managers felt attainment evidence supported outcomes reported by TAs. CPD managers and TAs reported that TAs provide an important voice when communicating with parents and the wider community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discussion of limitation of research design and implications for the study evidence (N.4); - quotations presented throughout the identified themes (N.8). 			<p>The nature (semi-structured interviews), content (open-ended questions) and justification for data collection choices are clearly stated.</p>	
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Study	Purpose	Key Findings	Evaluative Summary	Setting Rationale	Appropriateness of sample	Adequacy of description of fieldwork	Adequate evidence to support analysis
<p>Cockroft, C. and Atkinson C. (2015). "Using the Wider Pedagogical Role model to establish learning support assistants' views about facilitators and barriers to effective practice." <i>Support for Learning</i> 30(2), 88-104.</p> <p>This paper reported findings from a small-scale research project which explored TAs views about facilitators and</p>	<p>Focus: gather evidence for the WPR model.</p> <p>Explore TA views on facilitators and barriers to effective practice, using the components of the WPR model to conceptualise their views.</p> <p>Evaluate the relationship between the components of</p>	<p>Evidence of facilitators and barriers to practice linked to five components of the WPR model.</p> <p>Three out of the five components (Preparedness, Deployment, Practice) were found to have greatest bearing on TA effectiveness.</p> <p>TAs reflected on their practice in relation to a variety of contextual factors (i.e. organisational and personal factors).</p>	<p>Although not stated, this paper is indicative of a critical realist stance. There is fit between research focus and the method of investigation and analysis undertaken.</p> <p>Awareness of relevant literature, previous related empirical work and acknowledgement of varied perspectives and complex arguments surrounding TA practice and effectiveness.</p> <p>Authors do not explicitly reflect on how their assumptions, intentions or actions and how these may have affected the</p>	<p>TAs from a medium-sized mainstream primary school in north-west England.</p> <p>School had lower than average proportion of pupil premium funding and lower than average number of pupils with SEND supported through school action, school action plus or a Statement.</p> <p>Setting rated as 'good' in recent OFSTED inspection.</p> <p>Focus group (FG) used to collect data. Additional contextual</p>	<p>8 female TAs, aged between 31 and 55 - reflective of TA demographics in the UK.</p> <p>Length of time employed at the school ranged from five weeks to seven years.</p> <p>Six TAs (75%) had experience working with young people prior to employment and all held at a minimum the Supported Teaching and Learning - Level Two qualification.</p>	<p>Relevant aspects of the research process are presented, but lack of detailed explanation about ethical considerations.</p> <p>Clear that prior to taking part in the FG, participants were given a handout outlining the WPR components and a verbal overview of the model.</p> <p>Type of thematic analysis used is specified.</p>	<p>Quotations are presented throughout to support the identified themes.</p> <p>Transparency in the presentation of analysis and empirical data is achieved as the authors detail aspects of the data collection and rules used to code data.</p> <p>Unexpected results are not always explored in depth or in relation to theory for e.g. on p.95.</p>

<p>barriers to effective practice in the UK. The authors claimed that their study offers support for Blatchford et al's. (2012) WPR model and suggested further developments to the model.</p>	<p>the WPR model.</p>		<p>product of the research investigation. However, they do refer to external pressures / constraints and lack of TA voice in research.</p> <p>Empirical material is used to challenge current thinking related to WPR model i.e. the authors found 3 out of the 5 components had the greatest bearing on TA effectiveness.</p> <p>Discussion about socio-cultural impact of their study, i.e. opening dialogue, importance of TA voice.</p> <p>Suggestions for further empirical examination of the</p>	<p>information about TA's background, deployment, experience etc. was gathered via questionnaires prior to FG.</p>	<p>Views from all TAs included in analysis.</p>	<p>FG questions are not provided but are available upon request.</p>	<p>At the same time, the voice of the TAs involved is informative and convincing.</p>
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WPR framework.
Quantitative analysis of relationships between WPR components through path analysis or statistical modelling.
Authors suggest that this may also be a step forward in identifying the most important factors in effective TA practice.

Evidence of the following EPPI WoE criteria: N.3, N.4, N.5, N.8, N.12.

Study	Purpose	Key Findings	Evaluative Summary	Setting Rationale	Appropriateness of sample	Adequacy of description of fieldwork	Adequate evidence to support analysis
<p>Higgins, H. and Gulliford, A. (2014)</p> <p>Understanding teaching assistant self-efficacy in role and in training: its susceptibility to influence. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i>, 30(2), 120-138.</p> <p>This exploratory study draws together views from a small sample of TAs who took part in</p>	<p>Focus on the role and functioning of TAs themselves within and following training.</p> <p>To explore sources of influence upon TA self-efficacy and its susceptibility to influence through training approaches.</p>	<p>Thematic analysis highlighted three main influences on TAs' self-efficacy – these were categorised as Bandura's (1977)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> theory of sources of information (i.e. Bandura's four sources which are Experience, Affect, Verbal persuasion, Learning from others experiences); outcome expectations (i.e. making a difference, contextual, making no difference) and; whole school support and norms (i.e. 	<p>Evidence of WoE criteria: N3, N4, N5, N6, N7, N9, N10, N12. For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discussion of theoretical ideas upon which the research is undertaken. This study is an example of theory building work of vertical generalisation. detailed evidence of data collection process and rules used to code data (i.e. thematic analysis, inductive). clear conceptual links between commentary and presented original data. 	<p>The study took place in small rural market towns / villages in the same (unspecified) geographical area.</p> <p>To gain a range of experiences, data was collected from three mainstream secondary settings.</p>	<p>The training stage included 17 TAs from 3 mainstream secondary schools – 3 decided not to take part at the data collection stage. Thus all participants had received in school-training based on Bandura's (1977) principles.</p>	<p>The two-stage training process is clearly outlined - School A and B had six sessions using the coach-consult method over two terms and School C had a one-off INSET training. Two months after training was complete, researchers facilitated three 45-minute FGs in the TAs' respective schools.</p> <p>Self-efficacy literature and information about FGs was used to create a script for the FGs but the authors did not provide an overview of</p>	<p>Excerpts of textual data are presented so the reader can discern the patterns identified in analysis.</p> <p>TA voice is informative and convincing.</p>

<p>a larger doctoral study (Higgins, 2009) which explored impact of training on TAs' behaviour, learning and self-efficacy.</p> <p>The authors investigated factors which influence TAs' sense of self – efficacy and its susceptibility to influence in training.</p> <p>School-based training was delivered by Educational Psychologists using one of two training approaches</p>		<p>resources, valuing self within organisation, valued by teachers, time pressures, developing whole school norms).</p> <p>Not clear which source of information was most powerful for TAs or whether they were influenced by all four of Bandura's (1977) categories. As there was reference to all four, may suggest that they each had some effect on the TAs' confidence, behaviour and self- efficacy.</p> <p>Outcome expectations were highly individual. TA self-efficacy appeared to be influenced by what outcome expectations they believe they can achieve - these outcome</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evidence that authors draw on empirical material to present novel challenging perspectives which open new ways of understanding the topic of TA self-efficacy. - limitations of the methodology are addressed. <p>Although not explicitly stated, the purpose and justification for the research provided suggests a constructionist view, recognising different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon.</p> <p>Social context of the relationship between</p>			<p>the questions for transparency.</p> <p>Some ethical considerations are given. For example, reference to consent. They also reflect on the socio-political context of schools and how this can influence power dynamics and the ability for the sample to be voluntary and non-probability sample.</p> <p>Although there is transparency about the dual relationship of one of the researchers, i.e. the person who delivered training and also facilitated FGs, ethical implications are not explicitly addressed.</p>	
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<p>(coach-consult/INSET).</p> <p>A framework to support schools to develop TAs' self-efficacy, their effectiveness and overall school improvement is proposed.</p>		<p>expectations in turn seem to be influenced by different factors, for example, how much the TAs perceived they could influence change.</p> <p>Organisational factors influenced TAs' self-efficacy. Common themes were present across the three schools, but whole school support needs and the focus of each school was individual, and reflects the individual nature of each school organisation. TAs in all schools did however imply that their self-efficacy would increase if whole school norms were developed through whole school training and development of practices.</p>	<p>investigator and participants is crucial but there is no comment / consideration of general and specific effects of the researchers' actions (i.e. they delivered training sessions and then facilitated FGs about the training sessions).</p> <p>Relatively small scale, localised study which sets out to contribute to the continuing debate over TA preparedness and impact of organisational factors.</p>				
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Study	Purpose	Key Findings	Evaluative Summary	Setting Rationale	Appropriateness of sample	Adequacy of description of fieldwork	Adequate evidence to support analysis
<p>Houssart, J. and Croucher, R (2013).</p> <p>“Intervention Programmes in Mathematics and Literacy: Teaching Assistants’ Perceptions of Their Training and Support.”</p> <p>School Leadership & Management 33 (5): 427–439.</p> <p>The authors propose an alternative model to one</p>	<p>Focus: TAs’ experience of support / guidance received when implementing literacy / maths interventions.</p> <p>Training and interactions with colleagues from TAs’ perspectives.</p> <p>Current state of TA support / guidance in</p>	<p>Wide variation in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - training received (e.g. many had attended training but 8 out of 24 TAs received little or none), - experiences and quality of training (e.g. handwritten instructions in lieu of training); - experiences of being managed / supervised (e.g. few TAs reported ongoing support from more senior staff – once trained expected to implement without further help). <p>In the absence of formal training, TAs share</p>	<p>Evidence of EPPI WoE criteria: N3, N4, N6, N8, N9, N12. For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sufficient justification for why the study was carried out, e.g. most literature is framed within a policy and managerial discourse which pays minimal attention to TAs’ experiences (p.428). - illumination of diversity of perspectives. - unpacking and portrayal of nuance within data. 	<p>Mainstream primary schools in England.</p> <p>Rationale for focus on primary age TAs is not explicit but reference is made to large numbers of TAs working in primary classrooms in England and extensive evaluation of</p>	<p>24 TAs across a number of unspecified primary schools.</p> <p>Mostly women with families - in line with the national profile of TAs.</p> <p>Two thirds of the sample were White British.</p>	<p>No ethical considerations - it is not clear whether consent was gained or how participants were recruited.</p> <p>The data are transcriptions of hour long, in-depth interviews but the authors clearly state that analysis was mainly based on extracts which discussed intervention programmes.</p> <p>Although not specified, an inductive approach may have been used as research questions were used to narrow the scope of the study and to guide coding of data.</p>	<p>Detailed analysis of findings, accompanied by direct quotes.</p> <p>Findings are discussed in relation to literature which explored similar concepts.</p> <p>TA voice is informative and convincing.</p>

<p>advocated by the government / in literature (i.e. TAs' subordinate role in training / monitoring). There is an emphasis on team work and collaboration and recognition of TAs' capabilities - they are included in a form of distributed leadership.</p>	<p>delivery compared to approaches prescribed by influential researchers / existing literature.</p> <p>Research questions: How far do TAs report receiving training, preparation, guidance and support related to intervention programmes and how useful do they find these?</p>	<p>knowledge and experiences amongst themselves.</p> <p>Knowledge gained from training was used for interventions, in the implementation itself to inform their wider work and / or their colleagues' work.</p> <p>Variation in whether learning shared by TAs is valued by colleagues. Also differences in opportunities to share information upward for example, to teachers, which demotivated TAs.</p> <p>TAs' specific expertise not fully recognised through ways they're deployed.</p> <p>Situations are structured <i>for</i> TAs - possibilities for restructuring them may be limited or non-existent though TAs showed</p>	<p>- clear conceptual links between analytic commentary and presentation of original data.</p> <p>Considers wider literature and theories (e.g. management approaches, social capital concept) to justify focus on TA perspectives and consider alternative approaches / perspectives (i.e. collaboration) which allows new ways of thinking about this topic.</p> <p>Sensitivity to context and evidence of reflexivity – recognition of sociocultural setting of the study and how</p>	<p>interventions used by TAs in primary settings.</p>		<p>Limitations of the methodology are discussed.</p>	
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	<p>How far do TAs claim and demonstrate expertise and to what extent do they feel this is acknowledged and accessed by teachers and managers?</p>	<p>considerable expertise in overcoming difficulties faced.</p> <p>TAs demonstrated preference for an inclusive management approach that fully recognised their contribution.</p>	<p>this may influence participants' / authors' beliefs / talk.</p> <p>Methodology and analysis used are appropriate.</p>				
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Study	Purpose	Key Findings	Evaluative Summary	Setting Rationale	Appropriateness of sample	Adequacy of description of fieldwork	Adequate evidence to support analysis
Morris, T. M (2010). Is It Worth It? An Examination of How Teaching Assistants Experience and Perceive Their Foundation Degree Study. Journal of Vocational Education and Training,	<p>Explore overarching perceptions of TAs in relation to personal / professional development.</p> <p>Research questions:</p> <p>(1) How do TAs perceive their taking a Foundation degree course has affected their role in the workplace?</p> <p>(2) How do TAs perceive their taking a</p>	<p>Majority agreed that the course enhanced their understanding of teaching and learning - this is reflected in their work and the way they carry out their responsibilities.</p> <p>Negative outcomes linked to professional development (e.g. increased responsibilities without increase in pay, unable to complete previously agreed tasks such as unpaid overtime due to new demands of course, feelings of guilt and difficulties when trying to balance study and family time, academic study demands extremely difficult to cope with at times with impacted home and work life).</p> <p>Increased confidence attributed to the course enhancing their</p>	<p>The paper is indicative of a social constructionist stance - the methodology used is congruent with this stance.</p> <p>Evidence of EPPI WoE criteria: N1, N3, N4, N5, N9, N12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - detailed explanation of ethical considerations regarding recruiting participants. - draws on empirical material to opens up new ways of understanding a topic. 	<p>Four institutions (traditional university, further education college, collegiate and university college) in England which offer the Foundation Degree.</p>	<p>25 TAs undertaking a Foundation degree by part-time study.</p> <p>All were mature students and 23 out of the 25 were women.</p> <p>Programme managers agreed that the sample of TAs from their institution was representative.</p> <p>Although specific data is not provided, some reference is made to varied socioeconomic</p>	<p>Details given about sampling, data collection and rules used to analyse data (e.g. data reduction by open coding for thematic analysis).</p> <p>FG questions are not provided.</p>	<p>Analysis of findings with direct quotes offered for the reader.</p> <p>However, there are some issues with transparency and coherence. For example, themes / codes are not specified. Moreover, no direct quotes are presented where TAs expressed negative views</p>

<p>62(4), 481-494.</p> <p>Explores the experiences of TAs studying a Foundation degree programme at institutions in England.</p>	<p>Foundation degree course affects their confidence and self-esteem?</p> <p>(3) What are the TAs' experiences of the Foundation degree provision they are offered?</p>	<p>understanding of teaching and learning – some experienced this at the early stages of the Foundation degree whereas others started with relatively high self-esteem and confidence.</p> <p>Impact on confidence was a reason why some TAs considered further training to become a qualified teacher.</p> <p>FG number 4 had the highest number of TAs from minority ethnic backgrounds and the lowest number of participants who considered further study to become a teacher.</p> <p>Mainly positive about their experiences of the Foundation degree provision – comments about emotional and academic support and guidance, positive relationships with other students and staff on course.</p>	<p>- quotations are presented at times to illustrate finding but here is significant paraphrasing which makes it hard to ascertain whether claims are adequate.</p>	<p>status, learning experiences, and professional experiences of the sample.</p> <p>There is recognition of the influence of the socio-political context on the sample (i.e. the aim of the Widening Participation initiative is to attract people who may not otherwise consider higher education or those who may be discouraged by social, cultural, economic or institutional barriers).</p>	<p>– perhaps this was a conscious decision due to external pressures.</p> <p>The findings are interpreted within the context of relevant literature.</p>
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		<p>High level of dissatisfaction in one FG - negative responses about inadequate level of academic support and lack of response to concerns about course content.</p> <p>All recognised value of the course on a personal level (i.e. as individuals, parents), professional level, and for future professional development.</p> <p>TAs agreed that support networks helped them cope with the demands of their Foundation degree course.</p>					
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Table 8: Overall WoE for papers in the synthesis.

