



Teaching Assistants in Classes in Full-Service Schools: Roles, Tools and Responsibilities

Suzanne Smuts and Estelle Swart

Department of Educational Psychology, Stellenbosch University

Corresponding author Email: estelle@sun.ac.za

ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is a global movement aimed at providing access to education and ensuring the participation and success of all learners. The implementation of such a system is complex and challenging. One of the implementation strategies used in South Africa is the utilization of full-service schools. Teaching assistants are appointed to support teachers in their classes. These staff members are employed, despite the uncertainty of whether they add value and what their roles are. Cultural historical activity theory was used as the theoretical framework for this study, which aimed to explore the roles and experiences of teaching assistants who work in resource classes in full-service schools. This study employed an interpretive case study design. Data were collected primarily through individual interviews with eight research participants selected through purposive and snowball sampling. The data were analyzed using thematic and activity systems analyses. The findings revealed that teaching assistants are perceived as valuable assets in resource classes when there are specific affordances such as personal characteristics, clear communication, cooperation, and a good relationship between teachers and teaching assistants.

Keywords: Collaboration; Cultural-Historical Activity Theory; Full-Service Schools; Inclusive Education; Resource Classes; Teaching Assistant

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Inclusive education is gaining momentum worldwide (Engelbrecht, 2019). The global commitment to Education for All, formalized through the World Education Forum in Jomtien in Thailand (1990), the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994), and the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action, set high standards based on practices in high-income countries (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). This commitment conforms to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28) of 1989, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006. These conventions provide a legal framework for ensuring that every child has access to quality education. This aligns with

the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 4), which are to be reached by 2030. Different countries responded to the challenge in unique ways based on their individual contexts.

Although noteworthy progress has been made in many countries, some have struggled to implement inclusive practices. Some governments have faced criticism of “borrowing policies” (Sharma & Subban, 2023, p. 105). In several cases, these policies have been introduced without proper support or context-sensitive implementation plans (Singal et al., 2021). These policies or indicators for inclusion often do not translate well into developing countries or countries of the Global South because histories and cultural and contextual practices differ (Nel, 2020; Walton, 2018).

One of the main approaches to promoting inclusive education in South Africa is to convert certain ordinary schools into full-service schools. These schools are equipped and designed to offer quality education and support to all learners, including those with moderate learning support requirements (Du Plessis, 2013; Department of Education, 2001). Full-service schools are also tasked with providing services to neighboring schools and communities. The education department allocates funding to the employment of teaching assistants to enhance the ability of schools to address classroom diversity.

With limited research available on the use of teaching assistants in South Africa (Cassim, 2016; Cassim & Moen, 2020), this study sought to better understand how teachers and assistants make sense of their roles and how full-service schools can optimize their presence. Cassim (2016) found that effective collaboration between teaching assistants and teachers leads to a better distribution of workload in the classroom, resulting in increased teacher capacity to support all learners, particularly those who require additional assistance. Although these schools are provided with additional funds to hire teaching assistants, they often lack knowledge on how to employ them effectively (Jansen, 2020; Smuts, 2021).

A review of the literature on teaching assistants has shown confusion about their roles (Butt & Lowe, 2012; Harris & Aprile, 2015; Trent, 2014) and the overall impact they can have on learners, particularly those who are identified as having specific learning needs. (Blatchford et al., 2009; Breyer & Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2023; Groom & Rose, 2005; Sharma & Salend, 2016; Webster et al., 2011; Webster et al., 2013). Trent (2014) suggests that further research is required to understand the experiences of teaching assistants in specific learning contexts. Webster et al. (2013)

specifically recommend clarification of teaching assistants' employment, roles and responsibilities, and preparedness to assist in a classroom.

The Department of Basic Education (DoBE) in South Africa suggests that teaching assistants, also known as teacher assistants, can help teachers identify and address barriers to learning, assess learner performance, evaluate teaching programs and interventions, and promote inclusion for all learners (DoBE, 2010). When it comes to implementing policies in practice, it is uncertain what role teaching assistants play in resource classes in full-service schools. It is unclear whether they are considered valuable assets or add-ons, what their specific responsibilities are, what resources they require to be successful, and what kinds of experiences they have working in those classes.

For various reasons, it is essential to address the knowledge gap concerning the roles and experiences of teaching assistants in resource classes in full-service schools in South Africa. First, such an initiative could help schools and policymakers make informed decisions regarding the appointments, training, and job descriptions of teaching assistants. Second, it can facilitate collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants, enabling them to make the best use of their time, skills, and presence. Third, it could provide clarity to all role players regarding their respective responsibilities, ensuring quality education for every learner in the class. Finally, this topic is yet to be thoroughly researched in South Africa. The research question that guided this study was: What are the roles and experiences of teaching assistants in classes in full-service schools in the Western Cape? We aimed to move away from the problem-saturated stories of implementing inclusive education to learning from assistants, teachers, and learning support teachers. Therefore, we

aimed to capture the current knowledge and practices in situ.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We used cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) to frame this study, as it enabled us to investigate teaching assistants' roles and experiences in their specific community and setting. The theory also supported us in exploring what tools teaching assistants use when participating in an activity. When working with learners who require specific attention or support, teaching assistants in a full-service school are not only doing their job to achieve an outcome but are also in a relationship with other individuals. These individuals, including teachers, parents, teaching assistant colleagues, and other personnel, are shaped by sociocultural history. As a result, CHAT can provide a historical and sociocultural perspective on the teacher-learner-teaching assistant system in resource classes.

CHAT has undergone several developments over the years. It is said to have gone through four generations, with each new generation theory being a modified version of the previous one (Nussbaumer, 2012). For this study, the second-generation CHAT, shown in Figure 1, was utilized to analyze the resource class as an activity system.

The classroom activity system consists of seven main components that interact with one another. According to Foot (2014), each component has cultural and historical aspects. The seven interacting components are the subject, object, tools or mediating artifacts, community of significant others, rules, division of labor, and outcomes. The interplay between these components affects the entire system (Patchen & Smithenry, 2014). A triangle image is often used to represent an activity system in which these seven components are in dyadic and triadic relationships.

CHAT frames an activity system as a unit of analysis (Sannino & Engeström, 2018). The unit of analysis in this study was teaching and support in these schools, which are referred to as resource classrooms in this school district. The teaching assistant is the subject of this activity (see Gretschel et al., 2015; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). If the roles of the subjects are not clearly defined, and if they are not sure about what they should focus on and what the ultimate object of their work is, it can create tension within the system, leading to contradictions and ultimately requiring changes for the system to function optimally (Turner et al., 2018).

In an activity system, tools or artifacts play a crucial role in facilitating the interaction between the subject and object. This interaction aims to achieve the desired objective or outcome as stated by Gretschel et al. (2015). In this context, the term "tools" pertains to the resources available in a classroom, which can include a wide range of factors such as skills, ethnicity, personal characteristics, personal agency, and training of teaching assistants. Additionally, the use of language specific to learners' culture, as suggested by Vygotsky (1978), can be considered a tool. Teachers' abilities to guide, manage, and collaborate with teaching assistants, as well as the support available to them, are tools and mediating artifacts used to achieve the desired outcome. Implicit and explicit rules mediate what the assistant does, how the assistant and teacher act in relation to the object, tools they employ, and how they are used.

In an activity system, the division of labor refers to how work is distributed among individuals in the activity system based on established rules (Gretschel et al., 2015). In this study, tasks were assigned to both teachers and teaching assistants to achieve the desired outcomes or changes.