WoE criteria	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
A	High	High	High	High	Medium
B	Medium	High	High	High	High
C	High	Medium	High	High	High
D	<i>High / medium</i>	<i>High / medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High / medium</i>

1.6 Determining how the studies are related

The relationships between the concepts arising from the different papers were considered using Britten et al's. (2002) example to guide the process. I then looked for commonalities and recurring concepts across studies. The list of key metaphors was reviewed to identify common and recurring concepts across the five papers.

1.7 Translating the studies into one another

Following Noblit and Hare (1988), I compared concepts and their interactions in one study with concepts and their interactions in other studies. Following discussion with my supervisor, the most common and recurring concepts were further reduced to the most significant recurring concepts present in each of the papers (see Table 9). As Britten et al. (2002) recommended, literal translations from accounts were used to preserve original meanings and contexts.

This reduction represents the process of moving from first to second order constructs. Translating the studies emphasised three concepts – efficacy, relationships and identity – as influenced by PD activities. A descriptive translation of each of the identified key concepts follows to demonstrate my line of thinking.

Table 9: Most common and recurring concepts across the relevant papers.

Studies	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
<p>Concepts</p> <p>Efficacy</p>	<p>TAs' confidence in their capacity to implement learning from training.</p> <p>'personal achievement'</p> <p>'Training has a great intrinsic value'</p> <p>Support children in their learning</p> <p>Improve knowledge and skills</p> <p>ability to support children's learning</p> <p>ability to improve / manage children's behaviour</p> <p>ability to support children with SEN</p> <p>knowledge and understanding of the curriculum</p>	<p>"I think it's important that everybody has had background access to working with children on a voluntary basis, so you decide yourself whether that is for you because you could have all the qualifications in the world but once you start that job, it's completely different to how you imagined it was going to be."</p> <p>"I felt that I learnt more coming into the school; I didn't think the course (level 2) was that great to be honest... but I thought in terms of the job it didn't really teach me anything."</p> <p>'important to have certain personal qualities and skills such</p>	<p>'learning from others, vicarious learning, made them feel more confident to do the intervention and the TA role in general'</p> <p>"I think it is because you'd seen how someone else works doing it, and everybody learns from everyone else."</p> <p>All four sources of information had some effect on TAs' confidence, behaviour and self-efficacy.</p> <p>Pupil-specific and contextual factors affected how TAs viewed their effectiveness</p> <p>"I think the kid with autism, it's a lot more difficult when their</p>	<p>"I did have to do a phonics intervention with them over a period of six weeks, which I had to plan from a book. I was given a handbook and 'Away you go.' [asked if she was happy to plan it herself] Not really, because I'm not confident in what I'm doing. So I kind of just went by the book and did my own thing ...I'm not happy with that at all."</p> <p>"I'm timetabled to do that in the afternoon ...which is quite sad, because I think focused learning like that should be done in the morning when the children's brains are fresher. I get them when they're tired after lunch, and normally the</p>	<p>'increase in confidence'</p> <p>course enhanced understanding of teaching and learning</p> <p>"You are given a tad more respect, now that you are doing a qualification as such. They see you in a slightly different light."</p> <p>Knowledge gained from course reflected in practice.</p> <p>"...when people are talking about how they have been to university and got degrees, you feel good, because you are actually doing a degree."</p> <p>Signed up for additional responsibilities and duties without financial</p>

Studies	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
Concepts					
	<p>Use of ICT</p> <p>Numeracy / Literacy knowledge</p> <p>ability to assess children's work</p>	<p>as listening, patience, understanding and flexibility'</p> <p>'willing to gain information themselves but they felt they needed professional support to facilitate effective practice'</p> <p>Felt that entry qualifications were important for role – minimum Level Two required for effective practice.</p> <p>"It (the level 2 course) was good in terms of understanding in terms of child protection and things like that, and the legalities..."</p> <p>'benefits of training to meet the needs of the children'</p> <p>'previous training was helpful in identifying</p>	<p>problems are more environmental."</p> <p>"I think you can contain behaviour in school to a point but you ... can't always change someone's core values because they are given by the parents."</p> <p>"yeah I think you can at school ... definitely but then they go home and their parents are saying what a load of rubbish or you don't have to listen to them."</p> <p>"you can't win unless they want to I mean if the student is not going to change... no matter what you do or how much you bend over backwards for them."</p> <p>"there are some students that no matter how hard you try, if they don't want to,</p>	<p>more fun activities are going on in the classroom, and I'm taking them out to do more maths. So if I had my way, I'd have it programmed for the morning..."</p> <p>'specific expertise was not fully recognised through' deployment</p> <p>"Reading Recovery is what I do a lot of ...I watched what Rhona (Reading Recovery teacher) did and how she delivered the book and how she, you know, brought the child in. Sometimes children don't want to read straight away. They might just want to look at the pictures. And I picked all that up from Rhona, which was great, and then went away and did it myself, put it into practice ...I</p>	<p>contribution to achieve long term goal (i.e. gain QTS through the Graduate Teaching Route)</p> <p>'concerns with course content' were not acknowledged.</p> <p>Value in their various roles as individuals, parents, TAs and their 'future professional development'</p>

Studies	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
Concepts		<p>useful new resources and interventions'</p> <p>Training opportunities described as 'vital'</p>	<p>they're to be in the right place haven't they"</p> <p>TA attributions about children</p> <p>"once they have sent someone out of their lesson and their lesson goes well they will send them out again and you kind of make a rod for your own back because if you have got work out of them then you take that back, they think I've had a lovely lesson, they have got some work done, why not do that again"</p> <p>Conscious about practice</p> <p>"this is what I do, this is why I do it, it helps it really does."</p>	<p>work on my own. I've got a small room on my own."</p> <p>"..the SENCO at school and the deputy head have both observed me doing Catch Up and were perfectly happy that it was being done correctly"</p> <p>"I did have to do a phonics intervention with them over a period of six weeks, which I had to plan from a book. I was given a handbook and 'Away you go.' [asked if she was happy to plan it herself] Not really, because I'm not confident in what I'm doing. So I kind of just went by the book and did my own thing ...I'm not happy with that at all"</p>	

Studies	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
Concepts				<p>“I ran that for a couple of years before I actually had any formal training on it, which is quite funny....”</p> <p>“I’ve done FLS, but I haven’t been on the training for it. Somebody else taught me how to do it.”</p> <p>‘positive account of learning’</p> <p>“I’ve been on a few maths intervention courses as well, and that really helps, and literacy interventions, so you sort of know when you take a group how to support them. What exactly do they need to help them develop and how can you help them to achieve their objective, their learning objective?”</p>	

Studies Concepts	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
				<p>'gained knowledge about the children they worked with on programmes, which could potentially be passed back to teachers'</p> <p>"You actually become more knowledgeable about the way the program runs than the teacher does, so they start coming to you. They sort of discuss the difficulty with the child, they ask you to start on the program, and they then don't actually have much understanding of how the program works."</p>	
Relationships	<p>TA study groups</p> <p>TA workshops</p> <p>In school workshop</p>	<p>LSAs sharing information or resources amongst themselves</p> <p>"accessed training such as iPad</p>	<p>TAs provided cascade training to other TAs.</p> <p>"going and showing the others how to do it ..."</p>	<p>".. I've since sort of taught the other TAs."</p> <p>'TAs socialising their knowledge and experience among themselves in the</p>	<p>"The most beneficial thing is knowing and understanding why teachers are teaching, you can now say I know why you are doing what you are</p>

Studies	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
Concepts	<p>encouragement from school/employer/colleagues</p> <p>support received by tutors/in school</p> <p>'Relationship with colleagues'</p> <p>'ability to consult with pupils'</p> <p>Considered to be less formal and intimidating and thus considered an 'important voice when communicating with parents and the wider community'</p> <p>collaboration with classroom teachers'</p> <p>TAs being integral part of school – 'important or sustainability and productivity of the school setting'</p>	<p>and maths games from teachers within the school"</p> <p>"I have had good stuff from the speech and language person who has come in, she is brilliant. She's really helped a lot with the things I do on a daily basis"</p> <p>Benefits of how 'good communication and collaborative planning with the class teacher can contribute to effective practice'</p> <p>'importance of set work time with teacher'</p> <p>'independent planning'</p>	<p>"it does boost your confidence to think that you've helped somebody else"</p> <p>"yeah and we learn ... from each other all of the time, well I do."</p> <p>"I think it is because you'd seen how someone else works doing it, and everybody learns from everyone else."</p> <p>"working in the small group situation as well ... you can hear different points of view ... someone might have done something else that you have not thought about and you can think hang on a minute that could work for my student."</p> <p>'self-efficacy would increase if whole</p>	<p>absence of formal training'</p> <p>'drew on the knowledge gained in training for interventions or in the implementation itself to inform their wider work or potentially that of their colleagues by passing key insights on to others in their schools'</p> <p>'limitations to knowledge transfer both where hierarchical views are in evidence and where TAs prioritise sensitivity to teacher workloads above sharing innovative practice with them within that wider hierarchical context'</p>	<p>doing. The children are not, for example, just playing a fishing game, but are learning."</p> <p>'those in her workplace were more frustrated with her, than she was with them'</p> <p>"Not all the teachers know I am doing one, but my class teacher does ask sometimes about what I am doing."</p> <p>'inadequate level of academic support'</p> <p>"positive relationship with other (academic) students and (lecturers) staff"</p> <p>Balancing study and home life was difficult but social supports were key to being able 'to attend, cope with or</p>

Studies	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
Concepts			<p>school norms were developed through whole school training and development of practices'</p> <p>'importance of school developing as a learning organisation and for TAs to be a part of this'</p> <p>Not feeling valued or being 'undermined' by teachers.</p> <p>helping others which they felt increased their confidence.</p> <p>"well for me I couldn't have done it without C's worksheet thing today"</p>	<p>'while senior teachers sometimes shared knowledge downward to the TAs, teachers and managers' attitudes to upward knowledge sharing by TAs were more unevenly in evidence.'</p> <p>'importance of upward information flows... recognised as useful by some teachers who grasp the TA's specific accumulated expertise acquired through proximity to the task'</p> <p>TAs account of how she learned from in-school training from teacher reflects mentoring and coaching</p> <p>"Reading Recovery is what I do a lot of ...I watched what Rhona (Reading Recovery teacher) did and how</p>	<p>successfully complete the course'</p>

Studies	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
Concepts				<p>she delivered the book and how she, you know, brought the child in. Sometimes children don't want to read straight away. They might just want to look at the pictures. And I picked all that up from Rhona, which was great, and then went away and did it myself, put it into practice ...I work on my own. I've got a small room on my own."</p> <p>"I'm lucky and fortunate that I work with someone who encourages me..."</p> <p>"I won't even bother pestering her [teacher].. "</p> <p>"I went to [local authority] learning centre to do that. I did that with the class teacher in year five, so</p>	

Studies	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
Concepts				<p>both of us did it, and then I run the intervention.”</p> <p>“I’ve done FLS, but I haven’t been on the training for it. Somebody else taught me how to do it.”</p> <p>“I keep detailed notes on what I do with the children, what they struggled in. Some teachers will actually ask me for them when they’re writing their end-of-year reports. Some teachers won’t.”</p> <p>“...I have had the experience that they’re the teacher, they’re not interested in what you’ve found or what you’ve seen.”</p> <p>‘teacher –TA conflict’</p>	

Studies	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
Concepts Identity	<p>training as a way to raise 'self-esteem in relation to personal achievement'</p> <p>'confidence and competence'</p> <p>'personal satisfaction'</p> <p>'professional status'</p> <p>'promotion/career progression'</p> <p>"This is the frustrating part of it as well, because now that I am trained to Level Three, I'm not considered I need training in anything, because I'm higher trained than any of the jobs that I can do in school anyway... because I am now Level Three trained, they don't see that I need to go on any one day courses, because I've had all the training</p>	<p>entry qualifications 'important' for effective practice</p> <p>LSAs wanted more recognition for what they do</p> <p>"You can have all the qualifications in the world, but if you don't like working with kids then it's completely irrelevant as far as I'm concerned."</p> <p>Reasons for entering the profession</p> <p>'training aided their professional development and improved their CV with a view to future employment possibilities'</p> <p>Some not offered any training throughout employment at school despite making requests</p>	<p>Emotions or physiological state affects confidence with the intervention and work in general.</p> <p>'Not feel valued by some of the teachers'</p> <p>"unless someone listens to us and we say...we're not going to actually achieve anything from this even though we feel we are doing well"</p> <p>"that's the problem we can say something and then sometimes it doesn't make a difference. We are undermined on a regular basis"</p> <p>'time pressures'</p> <p>'organisational climate and the value placed on TAs within the climate of that school'</p>	<p>"I prefer to do it individually ...[asked if she could make this decision herself] I can, yes, in liaison with the class teacher."</p> <p>'situations are structured for TAs, and that while the possibilities for restructuring them may be limited or non-existent, TAs perceived themselves to have and indeed appeared to us to have showed considerable expertise in overcoming the difficulty.'</p> <p>"..in the pound shop they've done these little cars... and they had these little butterfly things, and we replaced the counters with those, and the children love them ...Because I was noticing, they'd see me</p>	<p>'It [the Foundation degree] has raised my self-esteem; I know why I am doing what I do, I don't feel such a fraud anymore.</p> <p>'You are given a tad more respect, now that you are doing a qualification as such. They see you in a slightly different light.'</p> <p>'I have found that the further I have gone in the course, the more – they call it responsibility – I call it that I have been put on to be honest.'</p> <p>'...when people are talking about how they have been to university and got degrees, you feel good, because you are actually doing a degree.'</p>

Studies	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
Concepts	<p>I need at the moment ... No pathway at all. In fact having finished the course, I felt like my pathway has come to a complete dead end.”</p> <p>“I think the biggest thing for me now is I don’t see really any point, because it doesn’t happen to have a career really.”</p> <p>“So if you had some sort of incentive, that’s it, I think that plays a big thing as well doesn’t it?”</p> <p>TAs provide an important voice when communicating with parents and the wider community</p>	<p>‘Willing to gain information themselves but felt they needed professional support to facilitate effective practice’</p> <p>‘practice effects as a result of limited training opportunities’</p> <p>“I don’t think that as a Level Two the amount of planning and left to our own devices isn’t really, wasn’t really in the job description”</p> <p>‘despite making requests, they had not been offered any training throughout their employment at the school.’</p> <p>‘having a positive attitude toward work helped them be more effective and also cope</p>	<p>Individual nature of organisational issues – specific to context</p> <p>‘[pay] doesn’t affect how I do my job but it is beginning to affect how I feel...’</p> <p>“the staff that earn a lot of money come and work in our ... building here don’t interact with the children at all ... do they need to go on a course which encourages them to work with you know the kids with the challenging behaviour.”</p>	<p>coming, and they’d be painting and doing whatever in the afternoon, and they wouldn’t want to come, because they’d want to be doing the painting, the clay activities, et cetera, so I had to try and make it as fun as possible ...Otherwise, I think if it isn’t fun I can’t get them to engage”</p> <p>“..the SENCO at school and the deputy head have both observed me doing Catch Up and were perfectly happy that it was being done correctly”</p> <p>“You actually become more knowledgeable about the way the program runs than the teacher does, so they start coming to you. They sort of discuss the difficulty with the child, they ask you to</p>	<p>‘knowledge was reflected in their work and in the way they were seen to be carrying out their responsibilities’</p> <p>Varying levels of ‘self-esteem and confidence’ at the start of the Foundation degree</p> <p>Previous higher level employment experience</p> <p>Confidence to pursue Qualified Teacher Status</p> <p>“ I think that the school has noticed that it’s about my time, the time that I am prepared to put in. Before starting this course, I would have stayed and put in extra work – which I was not paid for. Now I wouldn’t as I haven’t</p>

Studies	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
Concepts		<p>with the stressors present within the role'</p> <p>issues with unpaid planning and reasons why they plan in their own time included lack of preparation time in school hours and a lack of training.</p> <p>'expectations to work additional hours unpaid'</p> <p>"part and parcel of the job"</p> <p>'limited training opportunities offered to LSAs'</p> <p>Practical barriers around accessing training (e.g. being released for the training, cost of training, children they work with could miss out on allocated hours).</p>		<p>start on the program, and they then don't actually have much understanding of how the program works."</p>	<p>got the time or inclination."</p> <p>"My Head says that we are offering you all these valid experiences. That you would not be able to teach Y6 in any other school. They think that all the different opportunities that they offer you is great – yes – for them!"</p> <p>'basically they just give you more responsibility than the other teaching assistants, without extra pay.'</p> <p>Value in their various roles as individuals, parents, TAs and their 'future professional development'</p>

Studies	Brown and Devecchi (2013)	Cockroft and Atkinson (2015)	Higgins and Gulliford, (2014)	Houssart and Croucher (2013)	Morris (2010)
Concepts		"I appreciate it is a cost issue, but then surely to benefit the children more, we are better off getting the correct training firstly"			

1.7.1 Efficacy

This concept encompasses TAs' sense of being able to deal effectively with a specific task (i.e. self-efficacy beliefs; Bandura, 1978) and their beliefs about what they can do with their skills under different circumstances (i.e. perceived self-efficacy).