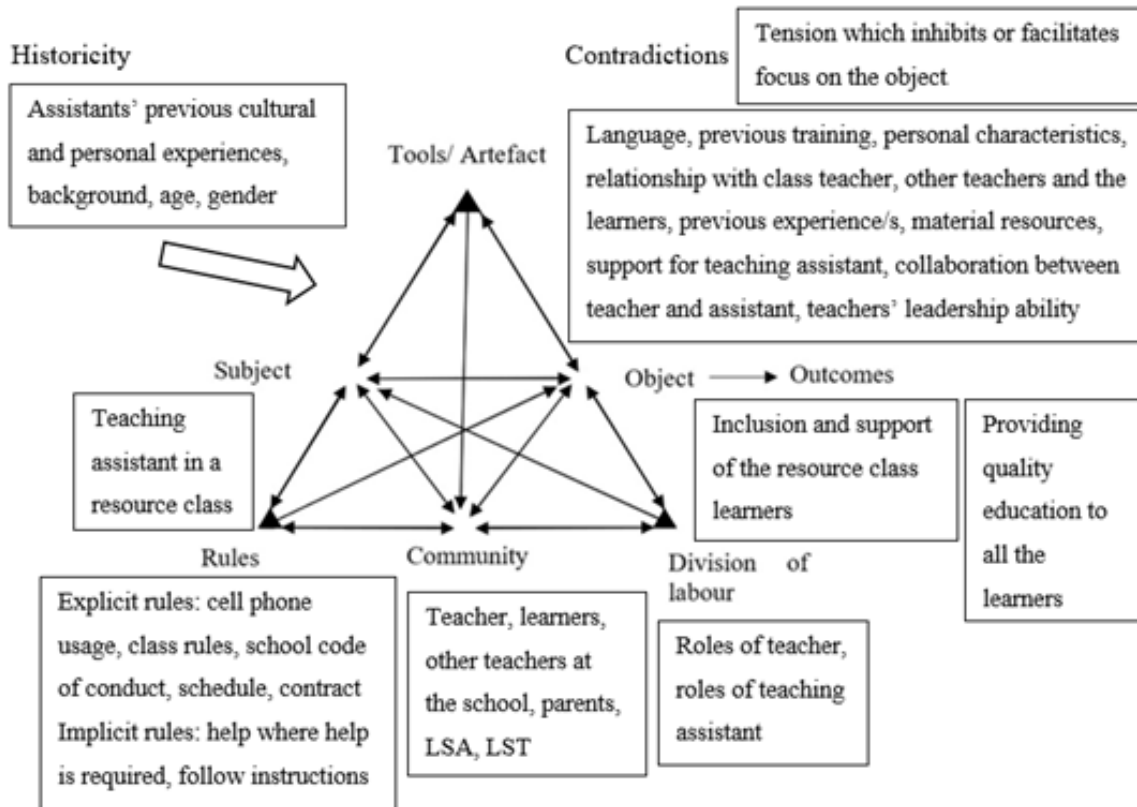


Figure 1: The resource class activity system (adapted from Engeström, 2015)

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Paradigm and research design

We used an interpretive case study design to explore the experiences and perspectives of teaching assistants in resource classes. This study focused on a specific context: a resource class in a primary full-service school in a particular province (Smuts, 2022). The design allowed us to examine a bounded system and gain insights into the real-life experiences of the participants (see Gustafsson, 2017; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010).

In this study, we used a combination of activity systems analysis (ASA) and qualitative research methodology. This approach helped us gain a better understanding of the complex learning environment in resource classes of

full-service schools (see Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Using this methodology, we were able to delve into the perspectives of teachers and teaching assistants and explore their emotions, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs (Sutton & Austin, 2015). This approach also allowed us to uncover the contradictions and tensions within the activity system, which are important to understand when aiming for close relationships, shared responsibilities, collaborative role-playing, and supported learners (see Engeström & Sannino, 2010). We chose ASA as a tool to investigate the interaction between individuals, their activities, and their contexts (see Yamagata-Lynch, 2010).

Context and participants

The scope of the study was limited to teaching assistants in primary full-service schools in the Western Cape

Teaching Assistants in Classes in Full

Province of South Africa. Our initial assumption was based on the belief that we would find assistants and support structures in designated full-service schools, because we wanted to know where the teaching assistants worked, with whom, and what their roles and responsibilities were. Full-service schools should be resourced and provide examples of good practices in inclusive, ordinary classrooms. However, in this particular school-district circuit, we soon discovered that the assistants were assigned to resource classes in which they worked with teachers and a small number of children (Pather, 2019). Most of the learners were diagnosed with severe cognitive challenges. The curriculum was individualized. While some learners make academic progress, the primary focus is on developing skills that will enable them to attend a school of skills when they reach the age of 14 years.

We purposefully selected teaching assistants, teachers, learning support teachers, and learning support advisors who worked in/with these classes in the same school district to provide detailed and appropriate data (see Yin, 2011). Snowball sampling was used to identify the participants (see Lichtman, 2014).