The researchers and TAs suggested that PD activities influenced TAs' thoughts, feelings, motivation and behaviour. TAs in Brown and Devecchi (2013) believed that training had a 'great' impact on their 'confidence', 'competence', 'ability to support children's learning', 'ability to improve/manage children's behaviour', 'ability to support children with SEN', and 'knowledge and understanding of the curriculum' (p.381). Similarly, Morris (2010) reported TAs had increased confidence due their understanding of teaching and learning from the Foundation course; such knowledge was reflected in TAs' work and in the way they were seen to be carrying out responsibilities. Higgins and Gulliford (2014) suggested that TAs' confidence with the intervention they had been trained, and their general work, was affected by their 'emotions or physiological state' (p.129). This was further emphasised by a TA's comments in Cockroft and Atkinson (2015); "If they have a specific need then you can't support them surely if you're not trained in how to deal with that specific need" (p.98).

There were differences in how PD impacted TAs' efficacy beliefs. In Morris (2010), a TA's sense of belief in their capabilities allowed them to commit to goals despite established expectations and potential organisational challenges;

... the school has noticed that it's about my time, the time that I am prepared to put in. Before starting this course, I would have stayed and put in extra work ...Now I wouldn't as I haven't got the time or inclination (p.487).

On the other hand, Brown and Devecchi (2013) reported that PD highlighted lack of progression available to TAs which negatively affected motivation; "I think the biggest thing for me now is I don't see really any point, because it doesn't happen to have a career really" (p.382).

Across the studies, TAs suggested that organisational factors influenced self-efficacy beliefs. This was exemplified by a TA in Houssart and Croucher (2013);

I did ... a phonics intervention with them over ... six weeks...I was given a handbook and 'Away you go.' [asked if she was happy to plan it herself] Not really, because I'm not confident in what I'm doing. So I kind of just went by the book and did my own thing ...I'm not happy with that at all (p.432).

A third of TAs in their sample had similar experiences; given 'written instructions in lieu of training' which had 'demotivating' effects (p.432). This outcome may be explained by Higgins and Gulliford (2014) who suggested 'the importance of a school developing as a learning organisation and for the TAs to be a part of this' (p.131). They also suggested that TA self-efficacy would increase 'if whole school norms were developed through whole school training and development of practices' (p.131).

Efficacy beliefs were inextricably linked to the complex relational system TAs were part of. TAs learned vicariously; "I think it's because you'd seen how someone else works doing it, and everybody learns from everyone else" (Higgins & Gulliford, 2014, p. 129). Similar experiences were echoed by a TA account in Houssart and Croucher (2013);

Reading Recovery is what I do a lot of ...I watched what Rhona (Reading Recovery teacher) did and how she delivered the book ...And I picked all that up from Rhona, which was great, and then went away and did it myself, put it into practice ...I work on my own. I've got a small room on my own (p.433).

Houssart and Croucher (2013) further suggested that the TA's 'positive account of learning from Rhona is closer to... mentoring and coaching' (p.432). Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) also wrote of the influence of verbal persuasion on effort; 'observations and feedback from other professionals could be helpful, as they felt that reassurance and guidance about their practice allowed them to develop further.' (p.98).

In summary, TA efficacy is a complex phenomenon. PD activities can influence efficacy beliefs and thus facilitate or hinder TA's behaviour in different ways related to determinants such as TAs' goals and aspirations, outcome expectations, affective processes, and their perception of obstacles and opportunities in their social environment. Translating the studies suggests individual differences in efficacy beliefs and organisational influences.

1.7.2 Relationships

Translating the studies into one another suggests that relationships were complex and influential to TAs' learning and practice.

TAs valued opportunities to interact with, and learn from, others. For example, when asked what prepares them for their role, TAs in Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) emphasised 'training from teachers', 'support between LSAs' and 'access to external agencies' (p.96). One reflected on her experience of working with a Speech and

Language Therapist; “I have had good stuff from the speech and language person brilliant.... helped a lot with the things I do on a daily basis” (Cockroft & Atkinson, 2015, p. 96). Similarly, a TA in Higgins and Gulliford (2014) mentioned that TAs learn from each other; “yeah and we learn ... from each other all of the time, well I do.” (129). Houssart and Croucher (2013) suggested that TAs are aware of pressures on teachers and that this inhibits sharing ‘innovative practice’ (p.343). However, another TA’s comments in Houssart and Croucher (2013) demonstrated the importance of ‘upward information flows’; “You actually become more knowledgeable about the way the program runs than the teacher does, so they start coming to you...” (p.436).

The powerful effect of supportive and responsive relationships was evident in Brown and Devecchi (2013) when TAs rated encouragement and support from school, tutors and colleagues as very important, and motivating factors, behind decisions to take up training. The positive impact of emotional and academic support was also shown in the dialogue presented in Morris (2010); “the lecturers were all really approachable and helpful and you always feel you can ask anything, it’s great” (p.488). Comments by TAs in Morris (2010) emphasised the value TAs place on their relationships with their friends/family because without such support, ‘they would not have been able to attend, cope with, or successfully complete the course’ (p.489).

Relationships were important for sharing knowledge, developing confidence and supporting practice. For example, TAs in Brown and Devecchi (2013) gained and shared knowledge through ‘TA study groups’, ‘mentoring’, and ‘coaching’ (p.379). Similarly, TAs in Higgins and Gulliford (2014) provided training or support to other TAs, boosting ‘confidence to do the intervention and the TA role in general’ (p.128). Higgins and Gulliford (2014) suggested the ‘importance of a school developing as a learning organisation and for TAs to be a part of this’ (p.131). Similar sentiments were shared by CPD managers in Brown and Devecchi (2013) who suggested that TAs are important to the ‘sustainability and productivity of the school setting’ (p.383).

In summary, TAs’ relationships were the basis for engagement and learning. How relationships work and their importance is discussed further below. Knowledge-sharing behaviour can be multi-directional and occurred through close interpersonal and distal relationships, and was influenced by organisational and individual factors (e.g. organisational support and reward, organisational commitment, social interaction and trust, intrinsic motivation; see Liu, Liang, Rajagopalan, Sambamurthy, & Wu, 2011). Perceived positive outcomes occurred if relationships were supported within

the organisation and responsive to TAs' social, emotional and academic needs. Learning can take place opportunistically and on the job. Sometimes learning occurs within a reflective practitioner framework (Schön, 1991) – the practice by which professionals become aware of their implicit knowledge base and learn from their experiences - and sometimes not. There was a message which suggested that TAs need to be actively included in the school learning community.

1.7.3 Identity

PD influenced how TAs viewed their various roles in society in relation to others - their social identity (Stryker, 1987; Tajfel, 1982).

One TA in Brown and Devecchi (2013) linked PD to lack of career progression;

... No pathway at all. In fact having finished the course, I felt like my pathway has come to a complete dead end (p.382).

Comments by TAs gathered in Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) noted frustrations over lack of 'recognition in light for what they do' (p.97). Moreover, TAs in Morris (2010) referred to enhanced skills and knowledge leading to increased workload and responsibilities without remuneration; "...just give you more responsibility than the other teaching assistants, without extra pay" (p.487). In contrast, a TA in Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) accepted additional responsibilities as "part and parcel of the job" (p.95). Such variation may reflect how work-related identity is thought to be the product of individual histories, personalities and work-related experiences (Busher, 2005).

Perceptions of having increased knowledge and skills and enhanced abilities was not always viewed as helpful by TAs as reflected by in Morris (2010); "I have found that the further I have gone in the course, the more – they call it responsibility – I call it that I have been put on to be honest" (p.487). Responsibilities were also 'put on' TAs in Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) and this seemed to threaten sense of identity; "I don't think that as a Level Two the amount of planning and left to our own devices isn't really, wasn't really in the job description" (p.95). An HLTA in Morris (2010) seemingly challenges cultural expectations linked to collective identity;

I think that the school has noticed that it's about my time, the time that I am prepared to put in. Before starting this course, I would have stayed and put in extra work – which I was not paid for. Now I wouldn't as I haven't got the time or inclination (p.487).

The way in which this TA managed and conveyed their identity could be understood within the context of identity theory (McCall & Simmons 1978) where identities can be improvised and negotiated, rather than normative and conventional.

PD activities also positively affected how TAs viewed themselves as individuals and as a collective group, and how they were viewed by others. Comments by TAs in Brown and Devecchi (2013) suggested PD improved self-esteem, and increased feelings of confidence and competence. A TA represented in Morris (2010) articulated similar positive outcomes linked to PD; “It [the Foundation degree] has raised my self-esteem; I know why I am doing what I do, I don’t feel such a fraud anymore” (p.478). Morris (2010) noted that even at the early stages of the Foundation degree course, confidence and self-esteem increased, but suggested that these TAs may have already had relatively high levels of self-esteem and confidence at the start of the degree due to factors such as previous experience of learning (e.g. previous HLTA experience) and socioeconomic status (e.g. having parents that attended higher education).

A TA in Houssart and Croucher (2013) used social comparison to compare her knowledge, skills and abilities to another;

You actually become more knowledgeable about the way the program runs than the teacher does, so they start coming to you. They sort of discuss the difficulty with the child, they ask you to start on the program, and they then don’t actually have much understanding of how the program works. (p.436).

In comparing herself with the teacher in this way, she shares a positive view of herself and feelings of superiority due to increased knowledge from the training programme. Houssart and Croucher (2013) noted that this was a common TA perception and similar views were reported by Morris (2010). However, rather than feel superior, there was a feeling of being equal; “The most beneficial thing is knowing and understanding why teachers are teaching, you can now say I know why you are doing what you are doing. The children are not, for example, just playing a fishing game, but are learning” (Morris, 2010, p. 486).

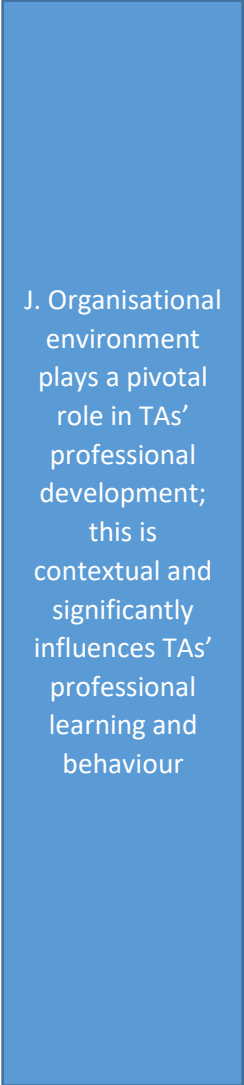
In summary, TAs have multiple identities which are complex and influenced by situations and environments. PD activities can influence how TAs view themselves, and others’ perceptions of them as individuals and as a collective group.

1.8 Synthesising translations

First and second order constructs were synthesised to develop a new interpretation: third order constructs (Schutz, 1962). Noblit and Hare (1988, p. 28) described this as 'making a whole into something more than the parts alone imply'. Three key concepts emerged – efficacy, relationships and identity – and form the basis for

developing a line of argument (see Table 10). The next section establishes how findings of the review address my interest in TAs' perspectives about PD.

Table 10: Developing the line of argument.

Key concept	Second order constructs	Third order construct
Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Professional development has some effect on TAs' confidence, behaviour and self-efficacy b) Individual differences in how professional development impacts TA's perceived self-efficacy c) Organisational influences on self-efficacy beliefs 	 <p>J. Organisational environment plays a pivotal role in TAs' professional development; this is contextual and significantly influences TAs' professional learning and behaviour</p>
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) TAs compare their knowledge, skills and abilities to others e) TAs' individual identities and collective identity can be confirmed, negotiated or threatened in social interactions f) Professional development has a direct impact on TA's self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception, future perspective 	
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> g) Positive and supportive reciprocal relationships are important to TAs h) TAs value strong support systems responding to social, emotional and academic needs i) TAs gain knowledge and skills from interactions with others, especially other TAs 	

1.9 Expressing the synthesis

Through my systematic interpretation of the literature, efficacy, relationships and identity were highlighted by TAs as the most prominent factors influenced by PD activities.

The studies suggested that PD had potentially negative or positive outcomes on TAs' beliefs and functioning. This may be understood in terms of what is known about the influential role of perceived-self efficacy in human adaptation and change (Bandura, 2009). TAs felt reassured by experiences that supported their efficacy (e.g. successful experiences of implementing interventions / learning tasks, observing fellow TAs perform the task and learning from their experiences, seeing positive outcome expectations such as making a difference to pupil(s) / teachers in class, verbal persuasion from teachers or their peers) and valued such opportunities. TAs also supported efficacy in others by providing similar experiences known to support efficacy, for example through coaching or mentoring others. However, it was also acknowledged that PD wasn't enough; the environment also shaped TAs' efficacy beliefs (e.g. through mastery and vicarious experiences) and had a powerful impact on behaviour and functioning, highlighting an interplay between TA and environment. TAs suggested that efficacy beliefs were also influenced by how they were seen by others. Identity, in this context, is understood to be a fluid concept and one influenced by social interactions. It is thought that an individual operates within the context of the social structure (i.e. society, classroom and school culture) and that there are mutual influences of characteristics of the social structure and characteristics of individuals (Stryker & Burke, 2000). There is therefore a need to understand both the nature of the individuals creating society (i.e. the TA, others in the school environment such as Head teacher, parents) and the nature of society in which the individual is acting. So, TAs' professional identities are influenced by their social environment. While there were differences in opinion relating to the impact of PD on work-related identity (see Turner, 1999), it was clear that the perceived power dynamics at play between TAs and those in the social structure (e.g. teachers, school leaders, tutors) had a powerful impact on their practice and how TAs saw themselves (see Mead, 1934; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006; Serpe, 1987). For example, TAs emphasised the value of PD as it enhanced self-esteem and led to increased feelings of confidence and competence but were also aware of

expectations that may come with such an identity i.e. increased responsibilities over which they have little or no control. As such, TAs behaved in ways to circumvent or maintain identities (i.e. passive group with limited autonomy, less skilled than teachers).

Furthermore, the reflective accounts of the TAs presented in the studies provided insight into their dynamic relational environment. TAs established and developed relationships with each other, and other school staff, and shared and gained knowledge through responsive and supportive relationships. Relationships were also a key source of emotional support. TAs suggested that knowledge sharing behaviour was affected by notions of a hierarchical school context. This may be understood in terms of what is known about intersubjectivity i.e. shared emotions (attunement), joint attention and awareness, and congruent intentions (Stern, 1985; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001).

Fundamentally, analysis has suggested that TAs value PD but wish to be seen and included in the learning organisation in ways similar to teachers (see King, 2012), e.g. bottom-up approaches with top-down support, autonomy and professional trust, and collaborative practices and collective responsibility.

1.10 Limitations

There are clearly limitations within this meta-ethnographic literature review. Greater in-depth consideration could have been given to UK based studies, relevant articles before 2010 and non-peer reviewed research such as theses. However, the literature review was conducted by a single researcher and due to the previous systematic review (Cajkler et al., 2007), it was determined that studies after 2010 would be relevant and more manageable.

The process of meta-ethnography can allow a focus on a specific area of interest, highlight issues and realities, lead to significant new insights and theoretical developments so that there is better understanding of social phenomena and the control we may have. The concepts highlighted in this review are based on my interpretations of how TAs' view the world. Therefore, the synthesis is open to critique and debate and should, as expected, be viewed as an interpretation. This is one of many possible indications of TAs' experiences of PD. However, I used supervision, guides, empirical research, and evaluative studies and frameworks to

support the meta-ethnography process and demonstrate how I reached interpretation of the studies.

Due to the interpretative nature of appraising qualitative papers, there are limitations of the approach such as objectivity and replicability, however I followed guidance (Yardley, 2000) on how to assess studies which use qualitative research methods and have attempted to be transparent in how I came to my judgements about the quality of papers.

1.11 Conclusions and implications for further research

A key finding from the initial searching stages of this review was that, despite TAs being the second largest group in the school workforce, there is limited research into their PD in the UK and lack of in-depth understanding of what supports their learning and practice in light of what is now known about the role of organisational influences. The findings from the synthesis indicate that PD can have an impact on TAs' efficacy, identity and relationships. The organisational context which TAs are part of appeared to play a pivotal role in in each of these. Further research is needed to understand TAs' experiences of learning and development. Future research could explore in more depth TAs' views about what helps them learn. However before I move forward, I will consider the conceptual framework which will influence the nature and direction of such research. The next chapter will also demonstrate my motivation for carrying out my research with TAs.

Chapter 2: Bridging document

2.1 Introduction

I am aware that I bring my own assumptions, values and beliefs to the research process and that these influence the research process and knowledge produced. Authors such as Parker (2013) discuss the importance of thinking through and stating our position on what the world is and how we can know about it. Therefore, it is important to now turn the “investigative lens towards oneself” (Patnaik, 2013, p. 3) and answer the question: Why did I do this piece of research at this time, in this context and in this way? Reflexivity allows me to explore this question.

Reflexivity is connected to ethical considerations and can help establish rigour in qualitative research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Lazard & McAvoy, 2017). Lazard and McAvoy (2017) describe two types:

- *personal reflexivity* involves thinking about the ways our identities and positions impact the research process, and includes personal characteristics of the researcher such as race, gender and personal experiences.
- *epistemological reflexivity* concerns the nature, scope and limitations of knowledge.

Lazard and McAvoy (2017) note that linking personal to epistemological positions helps develop insight between the self and the research study. They also argue that reflection on personal, social, theoretical, and/or political influences means that claims and conclusions made in research can be understood and evaluated within context.

In what follows, I use Parker’s (2013) model (see Figure 2), which is informed by Hay (2002) and Grix (2002), to clarify my position and the research process.

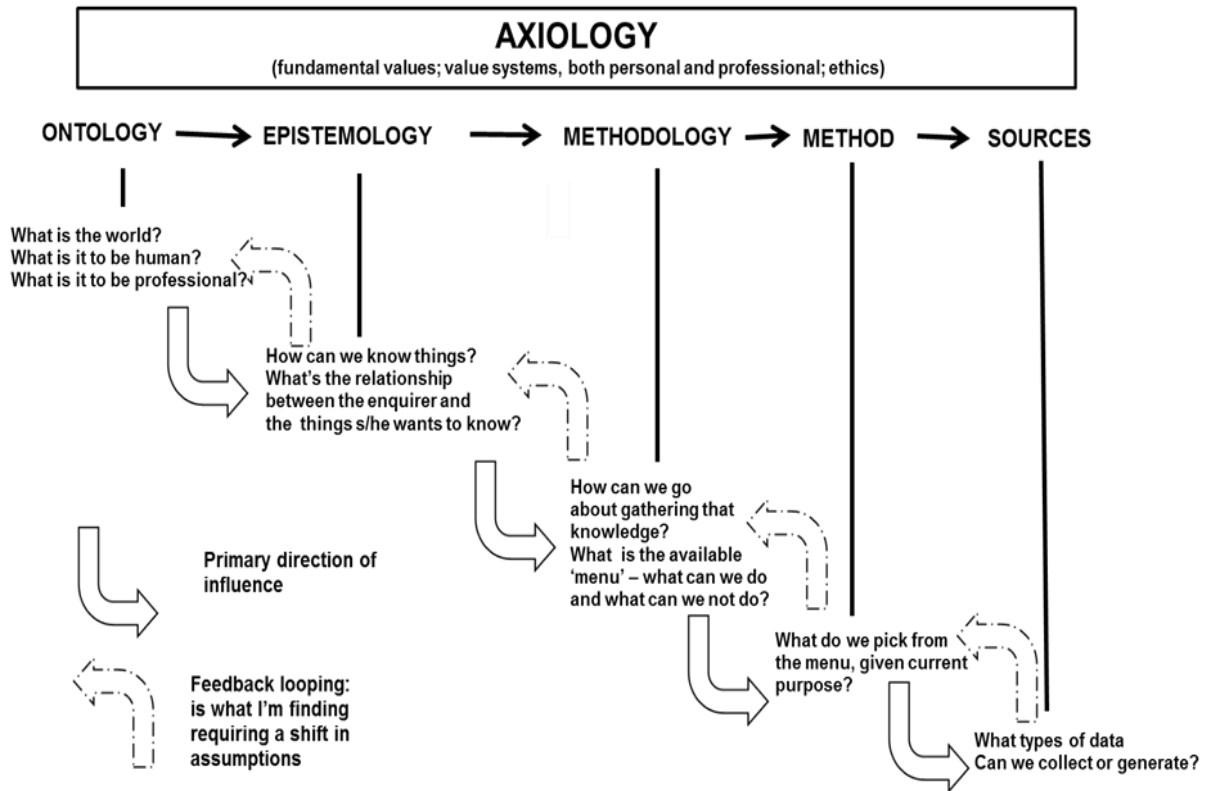


Figure 2: Parker's (2013) model linking world view and research action.

2.2 My motivations

There are four reasons for choosing to explore the topic of how Teaching Assistants' (TAs) learn.

- (1) Personal knowledge and experience from working as a TA and professional knowledge from working with TAs as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) on placement, sparked my interest in carrying out research with this group. Prior to starting my doctorate training, I worked as a TA in a secondary school science department for two years. During this time, I did not receive any formal training. I felt that I "learned" by doing the job and often "winged it". I have since worked with TAs as a TEP and noticed some similarities with my personal experiences and shared experiences between TAs despite working in different contexts. By engaging in extended reflection on various TA-related issues such as their role, deployment and practice, I was not interested in exploring TA role in England or what makes training, or specific training programmes, effective. Rather, I was concerned about TAs' perspectives and lack thereof in UK-based research. Specifically, I was interested in understanding circumstances that lead to TAs learning.

(2) Over the course of my training, I have been interested in systemic change in organisations. For example, System-Growth approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2008) have helped me understand different approaches to organisational change. I am also drawn towards research and theory relating to relationships and interactions of individuals, groups and organisations. When working with others, I draw upon psychological theory and research relating to solution-focused approaches, positive psychology and resiliency theory (see Bozic, 2013). Andragogy theory (Knowles, 1977; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005) and community psychology (Prilleltensky et al., 2015) match my values and beliefs about lifelong learning and empowering others.

(3) There are educational and governmental policies, initiatives and schemes which suggest TAs are currently important in England. The literature review and empirical research took place across 2015 - 2017, a period following education reforms and changes to school budgets. The research could link to current initiatives such as the “Teacher recruitment and retention strategy”, where one of the aims is to gather teachers and head teachers views about issues related to teachers leaving the profession within five years of qualification (Department for Education, 2019). In March 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) published a review that suggested:

A small number of teachers mentioned funding of the education sector as a factor in their decision to leave teaching. A few secondary teachers said their school had experienced budget cuts, which reduced the number of teaching roles and teaching assistants, therefore increasing class sizes and restricting the amount of funds for resources, trips and CPD (p. 27).

Understanding how TAs learn may help teachers and head teachers understand how best to support their practice in a context with reduced resources, ongoing challenges and potentially increased expectations, roles and responsibilities for school staff. Webster and Blatchford (2019) recently suggested that, to accommodate decreased TA numbers, the projected increase in pupil numbers, increasing numbers of young people with needs complex enough to require an Education Health and Care Plan and the

decline in the number of special schools, TA capacity needs to be reinstated within the next eight years in England. The authors suggest that reinstating TA capacity by 2027 seems “highly improbable” (p. 109) and that it is inevitable that mainstream schools need to respond by adopting more inclusive practices. The current research could provide an opportunity to focus on TAs’ perspectives and clarify processes involved in their professional learning so that TAs and others understand how to support their practice.

(4) This research is relevant both at the national and local level. The current research took place in a locality within a large County in North-East England. Until recently educational professionals, including educational psychologists (EPs), were involved in strategic work with TAs. EPs and specialist teachers facilitated monthly twilight sessions for primary and secondary TAs. From speaking with attendees and facilitators, I understand that TAs were either directed to attend by their SENCo / Head teacher, though a number attended of their own accord for personal reasons and / or interests in topics such as Autism, Anxiety etc. It was my experience that there was a high demand for this type of work and that it was valued by the TAs so much so that some were willing to dedicate their free time to access learning and support. In reviewing the literature, it was evident that most TAs practice without formalised learning and that the organisational context was key to their professional development and learning. I wondered about the loss of this space for these TAs and the ways in which TAs learn outside this context. Therefore, I wanted to conduct more formal research into how TAs learn in a primary school.

2.3 My position and the research process

Parker (2013) discusses the notion of multiple paradigms and views of the world and the importance of acknowledging, understanding and reflecting on them to guide decisions in professional practice. As previously mentioned, Parker (2013) developed the work of Hay (2002) and Grix (2002), and created a conceptual framework to illustrate decision making in empirical research (Figure 2). In what follows, I consider each element in turn, detailing my worldviews, and reflect on how

this shaped decisions and outcomes for my empirical research. My conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 3.

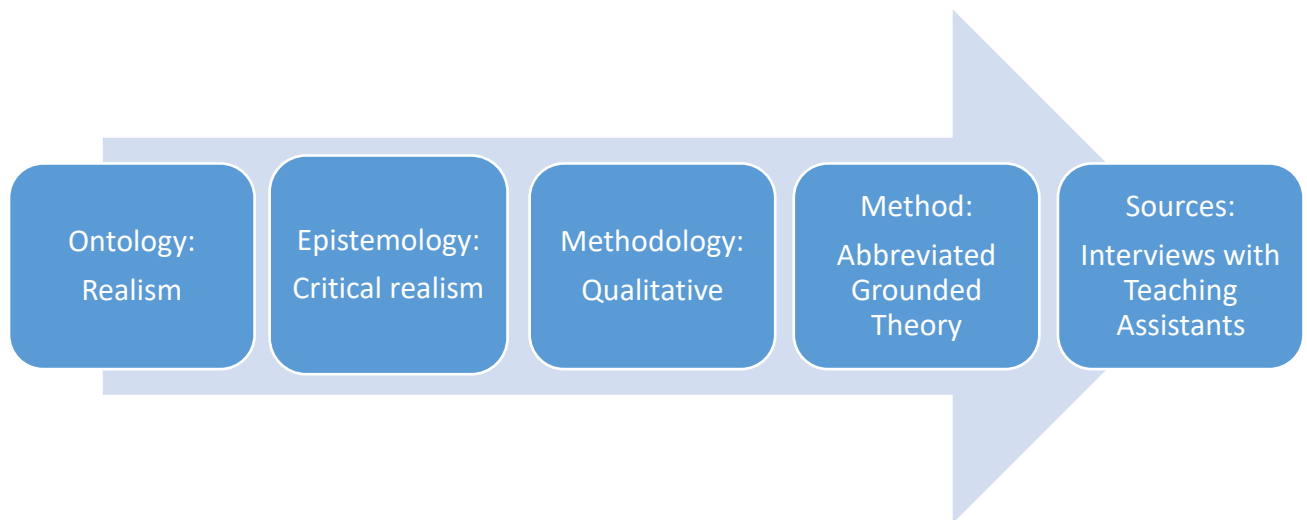


Figure 3: My conceptual framework.

2.3.1 Axiology

As demonstrated in Figure 2, axiology affects all stages of the research process and is thought of as our fundamental values and beliefs. Curiosity, empowering others and advocating for change are some of the values and beliefs which guide my professional practice. As such, these guided the research. I wanted the research to be meaningful in some way to the TAs taking part. Therefore, it was important for the research to develop “knowledge based practice” (Corbin, 2008, p. 11) and for it to move beyond the descriptive level and what Oliver (2011, p. 376) termed “surface tinkering”. Rather, it was important for me to engage in a type of research that allows the researcher to go deeper, and examine structures that generate social phenomena.

2.3.2 Ethical considerations

Situation ethics, a category of ethical relativism (Dewey & Tufts, 1922) where there are no moral absolutes and right or wrong are based on social norms, was used to guide ethical considerations. Moreover, the reflexive process helped me to pre-empt likely ethical issues (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). However, the authors acknowledge that the reflexive process cannot identify every ethical issue that may occur in research. Rather, reflexivity provides the researcher with the opportunity to pre-empt potential issues and be more sensitive to, and prepared for “ethically important

moments” i.e. difficult and “often subtle, and usually unpredictable situations that arise in the practice of doing research” (p. 262).

An ethical dilemma in the context of this research may be that I gathered the views of a group who, I am aware from my past experience working as a TA and my professional experiences of working with them, lack of autonomy regarding factors that influence their day-to-day practice (see Blatchford et al., 2012) in the context of a school organisation.

Furthermore, the scope of this research did not provide an opportunity to effect immediate change for TAs involved. Rather, it provided an opportunity for TAs to reflect on their practice and for me to gather information which could be used by those who can effect change at the national and local level such as policy-makers, educational professionals and researchers, teacher training programme designers and curriculum designers of TA professional development courses. In this way, participants could benefit directly and indirectly from the research process (see Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

2.3.3 Ontology

Ontology is focused on the form and nature of reality and what can be known about it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I believe that an external reality exists, one that can be independent of the senses and that deeper structures lie beneath observable patterns (Madill, Jordan, & Shirley, 2000). This was an important consideration for the empirical research. I was interested in TAs’ perspectives about their own learning, something I had not observed directly, and the sense they made of this, rather than proving laws about learning that are generalisable and govern the world or emphasizing facts and the causes of behaviour (i.e. the positivist paradigm).