The study applied certain criteria to select participants. Teaching assistants from full-service primary schools in the Western Cape were chosen, as were teachers with teaching assistants in their classes. The participants had prior experience working with or as teaching assistants in full-service schools and willingly agreed to participate in this study. However, individuals appointed as teacher assistants by DoBE as part of a job creation initiative for a short period were excluded from the study.¹

The interpretation of the case study data depended on the context of the research participants. The context of the participants is presented in Table 1. The data revealed that the research participants P2AT² and P3ATA worked together, P4BT and P5BTA worked together, and P6CT and P7CTA worked together. The learning support teacher (P8ALST) worked at School A, and the learning support advisor (P1LSA) oversaw the resource classes at Schools A, B, and C. The participating schools were located in the Cape Winelands District. The resource classes in these full-service schools included 12 to 15 learners who had been screened and diagnosed with severe learning difficulties or cognitive and developmental disabilities. Their scholastic levels ranged from grades 1 to 5.

Table 1: Contexts of research participants

School	Participant	Position (according to participants)	Grade/Age of learners in class	Number of learners in class
N/A	P1LSA	Learning support advisor	-	-
School A	P8ALST	Learning support teacher	Grades R–6	6/7 learners in every group that are withdrawn

¹ See <https://wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za/news/wced-recruiting-20-500-education-assistants-and-general-school-assistants-schools>.

² P2 = Participant 2; A = School A; T = Teacher; TA = Teaching Assistant

School	Participant	Position (according to participants)	Grade/Age of learners in class	Number of learners in class
School A	P2AT	Teacher of learners with special needs	10–16 years of age Functional level: grades R–2 level	10
School A	P3ATA	Teaching assistant	10–16 years of age	10
School B	P4BT	Teacher	9–16 years of age Functional level: grades RR–2 level	11
School B	P5BTA	Teaching assistant in resource class	9–16 years of age	11 (only 8 after the national lockdown in March 2020)
School C	P6CT	ELSEN teacher	9–15 years of age Functional level: grades RR–2 level	11
School C	P7CTA	Teaching assistant in resource class	9–15 years of age	11

School A

The school is located in a peaceful suburb surrounded by residential areas, medium-sized shopping centers, and businesses. Most learners came from nearby farms. The school provides a feeding scheme, and many parents receive grants from the South African Social Security Agency. It is a no-fee school that caters to learners in grades R to 7. At the time of the study, the school had one computer room and library. The school has 12 teachers, two heads of department, one deputy principal, and one principal. Approximately 540 learners attended school.

School B

The school is situated in a small town near an informal settlement. Although transportation is readily available in towns, the cost of travelling between towns is high. It is a no-fee school serving Grades R to 9 with a total of 993 learners, 19 teachers, four heads of departments, two deputy principals, and one principal at the time of

the study. The school has a science laboratory, computer room, and library. Additionally, it provides a feeding scheme that offers food to learners in need.

School C

The school is in a residential area within the town with approximately 10,000 inhabitants. Although public transport is easily accessible, travel between towns is expensive. The school is a no-fee, full-service institution, with learners from grades R to 7. At the time of the research, the school had 932 learners, 19 teachers, four heads of departments, two deputy principals, and one principal. The school is equipped with two science laboratories, two computer rooms, and a library. Additionally, the school features a fence with security cameras and feeding scheme.

Data collection

We used different methods to collect data, namely demographic information question sheets, short worksheets, semi-structured individual interviews (transcribed verbatim),

documents, and field notes. Data were collected during the Level 1 lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic. The communication methods complied with the COVID-19 regulations set by the university's Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioral, and Education Research (REC: SBE). Alternative methods of data collection, such as virtual (Microsoft Teams) and telephonic interviews, were used to eliminate possible disease transmission between the interviewers and research participants.

Before conducting the interviews, all participants were asked to complete an online questionnaire to gather demographic information and a short worksheet exercise related to the teaching assistants. We conducted semi-structured interviews that lasted approximately 40 minutes each (Ritchie et al., 2013). Online modes of communication offer several advantages over traditional, face-to-face interviews. They are less expensive, less time-consuming, and easier to plan (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Moreover, they allow participants to react spontaneously, as in face-to-face interviews (O'Connor & Madge, 2017). In addition, telephonic interviews have the added benefit of overcoming the power dynamic between the interviewer and interviewee and creating a greater sense of safety for the participants (Oliffe et al., 2021; Vogl, 2013).

The information gathered from the demographic questionnaire and completed worksheet had an impact on how the interview questions were phrased. The insights obtained earlier played a crucial role in shaping the subsequent data-collection process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Zach, 2006). The primary data-collection instrument used was the interview schedule. Through semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions directed the conversation, resulting in meaningful discussions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). We

also analyzed contracts and advertisements for the job. A variety of methods and sources have enhanced the credibility and richness of this study.