2.3.4 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known. As illustrated in Figure 2, the epistemological position is determined by the ontological position. Scott (2005) suggests that attempts at describing and explaining the nature of the world are always fallible and open to critique and replacement by a new set of descriptions and explanations. This has implications for the outcome of the empirical research. I acknowledged that I would be developing a model of how TAs learn and that this model would be based on my decisions about how to code dialogue, and my perceptions of relationships and

patterns within and amongst categories. Therefore, any models arising from this research come from my sense-making of TAs' making sense of their learning experiences: hermeneutics (see Rennie, 2000), and may not match to another's reality.

Further, it seems that multiple realities can exist. It is possible for individuals to attach different meanings to their interactions with and in the world. This is because they experience different parts of reality and give meaning to events in light of his or her own biography or experiences, according to gender, time and place, cultural, political, religious, and professional backgrounds (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002; Oliver, 2011). Therefore, I chose to include a number of TAs in the research and use their perspectives to create knowledge.

2.3.5 Methodology

Methodology is focused on how the researcher can go about finding out what they believe can be known. How knowledge is gathered is constrained by the ontological and epistemological position. I adopted a qualitative methodology: Willig (2008), wrote that the qualitative framework is about identifying process, object or entity that the researcher wants to investigate. There is an emphasis on how rather than what. Qualitative research can move beyond the known and enter the world of participants, and in doing so researchers can see the world from their perspective and thus make discoveries that will add to the development of empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through this research, I wanted to provide TAs with an opportunity to share their lived experience to create knowledge about a social phenomenon (learning), rather than act as an observer and interpreter of their action.

2.3.6 Method

In this section, I discuss the method I considered suitable for the empirical research. I was aware of different interpretative approaches available (see Figure 4). Starks and Trinidad (2007) note that each interpretative approach explores questions of meaning and understanding but when they are used as research methods, differences rise in terms of how researchers frame research questions, sample participants, and collect data. Researchers are therefore encouraged to familiarise themselves with the details of different qualitative methods to ensure a good match

between research question(s), goals and products of the study (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

	Phenomenology	Discourse Analysis	Grounded Theory
HISTORY	European Philosophy	Linguistics/Semiotics	Sociology
PHILOSOPHY	There exists an essential, perceived reality with common features	Knowledge and meaning is produced through interaction with multiple discourses	Theory is discovered by examining concepts grounded in the data
GOAL	Describe the meaning of the lived experience of a phenomenon	Understand how people use language to create and enact identities and activities	Develop an explanatory theory of basic social processes
METHODOLOGY Formulating a research question	"What is the lived experience of [<u>the phenomenon of interest</u>]?"	"What discourses are used and how do they shape identities, activities, and relationships?"	"How does the basic social process of [<u>X</u>] happen in the context of [<u>Y environment</u>]?"
Sampling	Those who have experienced the phenomenon of interest	Those situated in one or more of the discourses of interest	Those who have experienced the phenomenon under different conditions
Data Collection: Observations	Observe participants in the context where the phenomenon is experienced	Observe participants in conversation in their natural environment	Observe participants where the basic social process takes place
Interviewing strategy	Participant describes experience; interviewer probes for detail, clarity	Both engage in dialogue; interviewer probes for intertextual meaning	Participant describes experience; interviewer probes for detail, clarity
ANALYTIC METHODS Decontextualization & Recontextualization: Process of coding, sorting, identifying themes and relationships, and drawing conclusions	Identify descriptions of the phenomenon; cluster into discrete categories; taken together, these describe the "essence" or core commonality and structure of the experience	Examine how understanding is produced through a close look at the words. Interested in <i>how</i> the story is told, what identities, activities, relationships, and shared meaning are created through language	Open, axial, & selective coding: Examine concepts across their properties & dimensions; develop an explanatory framework that integrates the concepts into a core category
Role of Analyst's Views	Bracket views	Examine own place in the discourse(s)	Bracket views
AUDIENCE	Clinicians, practitioners & others who need to understand the lived experience of the phenomenon of interest	Policy makers & interventionists who need to understand the discourses in use to craft effective messages	Researchers & practitioners who seek explanatory models upon which to design interventions
PRODUCT	A thematic description of the pre-given "essences" and structures of lived experiences	Description of language-in-use; identify how different discourses shape how identities, relationships, and social goods are negotiated and produced	Generate theory from the range of the participants' experience

Figure 4: Similarities and differences of three qualitative approaches (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1373).

GT is concerned with the 'six Cs' of social processes - causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances and conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). GT seeks to understand patterns and relationships among these elements thus it moves beyond description to the development of a contextually relevant and theoretical perspective (Charmaz, 2008; Fletcher, 2017; Willig, 2008). Moreover, as an approach, Fletcher (2017) suggests that GT provides an opportunity to centre participants' views and experiences and generate theory from the range of participants' experience, allowing for fresh insights into the topic area.

Considering the systematic literature review findings (Chapter One), my empirical research question and the method's goals, Grounded Theory Methods (GTMs) seemed the most appropriate to explore the chosen area. Charmaz (1996, pp. 28-29) suggested

GTMs are suitable for studying individual processes, interpersonal relations and the reciprocal effects between individuals and larger social processes. For example, these methods are useful for studying typical social psychological topics such as motivation, personal experience, emotions, identity, attraction, prejudice and interpersonal co-operation and conflict.

I used the abbreviated version of GT. The full version of GT is preferred but due to time constraints this was not possible. Timonen, Foley, and Conlon (2018) argued that this is a pragmatic concern often faced by GT doctoral researchers (e.g. Wu & Beaunae, 2014). In the full version, the researcher moves back and forth between data collection and analysis (see Table 11 for information about the fundamental components of GT). It is important to note that in the abbreviated version, theoretical sensitivity, theoretical saturation and negative case analysis, are still possible but these were achieved within the available data set.

All varieties of GT:

- are concerned with how individual participants make meaning and take action within their worlds;
- ask questions which relate to processes, interactions, and context and;
- seek to approach the research inquiry with openness to new findings (Oliver, 2011; Timonen et al., 2018).

The abbreviated version was still appropriate to my research question and my axiological, ontological epistemological and methodological position. Moreover, researchers who claim critical realist epistemological positions have employed a GT approach to data coding and analysis (see Fletcher, 2017; Lee et al., 2015; Oliver, 2011). By applying GT-inspired coding to interview transcripts, I was able to produce a systematic representation of the participants' experience (Timonen et al., 2018).

Table 11: Fundamental components of a GT study, adapted from Sbaraini, Carter, Evans, and Blinkhorn (2011, p. 3).

Component	Stage	Description
Openness	Throughout the study	GT methodology emphasises inductive analysis. Deduction is the usual form of analytic thinking in much research. Deduction moves from the general to the particular: it begins with pre-existing hypotheses or theories, and collects data to test those theories. In contrast, induction moves from the particular to the general: it develops new theories or hypotheses from many observations. GT's emphasise on induction means GT studies tend to take a very open approach to the process being studied. The emphasis of a GT study may evolve as it becomes apparent to the researchers what is important to the study participants.
Analysing immediately	Analysis and data collection	In a GT study, the researchers do not wait until the data are collected before commencing analysis. In a GT study, analysis must commence as soon as possible, and continue in parallel with data collection, to allow <i>theoretical sampling</i> (see below).
Coding and comparing	Analysis	Data analysis relies on <i>coding</i> - a process of breaking data down into much smaller components and labelling those components - and <i>comparing</i> - comparing data with data, case with case, event with event, code with code, to understand and explain variation in the data. <i>Codes</i> are eventually combined and related to one another - at this stage they are more abstract, and are referred to as <i>categories</i> or <i>concepts</i> .
Memo-writing (sometimes also drawing diagrams)	Analysis	The analyst writes many memos throughout the project. Memos can be about events, cases, categories, or relationships between categories. Memos are used to stimulate and record the analysts' developing thinking, including the <i>comparisons</i> made (see above).
Theoretical sampling	Sampling and data collection	Theoretical sampling is central to GT design. A theoretical sample is informed by <i>coding, comparison and memo-writing</i> . Theoretical sampling is designed

Component	Stage	Description
		to serve the developing <i>theory</i> . Analysis raises questions, suggests relationships, highlights gaps in the existing data set and reveals what the researchers do not yet know. By carefully selecting <i>participants</i> and by modifying the <i>questions</i> asked in data collection, the researchers fill gaps, clarify uncertainties, test their interpretations, and build their emerging theory.
Theoretical saturation	Sampling, data collection and analysis	Qualitative researchers generally seek to reach 'saturation' in their studies. Often this is interpreted as meaning that the researchers are hearing nothing new from participants. In a GT study, theoretical saturation is sought. This is a subtly different form of saturation, in which all of the concepts in the substantive theory being developed are well understood and can be substantiated from the data.
Production of a substantive theory	Analysis and interpretation	The results of a grounded theory study are expressed as a substantive theory, that is, as a set of concepts that are related to one another in a cohesive whole. As in most science, this theory is considered to be fallible, dependent on context and never completely final.

2.3.7 Sources

This relates to decisions about 'sources of information we can use' (Parker, 2013) to explore the research topic. In order to elicit an understanding of the multiple realities that exist, I used qualitative interviewing with four participants, the most common data collection method in GT (Glaser & Holton, 2004; Timonen et al., 2018). Oliver (2011, p. 382) suggested:

If reasons act as "psychological mechanisms" for action ... explanations for human behaviour must start with participants' own analyses of their intentions. A critical realist grounded theory would simply continue this "regression" by moving from individual action to reasons to rules to structures ... and see attention to individual meaning-making as an integral step to understanding causality.

Qualitative interviews provide a medium to explore psychological mechanisms for action and for TAs to make sense of their own experiences.

Interviews can be used to provide an emerging ontological framework of how TAs learn. However, it is acknowledged that participants are always one step behind the evolving and emergent nature of the social world; therefore their description of the

world is also one step behind, as is my sense making (see Scott, 2005).

Furthermore the model developed from the interviews has the potential to replace old ways of thinking, yet it too can be replaced and become redundant – be considered transitive (Scott, 2005).

2.3.8 Reflexivity

Undertaking an abbreviated GT provided challenges and learning opportunities. I was overwhelmed with the process of teaching myself a new method, especially one synonymous with words and phrases such as “hard work, “highly ambitious”, “challenging” (Timonen et al., 2018, p. 8). Given my interest in the organisational context from the literature review, the idea of producing a substantive theory was not only intimidating but felt impossible at times due to the large volumes of data generated by line-by-line coding. I found the process of abbreviated GT extremely challenging mentally.

However, in seeking to demystify GT, Timonen et al. (2018) challenged the view that GT must always result in theory. They suggested that to state such is “incorrect, misleading, and unnecessarily intimidating” (p. 4). Rather, they suggested that the most common outcome from GT is enhanced conceptual clarity which is short of theory (i.e. a model) in terms of a comprehensive system of ideas aimed at fully explaining and predicting phenomenon. I found that such in-depth exploration (i.e. constructing categories, making links between them) led to greater conceptual clarity in the research area.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an opportunity to detail the research process and explain how I influenced it and was influenced by it. My consideration of GT, helped me to move on with exploring: How do Teaching Assistants learn in the workplace?

The following chapter presents the contextual findings and explains how the qualitative results derive the GT of TA learning and development practice in a mainstream primary school.

Chapter 3: Research Project – How do Teaching Assistants learn in the workplace?

3.1 Abstract

Research has explored environmental and personal factors and conditions facilitating professional learning in school contexts. However, Teaching Assistant (TA) voice and perspectives are neglected. The aim of the study was to explore TAs' perspectives about what helps them to do their job and what supports their learning in school. The research question derived from this was: **“How do Teaching Assistants learn in the workplace?”**

Interview data from four TAs working in a mainstream First School were analysed using critical realist grounded theory (GT). The model developed from the data proposes that TAs learn and develop in an organisational context with a supportive leader and culture. More specifically, the GT identifies relational aspects as fundamental to how TAs learn and develop in a school context. Positive relationships pulled together three sub-categories (thought processes, feelings and organisational / external context) and indicates that relationships are core to TAs' learning and developing in a school context. The model suggests that being connected to others, belonging to a positive environment, experiencing mutual trust and respect, feeling heard and valued are factors that contribute to positive relationships. The constructs identified in the model are distinct yet related.

The model also proposes the importance of internal processes (thoughts and feelings) such as efficacy, self-evaluation and reflective practice, motivation and commitment for TAs' learning and development. The research findings were placed within the context of existing research on the identified constructs as well as theories of learning, interaction and systems thinking. The factors in the model have possible implications for school systems, policy makers and Educational Psychologists (EPs).

3.2 Introduction

3.2.1 Professional learning

TAs' role, deployment and preparedness and their impact on pupil-related outcomes remains an area for debate and discussion in England, and internationally.

Research and large scale reviews (Cajkler et al., 2007; Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle,

2010; Sharma & Salend, 2016) continue to report issues such as unclear professional roles, restricted communication and opportunities for collaboration and training between TAs and teachers. This often results in TAs taking on instructional, classroom management, and socialisation roles, resulting in ineffective and separate instruction that (unintentionally) challenges the inclusion, learning, socialisation and independence of pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and the pedagogical roles of teachers (Sharma & Salend, 2016). I want to move beyond this, and other relevant and related issues such as the ‘transfer of learning from training’ or ‘transfer problem’ (see Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume, Ford, Baldwin, & Huang, 2009; Ford, Baldwin, & Prasad, 2018), and explore TAs’ perspectives about what helps them to do their job and to what effect, and what supports their learning in school.

Chapter 1 suggested that TAs’ efficacy, relationships and identity were most influenced by Professional Development (PD) activities, and that organisational context affects TAs’ professional learning and behaviour. Furthermore, TAs valued PD but wanted to be included in the learning organisation differently. These findings highlighted a research gap and led me to develop a theoretical perspective of how TAs learn. I wanted to focus on patterns and relationships amongst social processes (i.e. to uncover underlying causes, contexts, consequences and conditions of TAs’ learning), rather than descriptions and evaluations of TAs’ PD experiences.

3.2.2 Why should we focus on TAs’ perceptions?

Recognition of the interplay between environment and personal factors and conditions facilitating professional learning in school contexts has been emphasised (Veelen, Slegers, & Endedijk, 2017). Empirical research has focused on teachers (Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011) and secondary school leaders (Veelen et al., 2017) but TA voice and perspectives are neglected.

3.2.3 The current study

A review into TAs’ learning in schools is much needed and may provide greater conceptual clarity and refine, reform or add to existing theory and literature (Timonen et al., 2018). Through the use of realist Grounded Theory (GT) I present a model of

how TAs learn and develop in their workplace. As such, implications for practice and thoughts for future directions are presented. Following this, a possible role for Applied EPs is also identified and discussed.

3.3 Ethical considerations

An overview of the main ethical processes and considerations is given here. Ethical approval was sought and granted in line with the requirements of Newcastle University. Principles and guidelines outlined in the Code of Human Research and Ethics (British Psychological Society, 2014) were followed at all times.

Dynamics of power between myself (the researcher and the link EP), the Head teacher and participants was also considered (Mason, 1996; Riley, Schouten, & Cahill, 2003). Interview questions (Table 13) may have evoked discomfort as there was a focus on interactions with colleagues. Power dynamics and issues of inclusion of particular participants and exclusion of others, may have resulted from my decision to seek consent from the Headteacher first. However, within the context of a school organisation, this approach may be considered appropriate.

3.4 Method

I adopted a critical realist perspective, assuming that perceptions of reality may differ between participants, though these perceptions can be scrutinised, and phenomena be explored through research (Oliver, 2011). Consequently, I also presumed that involvement with theory from previous research and reading influenced my approach, and how I went about developing my research strategy. (Charmaz, 2013). Data were analysed using Strauss and Corbin's (1990) realist GT. GT allowed greater insight into the processes facilitating TAs' PD because a method it centres participants' views and experiences (Fletcher, 2017), and is concerned with what Strauss and Corbin (1990) term the 'six Cs' of social processes - causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances and conditions. A model was used to explain social processes in context and conclusions were drawn.

3.4.1 Participants

Opportunity sampling was used to recruit four TAs from a north-east England First School where I work as a Trainee EP. The school was selected because it employed TAs working with primary-age children (4 to 9 year olds).

I e-mailed the Headteacher with an overview of my proposed research and asked for the details of any TAs interested in being involved. However, participants were selected by the Headteacher. It is possible that she selected TAs who were happy in their role, experienced, confident and with whom she had a positive relationship.

An overview of the 4 participating TAs is given in Table 12.

Table 12: Participant details

Name³	Sex	Ethnicity	Years of experience working as a TA
Sol	Female	White British	7 – 8
Steph	Female	White British	18
Priscilla	Female	White British	17
Greg	Male	White British	3

3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

In line with realist GT, the interview guide (Table 13) was developed using existing research and literature (see Hart, New, & Freeman, 2004). I did not adhere rigidly to the guide as suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2008) as this can hinder discovery by limiting the amount, and type of data that can be generated. General and follow-up questions were used to allow participants to elaborate and explain what was important to them, whilst keeping some focus on the research concept (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

³ Participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Table 13: Interview guide

I. Biographical/Historical/ background	II. How you learn(ed)	III. Experiences/things you do well	IV. Questions based on literature
<p>Is this the only place you've worked?</p> <p>When did you start working here?</p> <p>How long have you worked here for?</p> <p>Could you please tell me what you do in your job?</p>	<p>When you're in school, what helps you do your job?</p> <p>Have you had any formal training along the way? Can you please tell me about it? <i>Was it good? What was good about it? What wasn't good about it?</i></p> <p>When you first started, how did you learn how to do your job?</p> <p>How do you learn now?</p> <p>What is there in school that helps you learn?</p> <p>Tell me about a time you've learned something. <i>What happened? When? Where? Who was involved? What did that have you doing? How did that leave you feeling/thinking?</i></p>	<p>Tell me about what the class teacher(s) appreciates about you.</p> <p>Tell me about what other TAs appreciate about you.</p> <p>Can you tell me about a time when you realised you did something well? (rephrase/prompt) Tell me about a time when you think things went well. <i>What happened? When? Where? Who was involved? What did that have you doing? How did that leave you feeling/thinking?</i></p> <p>Can you think what experiences helped you become the skilled professional you are today?</p>	<p>Can you tell me about the working relationship you have with the teacher? <i>Are there things about the way you work that helps you learn? What doesn't help?</i></p> <p>Can you tell me about a time you did something together in class?</p> <p>Can you tell me about the working relationship you have with other TAs? <i>Are there things about the way you work that helps you learn? What doesn't help?</i></p> <p>You've told me about your background, what helps you learn, and your experiences. <i>Are there things that have helped you learn that you would like to do more of? Less of? Differently? Why is that?</i></p>

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by an external agency registered with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Face-to-face interviews have advantages and disadvantages (see Opdenakker, 2006; Roulston & Choi, 2018) and strategies such as reflecting on interviewer-interviewee relationship are suggested to guide researchers (Creswell, 2013).

Pragmatically researchers cannot address every point raised, but being sensitised to such challenges in qualitative interviewing can help the researcher anticipate potential issues (Creswell, 2013). Interviews allow researchers to follow-up interesting responses or explore underlying motives, creating rich and illuminating data (Robson, 2002). Furthermore, the use of interviews in the research design is in line with the critical realist epistemological stance and the version of GT used (see Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Smith & Elger, 2014)

3.5 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using Strauss and Corbin's (1990) coding procedures. The abbreviated version of GT was used due to time constraints (Timonen et al., 2018). In this version, theoretical sensitivity, theoretical saturation and negative case analysis are fulfilled within the available texts. GT-inspired coding was used to produce a systematic representation of the participants' experience and understanding (Willig, 2008). As there is lack of in-depth understanding of what supports TAs' learning and practice, I hoped GT method may provide new insights or clarify existing theory (Hadley, 2015; Timonen et al., 2018).

3.5.1 Procedure

Following transcription, a model was developed (see Figure 6) using the procedure outlined in Figure 5. Open coding (phases 2 -5) and axial coding (phase 7) 'go hand in hand', distinctions between these phases are 'artificial' and are for explanatory purposes only (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 198)

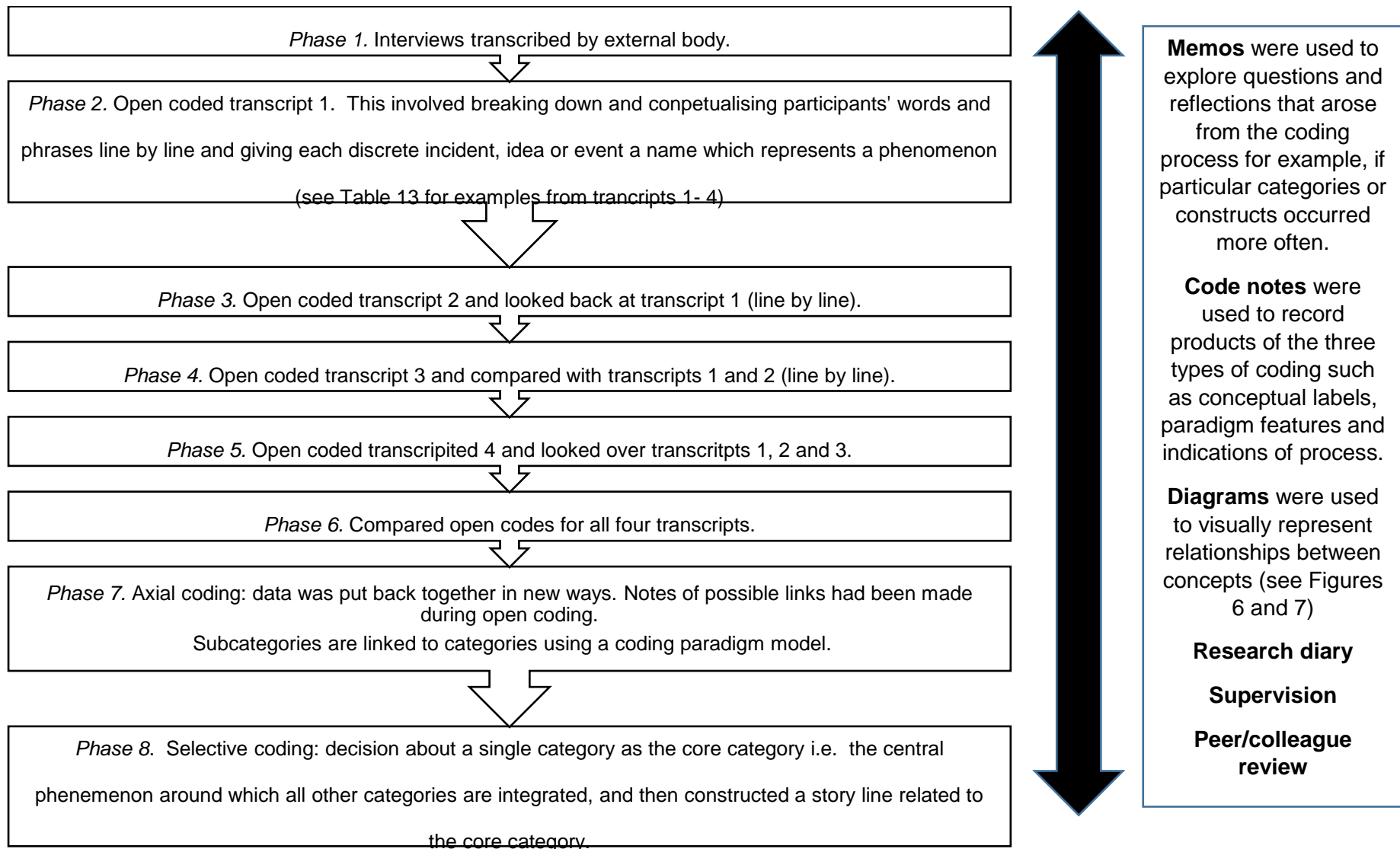


Figure 5: Analytic process adapted from Sheffield and Morgan (2017).

3.6 Findings

Analysis yielded 1 central category and 3 subcategories comprising of 12 conceptual constructs. These constructs indicate how TAs may learn and develop in mainstream primary educational settings. This is a conceptual framework grounded in TAs' views (see diagrammatic representation in Figure 6).

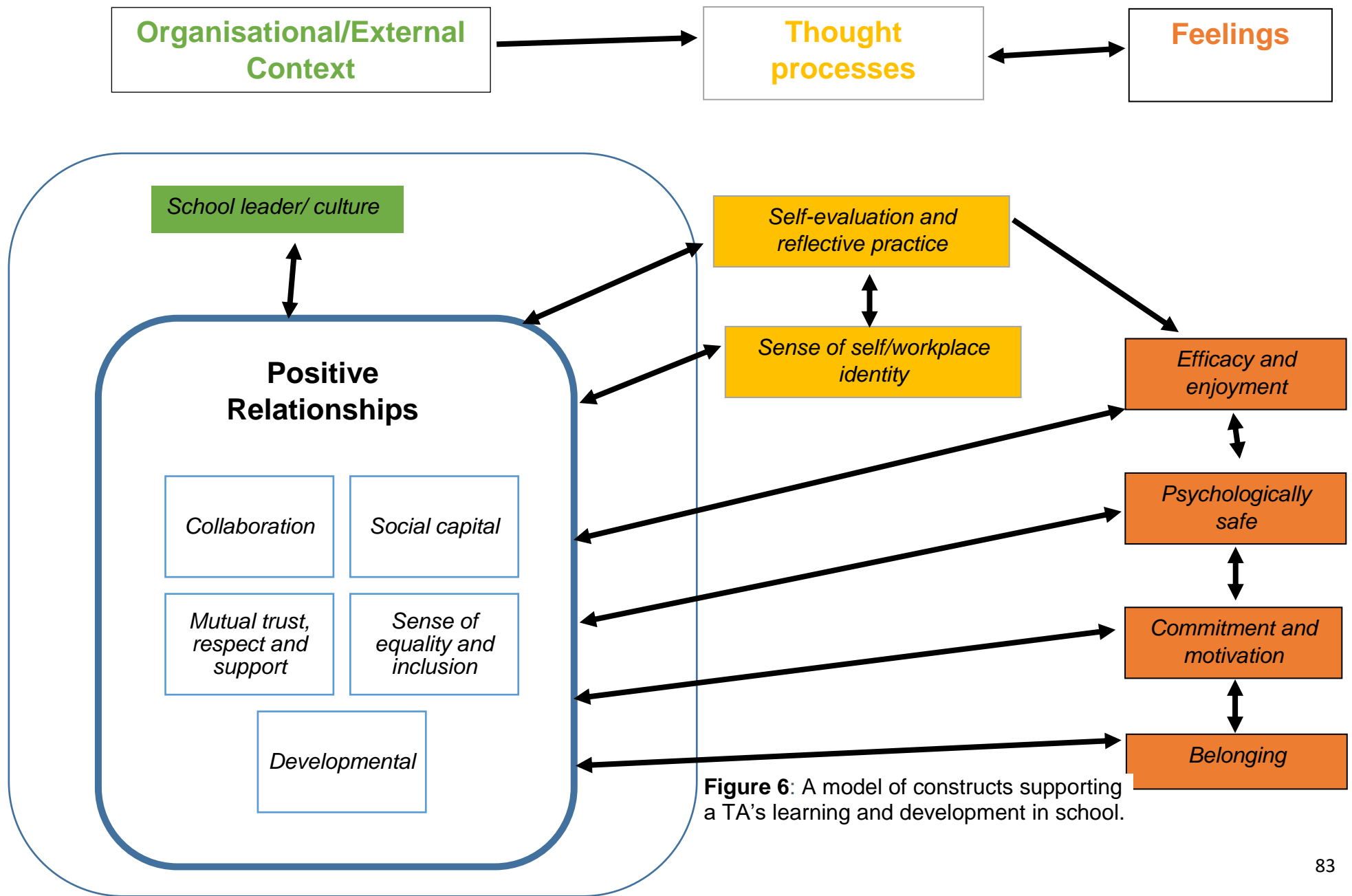


Figure 6: A model of constructs supporting a TA's learning and development in school.

3.7 The emergent model explained

3.7.1 Core category: *Positive relationships*

Positive relationships pulls together the other 3 categories and is core to TAs' learning and developing in a school context. In Figure 6, it is visually represented as the core of the organisational context.

'Positive' represents relationships where TAs feel valued, supported and included. They are the types of relationships where "It doesn't matter who you are" (Steph). Moreover, they are equal and reciprocal: "we all appreciate each other and we're all there for each other" (Priscilla). Positive relationships included those in senior roles (e.g. a teacher, Head teacher or professionals outside the school context), fellow TAs as well as other members of the school community such as parents/carers and students.

Positive relationships linked to several constructs and frequently appeared in TAs' discourse describing their learning and development in schools.

Positive relationships were directly influenced by school leader / culture – this was an important contextual factor. They were also affected by TAs' self-evaluation and reflective practice, their sense of self/workplace identity, a TA's efficacy and enjoyment and TAs' levels of commitment and motivation (these constructs are explained later).

The positive relationships had a direct impact on the above as well as a TA's feelings of psychological safety and sense of belonging.

In the model there are five constructs making up the core positive relationships category. Though these constructs stand alone and enabled positive relationships, they are incorporated within it. I have explained each construct in turn. Table 14 contains axial coding constructs and example text segments with their open codes related to the core category.

Table 14: Positive Relationships – Constructs and Text Segment Examples.