Research site and ethics

We received approval from the Western Cape Education Department to conduct this research in schools. Additionally, we were granted ethical clearance from the REC: SBE (project number 21692). We sought permission from the school principals to contact teachers and teaching assistants from their schools, and all participants provided informed consent. The first author collected data via MS Teams and telephonic means. Throughout this study, we were aware of and adhered to ethical considerations, including autonomy and informed consent, non-maleficence, beneficence, confidentiality and anonymity, fidelity, and utility.

Data analysis

Two methods were used to analyze the data. First, the thematic analysis method enabled us to identify, analyze, and interpret the themes generated from the qualitative data (see Clarke & Braun, 2017). This stage of data analysis involved sorting the data, which were transcribed scripts, documents, and field notes, into meaningful qualitative units called 'codes' (Chanail, 2012). Once coded, patterns and themes could be constructed (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

Second, Activity Systems Analysis (ASA) was used to analyze the interaction between the assistant and the environment, along with the effects of one on the other (Engeström, 2015). Engeström's CHAT model supports the understanding of human activity (Stuart, 2012), as both context and behavior play a central role (Nathan & Sawyer, 2014). The ASA enabled us to interpret and understand the data according to the specific unit of

analysis, systemic relations, systemic contradictions, tensions, and how the activity system responds to it.

classroom, tools teaching assistants need (qualities and characteristics), and training of the teaching assistants. This is discussed in the following subsections.

The teaching assistants' role

FINDINGS

The following themes were identified in the data: teaching assistants' roles, role division in the resource

Participants' views on the teaching assistants' daily tasks are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Participants' perceptions of teaching assistants' daily tasks

School	Participant	Position (according to the individual)	Tasks the assistants are responsible for on a normal day (in the order presented by the participants)
N/A	P1LSA	Learning support advisor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing individual support 2. Providing group support 3. Preparing the classroom – setting out activities 4. Developing apparatus
School A	P8ALST	Learning support teacher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing support 2. Acting as the right hand of teacher 3. Providing individual support to learners 4. Providing administrative support 5. Promoting inclusivity
School A	P2AT	Teacher of learners with special needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Screening, scanning, registering, completing bus forms 2. Supporting learners individually with their work 3. Cleaning and tidying (with learners) and disinfecting the class 4. Supporting craft activities 5. Doing administrative tasks: copying, printing, etc.
School A	P3ATA	Teaching assistant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Screening, scanning and capturing learner attendance for the class 2. Helping where learners do not understand 3. Teaching them how to use certain power tools correctly 4. Disinfecting all surfaces and everything that has been touched and used for that particular day 5. Printing and copying any documents that are needed for class
School B	P4BT	Teacher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Helping with the preparation of the classroom 2. Helping the learners in their different groups 3. Listening to the learners' needs 4. Providing one-on-one support

Teaching Assistants in Classes in Full

School	Participant	Position (according to the individual)	Tasks the assistants are responsible for on a normal day (in the order presented by the participants)
			5. Helping with tidying and setting up of exhibitions
School B	P5BTA	Teaching assistant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Copying 2. Doing the register 3. Working with the group assigned to her 4. Supervising learners
School C	P6CT	ELSEN teacher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scanning learners before they enter class, completing the temperature sheets, dishing up food, etc. 2. While teacher explains the work, helping with cutting, laminating, pasting, etc. 3. Supporting learners individually with their work (e.g., the grade group) 4. Working with a small group during carpet work, helping with informal assessment 5. Helping to organise the class in the afternoon and marking work if necessary
School C	P7CTA	Teaching assistant in resource class	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supporting learners with reading 2. Doing art activities 3. Supporting learners with mathematics if necessary 4. Working with the weaker of the two groups in the class

It is evident that there are similarities and differences in how participants perceive the tasks of teaching assistants. Analyzing the first three primary tasks mentioned by each participant revealed that teaching assistants were mainly responsible for administration, supporting the teacher, and supporting the learners. The participants provided their opinions on what the roles and purpose of a teaching assistant in a resource class should be, as demonstrated in the following excerpts.