Central category: Positive relationships		
Axial coding constructs	Text examples and open codes	Interview participant
Developmental	<p><i>I'm quite direct [TA expressing views]. I say if I don't agree with something, or – you know, that's just me [TA can be herself]. I don't mean it funny. And I'll just go, 'well, if I didn't understand, I'm sure the children didn't understand.' [TA provides feedback] So, I do say. I would say, 'look, I didn't really quite get that.' Or maybe it's taught at a higher level, or too easy, I will say. Do you know what I mean? Cos I've been with my class for- since they were in reception [working with class since reception].</i></p>	Sol
	<p><i>And now, you know, o-on Tuesday, I had two that were really, really struggling you know, all year, and we've been scared. And it's, 'you can do it. You know, you can do it.' [TA builds child's confidence over time] They come back with 'I can swim' badges.</i></p>	Sol
	<p><i>I think we should talk to everybody. We – the newer ones are a little bit maybe less, cos I don't know them as well [relationship builds over time]. But a lot of the staff here have been here a long time [being part of stable team]. So, that's really nice feeling [relationship builds over time].</i></p>	Steph
	<p><i>I think you build up a rapport, kind of a – you know [relationship builds over time]? And i-if you work with a teacher more than just, like, passing by in one year, kind of thing [supporting same teacher], then you get to know how they work [practice-based knowledge builds over time], and then you can model and work alongside, the same way the teacher's delivering it [align practice].</i></p>	Priscilla

Central category: Positive relationships		
Axial coding constructs	Text examples and open codes	Interview participant
	<p><i>knowing the children and knowing what's happening with them and what they like, what they don't like, what upsets, what- what engages them [gathering information over time]. Just [inaudible, 25:52] that, kind of, like, experience and- and knowledge. And then with- with- with new children, it's just – it goes back to patience and enthusiasm [relationship builds over time], I suppose, really more than anything else.</i></p>	Greg

Central category: Positive relationships		
Axial coding constructs	Text examples and open codes	Interview participant
Social capital	<p><i>I think we just – as a whole, I think we’re a happy school [happy environment] and I think that comes across and it shows in the children.</i></p> <p><i>having lots of other people around you, doing the same job [being around others in same role], you can support each other [supporting each other] ... Confidentially talk about the- other children [trusting others] and what you could do to help them out, if they’ve got a problem[seeking advice].</i></p> <p><i>Claire⁴ was happy to send- we’re off to another school [visit another setting], to go and see how they [nurture groups] run [observing others].</i></p> <p><i>I learnt a lot more just by doing the job and being supported by the- the teaching staff [supported by teachers] that I was working with.</i></p>	<p>Sol</p> <p>Steph</p> <p>Priscilla</p> <p>Greg</p>
Sense of equality and inclusion	<p><i>We have the meetings on a Wednesday [having time for meet]...teaching assistant meetings [attending meetings for TAs]...Every week...The odd week we have to miss for whatever reason ... there’s some trips out the last few weeks... one week it could be on...planning ideas and trips and updates for different things that are happening in the school...every week it’s something... different, or a follow-in. It maybe the Ofsted [included in school discussions]... Maybe a safeguarding one [included in staff training]...</i></p>	Sol

⁴ Claire is Headteacher.

Central category: Positive relationships		
Axial coding constructs	Text examples and open codes	Interview participant
	<p><i>And if there's any training that we spot [noticing training opportunities], she'll say, even if it's something that's... teacher based, she would still be happy to send us on it as teaching assistants [being included]. Because she thinks just because we've got a teaching assistant title, doesn't mean we can't do those training things what teachers get.[being included]</i></p> <p><i>it's unusual... that an LSA would have such a close working relationship with a child's parents [working with closely parents] ... in my previous jobs...I would be feeding back to the class teacher and the class teacher would feed back to the parents [working indirectly with parents]. And I think that is much more standard practice ... but by the very nature of ... one to one ... I need ...feedback ...to make sure that what I am delivering with the child is appropriate and is working [seeking feedback to enhance practice].</i></p>	<p>Priscilla</p> <p>Greg</p>
Mutual trust, respect and support	<p><i>You know, we help each other [helping each other] and that's what it's about [shared values].</i></p> <p><i>Just the support. You know, if you've ha- if you've had a bad day or – which doesn't happen very often, but sometimes. I think it's good to a- just have a sit and an offload [listening to each other] and a moan sometimes [trusting each other]. Everybody needs that, don't they</i></p> <p><i>we're all respecting each other as teaching assistants [respecting each other] and ... sharing ideas [sharing ideas]</i></p>	<p>Sol</p> <p>Steph</p> <p>Priscilla</p>

Central category: Positive relationships		
Axial coding constructs	Text examples and open codes	Interview participant
	<p><i>I trust them [parents] to turn around and tell me, 'that's not working.' [open to feedback]. So, because I've got a good working relationship [positive working relationship] and I can, like – whether it's just – I set their homework and if feedback comes from- from mum and dad saying, 'well, actually this was... a real struggle' or 'this was really easy', and then okay [listening to parents]. Well, I can then evolve and adjust tasks accordingly. [making recommended change]</i></p>	Greg
Collaboration	<p><i>...I do the nurture group ... with Jill [working with TAs]</i></p> <p><i>... I've had some training from the parent [information passing: parent - TA], ... it comes from a very informed place, because parent is teaching very similar children], working in a special school and teaching [sharing specialist knowledge and skills]So – and he's fully aware of the challenges and the opportunities. So, working together closely [working closely with parent] just means we try and deliver the best learning we can ...</i></p>	Priscilla Greg

Developmental

Over time, TAs build trust, rapport, confidence and practice-based knowledge.

... you build up a rapport, ...if you work with a teacher more than ... one year... you get to know how they work, and then you can model and work alongside, the same way the teacher's delivering it. (Priscilla)

Social capital

TAs learn and develop skills via interaction with people in their immediate environment such as other TAs, their own children, pupils, teachers and external professionals. Increased social capital means increased resources and support available to TAs.

asking ...and talking to people ...what do they do, and how can I do this. That's how I basically learnt in the beginning. (Sol)

There are increased levels of trust in TA-TA relationships, and is recognised in this context as something special.

..some schools... say that we have very good teaching assistant team where we all appreciate each other and we're all there for each other...if you see one of them upset or having a bad day... they'll appreciate that you're there to listen to them, to give them some advice, or to back them... (Priscilla)

Mutual trust, respect and support

TAs may be more likely to interact, share knowledge and acquire skills in relationships where there is mutual trust, respect and support.

... if they come to me... for...support or anything work wise... I would help them, like they would help me (Sol)

this school is very nice and there's a lovely atmosphere here.. all the staff get on with each other. I know I can't compare it 'cos I haven't really worked in other schools, but I have worked in other jobs...(Steph)

Sense of equality and inclusion

TAs said their learning and development was enhanced by an increased sense of equality and inclusion. They spoke of feeling heard, valued and included in day-to-day discussions and decisions affecting their practice. TAs said it is important they are also given opportunities for learning and development.

... a lot of [courses] we go on are really good and really useful and we have a lot of training now. We have a staff meeting on a Wednesday ...and Claire'll give ... information on things. We'll get people in to talk to us which is... good....we'll sit there and Claire'll say ... 'Oh, I've got this idea' or 'What do you

suggest?’ ...as a whole team, we work together..... we’d never had that before...Until Claire, we never had these get together meetings. ..So, we feel very included now (Priscilla)

Collaboration

TAs suggested collaboration provides a context to learn and develop skills. They mentioned that formal and informal opportunities to work with others enables them to gain ideas to develop practice and provides reassurance. They expressed pro-collaboration attitudes but spoke about time as a limiting factor. Pro-collaboration attitudes and practice is promoted by the school leader.

Opportunities to collaborate can be guided by the TA’s interests. Collaboration occurs across roles (e.g. teachers with TAs):

...[teacher] would probably say that we ...work well together ... I can pick up from where she’s left off on something and just continue it...it’s smooth in the class for the kids. (Priscilla)

...within roles (e.g. TAs with TAs):

all the other TAs, we work together (Steph).

...and between schools:

I ... observed another practitioner in another school, working in a very similar situation.... that was fantastic... trying to find other individuals that I’d be able ... share practice ... would be great (Greg)

I will now explain the rest of the model, starting with constructs in the organisational / external context.

3.7.2 Organisational / external context

Constructs in this area are about organisational phenomena that influence TAs’ work environment.

School leader / culture

This reflected organisational values and beliefs that influence how people think, behave and interact in school. School leader influences school culture. Based on TAs’ descriptions, school leader emerged as a key contextual factor. TAs spoke of the school leader as a resource for learning:

Claire’s always there... to give us advice (Steph)

talking to Claire... about... bereavement (Greg)

TAs also commented on the school leader including them in learning opportunities:

As the years have gone by, the courses are available for TAs, especially now Claire's here and is happy to send you on a lot of different [courses]...(Priscilla)

School leaders could contribute to positive relationships. There was similarities in the constructs of the school leader / culture and those within positive relationships.

3.7.3 Thought processes

Self-evaluation and reflective practice. This category describes mental processes, involving thoughts about themselves, others, observation, interaction, communication and experiences. Such thoughts influence how TAs view themselves and others, and decisions about practice. A consistent message in interviews was reflection on life experience.

... I'm continuously learning, being a parent ... Your life in general plays a part ... but ... my job plays a big part in me role of being a parent ... (Priscilla)

Among interviewees, Greg exhibited strongest self-evaluation and reflective thinking skills.

Planning, flexibility, a positive attitude, patience, remembering what I've learnt, remembering what I've observed other people doing and ...think what worked and what didn't. ... knowing the children...the adults as well... knowing what's happening with [the children] ... what they like, what they don't like, what upsets...what engages them....that, kind of... experience ... and knowledge. And then with... new children, it'sgoes back to patience and enthusiasm...more than anything else.

Sense of self / workplace identity. Understandings of themselves and their role in the school context. TAs expressed clear ideas about their roles. How they are perceived by others can influence access to resources.

I'm probably... the one that's probably done the least training in the school...I don't know whether it was because a lot of the time, I worked with the kids with bad behaviour. So, if I was out doing training, who was gonna have that child? ... I have never been told that. But you know sometimes, like back ... in the days, that's how I felt. 'Well, I won't be out for the next six weeks on a Wednesday because who's gonna have that child when I'm not in?' (Priscilla)

3.7.4 Feelings

Feelings influenced one another to a degree and provided a context for the TAs to learn.

Efficacy and enjoyment: A feeling of being good at work-related task / practice and therefore experiencing joy.

My HLT PE course was fantastic. I thoroughly enjoy it...I love doing PE anyway. (Sol)

...the biggest thing is just the fact that I enjoy working with children, more than anything (Steph)

Efficacy beliefs were motivating for TAs.

... I teach a phonics group ... from year one... I'd had a little bit of experience of phonics in my previous role... but I'd not been through the whole structure....this year, it's been one of the most enjoyable things that I do...even more enjoyable because ...my eldest son's in first school...and he's been doing....the same scheme. And... his little brother's gonna be doing it as well next year. So, now I know, when he's coming home with things, 'oh, I did this today', then it's like, 'yes, I know exactly what you've done'.... it's, like, a whole little window into... how he's learning. So, I can support that. And almost, like, as a parent, it's like [sighs]. (Greg)

Efficacy beliefs could also impact positive relationships because they were linked to relational aspects / systems.

...watching somebody else do a different lesson... in a different class, their approach... that's really important. And then you come back and you think, 'Actually, I could do that', you know? ... you can also ask adults, 'Why did you say that?' And think, 'Well actually, I could do that.'... it's a learning curve ... watching.... listening to others. (Sol)

I learn from [class teacher] ... the way she does things. How she will enthuse them to write more creatively, the way she reads stories and actions, makes it exciting. I do copy her when she's not there [laughter]. But that's a good thing... (Steph)

I just watch (Priscilla)

I've learnt a lot paying attention to more experienced colleagues (Greg)

Commitment and motivation: A desire to get the most out of opportunities and experiences.

...I would like to do more intervention groups, where needed. Maybe not just in my class, throughout the school... if ... can help children in my class, if it's needed in a different class, then I'd like to be able to do that as well. Obviously, it pulls youout of the class that you're in [chuckles] and there's ...only so many hours in a day. But ... if there's an opportunity where I can help others to do the same then I would like that ... reading as well...anything that I can help other children in different classes as well as my own, would be great. (Sol)

working in classrooms...voluntarily as a parent cos my children came to this school. And I liked it. ...And then I decided to do a course in childhood studies....for three years (Steph)

Psychologically safe: A sense of assurance from others and feeling respected and accepted. TAs learn and develop their skills in a positive and safe learning environment where they feel comfortable enough to:

- take control / experiment

...but they'll appreciate the fact that, like, although I'm working from their planning, they know that I am evolving it and changing it to fit the criteria ... (Greg)

- express their views

I'm quite direct. I say if I don't agree with something. (Sol)

...when I did that autism course... they were ... set in their ways of ... how an autistic child should be...it was like, 'They must have their own workstation.'...And I was a bit, like, 'Well, no... if you can work well enough with that child and that child can manage in the class environment and be on a table with friends, then that's where they should be.' And they kind of didn't like my view (Priscilla)

- acknowledge their own areas for development

I'm not particularly a good reader .. when I was at school, I found it tough...I was even made fun of by a teacher because of it. And I think that's not gonna happen to anybody here...I'm gonna make sure they are- they learn to read really well. (Steph)

- voice gaps in their knowledge and understanding

the only thing I'd like to do more of is ... the forest school training. I've worked with a forest school teacher, and I know what I deliver is the same, which I built upon myself. But I am waiting to go on a forest school course. ... I'd like to have the qualification ... to show that I can do this. I know what I'm doing is right and I've visited lots of other forest schools, but to have that bit of paper, especially when Ofsted turn up and say, 'what experience ... what qualification have you got in this?' It'd be nice to have a qualification (Steph)

[teacher's] been on courses ... then she'll deliver it in the class. ... and then I look at her and go, 'wow, you know, that's so simple.' But it's so effective...it's something I haven't seen before. So, then I'm like, right. Well, we'll do that another time. Or, I can put that in place when I'm working (Priscilla)

- and ask for help and support

I know who to go to amongst the teaching assistants. They really help me with that when I say, 'I can't do this. Can you help me please? (Steph)

Feelings of psychological safety could influence positive relationships: if TAs had reduced feelings of psychological safety, positive relationships may be impacted.

Belonging: A sense of being a part of something.

....as a whole team, we work together... (Priscilla)

TAs described how learning can occur through being part of networks and partnerships in and outside the school context:

I went and observed another practitioner in another school...And that was fantastic. (Greg)

...straightaway, Claire was happy to send us off to another school, to go and see how they run [nurture groups]. And if there's any training that we spot...she would still be happy to send us on it as teaching assistants. It was good to see that a lot of the things they were doing, we were already doing. And then other ideas of how we can move ours on and ... do more... at the school we went to, it was on a big forest school...Where ours is just a little Wednesday and Thursday outside groups. But it was good to see that actually, for all we're just doing it off our own backs ... we're doing a lot of what them were doing on a bigger scale (Priscilla)

3.8 Discussion

The emergent model (Figure 6) is grounded in TAs' views and may have explanatory power for how TAs learn and develop in mainstream primary schools. The findings answer the research question and highlight the importance of systemic influences, such as the school leader. However, positive relationships are core to TAs learning and development in a school context.

Being connected to others, belonging to a positive environment, experiencing mutual trust and respect, feeling heard, valued and included suggests TAs' experience of relationships was equal and reciprocal and thus, positive. This mirrors findings from Chapter 1 which focused on TAs' views on impact of PD. The review suggested TAs establish and develop relationships with each other, and other school staff, and share and gain knowledge through responsive and supportive relationships.

Organisational context also played a pivotal role in TAs' PD. Positive and supportive reciprocal relationships were important to TAs and they valued strong support systems responding to their social, emotional and academic needs. Together the findings suggest that positive relationships are important for TAs' well-being and provide a context within which TAs can learn and develop in schools (Roffey, 2010). The importance of relationships is not new to psychologists; it is important that schools recognise and understand this for the benefit of all including TAs, especially

in light of an increasing focus on connectedness in schools in research (Roffey, 2012).

I discuss findings using existing psychological theory and research. I highlight areas that need further exploration or areas for intervention or attention by EPs, schools and policy makers, and conclude with possible directions for future research. First, I discuss findings in relation to theory (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1977) which supports organisational processes in a similar way to Kourkoutas, Plexousakis, and Georgiadi (2010, p. 4774).

To understand human development the entire ecological system, thought to consist of five socially organised subsystems, must be taken into consideration (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The meso-system for example, is a system of microsystems formed or extended when the individual moves into a new setting (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). An example of a TA's meso-system from the research is <school-another educational setting> i.e. when a TA goes to a local setting to observe other TAs deliver nurture groups. The macro-system level includes wider social systems such as Government, laws (e.g. SEND Code of Practice), policies, bodies of knowledge, and cultural factors affecting lower-order subsystems (i.e. micro-, meso-, and exosystems). Macro-system can be considered as what drives how the school works. This could include economic factors such funding available to schools, media, general conceptions of what education is about and general assumptions of what TAs are / do.

It is a model applicable to schools and is used in EP practice to explain interrelationships between different groups of individuals, organisation and societal variables (Leadbetter, 2005). Moreover, systemic analyses tend to be situated in the present, therefore the model may explore situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and ways to support TAs' learning and development in schools.

I adapted the model by placing the TA at the centre (see Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009 for discussion on uses and misuses of Bronfenbrenner's work), and illustrate individual and systemic factors interacting and influencing TAs' learning and development at various levels (see Appendix 3).

TAs made reference to what Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) defined as proximal processes; reciprocal interaction between a TA and their environment, incorporating persons, objects, and symbols. TAs repeatedly discussed the importance of interactions with TAs and how these interactions supported their learning and development. The most important influence on development is thought to be what happens in the 'micro-system' and the interactions that individuals have with those in their immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Roffey, 2012). The model also emphasises that:

- learning does not take place solely from the individual but also from the interaction between people.
- positive change to one part of the system (e.g. change in Headteacher) can lead to change in the whole system.
- individual factors such as sense of self / workplace identity are acknowledged but integrated in a TA-systemic perspective.

The importance of school leader / culture in my model may link to Organisational Psychology research.

Analysis of their accounts suggests that change in leader led to changes in school culture, with positive outcomes for their learning and development. This mirrors research that found school leaders can influence school ethos / culture, and school culture can affect organisation members' thoughts, perceptions, feelings, behaviours and problem solving skills in ways that can lead to school success and learning (Peterson, 2002).

Although the term Professional Learning Community (PLC) did not appear in TAs' discourse, characteristics of effective PLCs did feature: shared values and vision, shared experiences and expertise, willingness to experiment with alternative strategies' engagement in high depth interactions (i.e. about how students learn content, pedagogical principles, curriculum content), collaboration focused on learning, individual and collective professional learning, reflective professional enquiry, openness, networks and partnerships, inclusive membership, mutual trust, respect and support (Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas, & Wallace, 2005; A. Scott, Clarkson, & McDonough, 2011). Research suggests creating, developing and sustaining a PLC is a major strategic leadership and management task, and that contribution from Headteacher and senior staff is essential (Stoll et al., 2006). The

findings from this study highlight ways in which school staff including TAs can contribute to learning communities in schools in their day-to-day practice, and that TAs value and benefit from being included in learning communities.

It is noteworthy that TAs were able to reflect on practice, but there were individual differences in the skills in reflection, as well as systemic influences which facilitated or hindered their ability to do so. For example, TAs were constrained by time and were often active and immersed in their role. Factors found to enhance or restrict opportunities for TAs to reflect and learn include:

- *role*. Clarity of their role, including how their role is perceived by others.
- *deployment*.
- *collaboration*. The degree to which reflective teaching, professional learning is enhanced through collaboration and dialogue with colleagues.
- *status and recognition* given to TAs.
- *teachers' reflection* . The extent to which teacher, Headteacher, other TAs are implicit and explicit reflective practitioners involved in reflective activity (Collins & Simco, 2006, p. 203).

Greg's reflective practice may be an example of the 'experienced' TA reflective practitioner described in Collins and Simco (2006, p. 211); the type of TA who may not need to rely on a teacher as a precursor to the development of reflection because they may already have expertise in reflection. Greg's learning occurs within a reflective practitioner framework (Schön, 1991) – the practice by which professionals become aware of their implicit knowledge base and learn from their experiences. However, without protected time and space to reflect and learn, opportunities to meet with others and discuss learning, and support with developing reflection skills, day-to-day opportunities for TAs to reflect and learn could be restricted and missed.

Feelings in the model provided a safe context for TAs to learn and develop their skills. Psychological factors including sense of efficacy have been found to strongly influence teachers' participation in professional learning activities (Geijsel, Slegers, Stoel, & Krüger, 2009).

Each feeling from the model can be linked to theory and research exploring role and impact of each on adult / child learning and development (see Table 15). For example, fun and enjoyment is linked with outcomes such as increased competence,

autonomy and improved relatedness with others, and intrinsic motivation and goal achievement in adult learners (Lucardie, 2014, p. 445).

It is important to note that TAs in this research shared positive thoughts and feelings about their work, though this is not the reality for every TA. TAs, for various reasons, may not be happy in their role. They may have reduced confidence in their skills or reduced autonomy. TAs' perspectives reveal the importance of relationships and emotions to the atmosphere in schools. This presents a distinct role for those who monitor and support TAs' PD in schools, including TAs themselves to recognise and understand the influence of psychological feelings.

Table 15: Psychological Feelings Identified in Literature on Learning and Development.

Feeling from emergent model	Author
Belonging	(Roffey, 2012).
Psychologically safe	(Wanless, 2016)
Motivation	(Hammett & Burton, 2005)
Efficacy	(Bandura, 2009)
Enjoyment	(Lucardie, 2014)

3.9 Implications for stakeholders

Although further research is needed to support or refute aspects of my model, the findings highlight a number of key areas for school staff and policy makers.

Whilst importance of relationships is not new to psychologists, the importance of relationships for learning is being recognised in schools (Roffey, 2012). I hope this research can support this by highlighting relationships and environments that support TAs to learn and develop, so that school systems and policy makers can act upon the issues voiced by the TAs themselves.

The findings could empower TAs with knowledge, skills and experiences. The eco-systemic model draws attention to the interactional processes in which TAs participate daily, which are core to their learning and development. Schools could protect time for TAs to engage with each other as a group on a weekly or bi-weekly

basis, ideally in school time. This could be a way to facilitate positive relationships and reflects the importance of social capital and sense of equality and inclusion as described under core category, positive relationships.

Given that TAs valued opportunities to visit other settings, and that this was possible through the support given by the school leader, another way to develop TAs' relationships in the wider community could be through developing partnerships between schools. Legislation such as the Academies Act (2010) has led to increasing arrangements such as federations, multi-academy trusts (MATs) and sponsored academy chains. School leaders could consider school partnerships and collaboration for school improvement in existing partnerships. However, where there are no formal arrangements leaders could establish new partnerships and possibly be supported by the local authority (LA). Inter-collaboration is recognised at the government level and positive outcomes have been found such as improvements in staff PD, sharing good practice and innovation, organisational and financial efficiency (Armstrong, 2015).

TAs welcomed opportunities to reflect and learn with others at school. TAs need protected time and space and possible support so they can develop characteristics of reflection in their daily practice. TAs could be part of reflective practice groups and support each other's practice in a safe environment. School staff, including teachers and 'experienced' TAs, could model reflective skills and encourage reflective practice.

3.10 Implications for EP Practice

As applied psychologists working in school-based settings, the research has significant implications for EPs. It is our role to support the systems around the child and that includes nurturing the adults who support them (Fallon et al., 2010). Given TAs' specific role in schools to support children and young people, they need to be supported to develop in that work. The research findings provide information about psychological areas that we can and do support schools with understanding. It is essential that importance of relationships is understood not only for children's learning and development (e.g. Osterman, 2000; Prince & Hadwin, 2012) but also in terms of adults around them (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

EPs may be well placed within LAs, and have the skills to offer support with the implications and areas discussed in the previous section. With their understanding of constructionist approaches such as systems theory and eco-systemic approaches (Leadbetter, 2005), EPs could communicate the value of inter-collaboration, and support schools with understanding potential challenges and conditions for effective collaboration. EPs could also support school improvement across groups of schools by promoting system-wide strategic partnership and supporting schools-led partnerships at the LA level. As such, EPs could be the interconnecting factor that links a TA's microsystems. Interconnections between a TA's microsystems can take the form of other people who participate actively in both settings (Bronfenbrenner, 2009), such as an EP who works across two settings, one where the TA works and another where they observe others' practice.

EPs could also disseminate current understandings from literature and this empirical research at Headteacher / SENCo / TA networks within an LA. For example, they could share key themes from research findings with school leaders and senior staff about the importance of engendering respect and creating a culture where all staff feel valued (see Stoll et al., 2006), and thus support senior staff strategically in their role of supporting their learning community. EPs could also support with monitoring and evaluating impact of professional learning or the process of PLC operation as a way to maximise good practice and ensure that development is sustained over time, especially in a context where schools are faced with budget cuts and restricted funds for CPD (Department for Education, 2019).

3.11 Limitations

Whilst it could be considered a limitation that the Head Teacher selected participants and that this may have contributed to more positive findings, this approach is considered appropriate given the hierarchical nature of responsibilities in schools and particularly the Head Teacher's responsibilities (e.g. safeguarding). With full GT, further consideration could have been given to the school leader / culture, an important contextual factor. Data could have been analysed immediately and this may have raised questions, suggested relationships and highlighted gaps in the data, with the aim to fill gaps, clarify uncertainties, test my interpretations, and build the emerging model (Sbaraini et al., 2011).

3.12 Future directions

Future research might:

- explore the model's applicability for different school personnel (e.g. teachers, Head teachers), different educational phases (e.g. secondary) and settings (e.g. specialist).
- explore what TAs do, or how involved they are in learning communities in schools. There is relatively little information about what teachers may do (Scott et al., 2011) so perhaps future research could explore TAs' perspectives.
- highlight benefits of relationships for learning amongst school-based staff e.g. teacher-TA.
- encourage more research centring TA perspectives.

There is an obvious role for EPs to continue to develop theory, research and awareness in this area, alongside direct work with individual TAs, schools and LAs to enhance TA's learning and development.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: EPPI-Centre WoE criteria (EPPI-Centre, 2007; Spencer, Ritchie, Dillon, 2003) to support generic, non-review specific judgements about quality of papers

<p>N.1 Are there ethical concerns about the way the study was done? Consider consent, funding, privacy, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of how research was presented in study settings/to participants • <i>(including, where relevant, any possible consequences of taking part)</i> • Documentation of consent procedures and information provided to participants • Discussion of confidentiality of data and procedures for protecting • Discussion of how anonymity of participants/sources was protected • Discussion of any measures to offer information/advice/services etc. at end • of study <i>(i.e. where participation exposed the need for these)</i> • Discussion of potential harm or difficulty through participation, and how avoided
<p>N2: Were students and/or parents appropriately involved in the design or conduct of the study?</p>	
<p>N.3: Is there sufficient justification for why the study was done the way it was?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationale for basis of selection of target sample/settings/documents • Discussion of how sample/selections allowed required comparisons to be made • Discussion/evidence of the main assumptions/hypotheses/theoretical ideas on which the evaluation was based and how these affected the form, coverage or output of the evaluation <i>(the assumption here is that no research is undertaken without some underlying assumptions or theoretical ideas)</i> • Discussion/evidence of the ideological perspectives/values/philosophies of research team and their impact on the methodological or substantive content of the evaluation <i>(again, may not be explicitly stated)</i> • Discussion of how error or bias may have arisen in design/data collection/analysis • Documentation of changes made to design and reasons; implications for study coverage and how addressed, if at all
<p>N.4: Was the choice of research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of how overall research strategy was designed to meet aims of study

<p>design appropriate for addressing the research question(s) posed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of rationale for study design • Convincing argument for different features of research design (<i>e.g. reasons given for different components or stages of research; purpose of particular methods or data sources, multiple methods, time frames etc.</i>) • Use of different features of design/data sources evident in findings presented • Discussion of limitations of research design and their implications for the study evidence
<p>N.5: Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the repeatability or reliability of data collection methods or tools?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who conducted data collection • procedures/documents used for collection/recording • checks on origin/status/authorship of documents • Documentation of reasons for non-participation among sample approached/non-inclusion of selected cases/documents
<p>N.6: Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the validity or trustworthiness of data collection tools and methods?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of access and methods of approach and how these might have affected participation/coverage • Discussion of how fieldwork methods or settings may have influenced data collected
<p>N.7: Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the repeatability or reliability of data analysis?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of contribution of sample design/ case selection in generating diversity
<p>N.8: Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the validity or trustworthiness of data analysis?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants' perspectives/observations placed in personal context (<i>e.g. use of case studies/vignettes/individual profiles, textual extracts annotated with details of contributors</i>) • Use of data management methods that preserve context (<i>i.e. facilitate within case description and analysis</i>) • Description and illumination of diversity/multiple perspectives/alternative positions in the evidence displayed • Evidence of attention to negative cases, outliers or exceptions • Use and exploration of contributors terms, concepts and meanings • Unpacking and portrayal of nuance/subtlety/intricacy within data • Discussion of explicit and implicit explanations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detection of underlying factors/influences Identification and discussion of patterns of association/conceptual linkages within data • Presentation of illuminating textual extracts/observations
N.9: To what extent are the research design and methods employed able to rule out any other sources of error/bias which would lead to alternative explanations for the findings of the study?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of attention to negative cases, outliers or exceptions • Discussion of any missing coverage in achieved samples/cases and implications for study evidence (<i>e.g. through comparison of target and achieved samples, comparison with population etc.</i>)
N.10: How generalisable are the study results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of what can be generalised to wider population from which sample is drawn/case selection has been made • Detailed description of the contexts in which the study was conducted to allow applicability to other settings/contextual generalities to be assessed • Discussion of how hypotheses/ propositions/findings may relate to wider theory; consideration of rival explanations • Evidence supplied to support claims for wider inference (<i>either from study or from corroborating sources</i>) • Discussion of limitations on drawing wider inference (<i>e.g. re-examination of sample and any missing constituencies: analysis of restrictions of study settings for drawing wider inference</i>)
N.11 In light of the above, do the reviewers differ from the authors over the findings or conclusions of the study?	
N.12: Have sufficient attempts been made to justify the conclusions drawn from the findings, so that the conclusions are trustworthy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear conceptual links between analytic commentary and presentations of original data (<i>i.e. commentary and cited data relate; there is an analytic context to cited data, not simply repeated description</i>) • Discussion of how/why particular interpretation/significance is assigned to specific aspects of data – with illustrative extracts of original data • Discussion of how explanations/ theories/conclusions were derived – and how they relate to interpretations and content of original data (<i>i.e. how warranted</i>); whether alternative explanations explored

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display of negative cases and how they lie outside main proposition/theory/ hypothesis etc.; or how proposition etc. revised to include them
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Appendix 2: EPPI-Centre WoE tool for quality for qualitative papers (EPPI-Centre, 2007; Spencer, Ritchie, Dillon, 2003) to make specific judgement about relevance of each study to the review question

<p>N.13 WoE A: Taking account of all quality assessment issues, can the study findings be trusted in answering the study question(s)? <i>In some studies it is difficult to distinguish between the findings of the study and the conclusions. In those cases, please code the trustworthiness of this combined results/conclusion.</i></p>	<p>N.13.1 High trustworthiness N.13.2 Medium trustworthiness N.13.3 Low trustworthiness</p>
<p>N.14 WoE B: Appropriateness of research design and analysis for addressing the question, or sub-questions, of this specific systematic review.</p>	<p>N.14.1 High N.14.2 Medium N.14.3 Low</p>
<p>N.15 WoE C: Relevance of particular focus of the study (including conceptual focus, context, sample and measures) for addressing the question of this specific systematic review</p>	<p>N.15.1 High N.15.2 Medium N.15.3 Low</p>
<p>N.16 WoE D: Overall weight of evidence <i>Taking into account quality of execution, appropriateness of design and relevance of focus, what is the overall weight of evidence this study provides to answer the question of this specific systematic review?</i></p>	<p>N.16.1 High N.16.2 Medium N.16.3 Low</p>

Appendix 3: Illustrative representation of individual and systemic factors influencing TAs' learning and development in mainstream primary educational settings, adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1977)