Supporting the learners and supporting the teacher. To me, that is the most important. [...] to do administrative tasks for which I don't necessarily have time, so she lightens my load ... (P2AT)

Whatever is needed, I take on the task, and whenever the teacher asks me to do something, I take it on, and I do it. I just step in where she needs help. (P3ATA)

The assistant is there to support you and the learners. (P4BT)

It was clearly communicated to me; you do what the teacher expects of you to do. (P5BTA)

My most important role is probably to be there for the learners and to make them feel comfortable and to let them understand that they are human and that we care ... (P7CTA)

The role of a teaching assistant is flexible and adapts to classroom needs. More specifically, the administration includes completing the attendance register, bus forms, and copying documents. Teacher support includes the preparation of the classroom; setting out activities; cleaning and tidying the class; and doing cutting, laminating, and pasting work for the teacher. Learner support involves providing individual or group support to learners when they are completing work, whether it is art, reading, mathematics, or using tools (see Table 2). During the COVID-19 pandemic, learners were screened, their temperatures were scanned, and the classroom was disinfected.

Role division in the classroom

The teaching assistants in the class knew exactly what was expected of them, not necessarily because of the written contract, but mainly because the teacher included them in the lesson planning and communicated effectively. It is interesting to note that none of the participants felt time constrained when planning or communicating with each other regarding the teaching assistants' tasks for the following day. This is evident from the following responses:

In the afternoon, when they [the children] are away then we sit with the planning of the following day. And then she tells me exactly: "Tomorrow we will do this, and the weaker group will do this task and the stronger group will do this." So, we always prepare the day before. So, I know exactly... (P5BTA)

I do my planning in the afternoons, she stays for a little while after school, she only goes home a bit later, so then I do my planning and I ask her input, "Will we do this, will we do that," what does she think, does it sound 'stupid' or does she think it will

work with that group or that group. She also knows the children and their levels and abilities, so we quickly put our heads together, which is how she knows what is expected of her the following day. (P4BT)

To ensure that teaching assistants were clear about their duties in the classroom, the teacher provided guidance and direction. The division of labor was well defined, and everyone understood the teacher's and assistant's responsibilities. While the teacher was the leader in the classroom, the assistant was not excluded from planning, and had tasks similar to those of the teacher. In fact, the assistant often occupies tasks like those of the teacher.

Tools teaching assistants need

Tools refer to qualities and characteristics, teamwork, experience, and knowledge of the context and culture. The participants in this study identified some key qualities and personal characteristics that are essential for teaching assistants to be effective in their work. These include showing respect, quick thinking, open-mindedness, patience, humility, honesty, good communication skills, willingness to help and follow instructions, friendliness, professionalism, caring for learners, and positive attitudes. The fluidity of the needs in the resource class also highlights the importance of teamwork, adaptability, and flexibility. The participants' responses emphasized the importance of these qualities.

Initially they gave her to me with the intention of discipline, and yes, I needed the extra hands, but yes, that role of discipline does not play a role anymore. (P2AT)

We [are] all over the place in the most structured manner you can ever possibly imagine. That is

how it works with us. [...] Because what the teacher and I mostly do is we have our schedule, and everything, our planning that we do ahead of time, but when it comes to the actual day, there are many times when we can't do what we planned. So, we just have to fall in with what that particular day gives us. But most of the time we focus on working with the kids academically. (P3ATA)

You must have an open mind [...] You must be quick enough to interrupt what you are doing and shift to another task. So, the thing is you have to be, you just have to be a quick thinker at times. (P3ATA)

You have to be so humble stepping into that situation because you cannot judge a child because they cannot work on the level that you expect them to work considering their age. So, patience is the main thing, patience and understanding. (P3ATA)

... Just to be there for them [children] and to give my everything and to see them laugh [...] you can comfort and give love and attention and just bring a smile to that face. (P5BTA)

An assistant and a teacher should really have a good relationship and they should respect each other. (P5BTA)

... just be yourself and come to the child's level. Imagine that you are that child. Let that child understand that you are there because you care, not just because it is your job. (P7CTA)

When considering the role of teaching assistants, it is important to consider the context, culture, and backgrounds of the individuals involved. The learning support advisor noted that it

was preferable for teaching assistants to be from the community in which the schools were located. This is important because the assistants can act as a bridge for learners between home and school, serving as "boundary brokers" between the two systems. This helps to create a sense of comfort for learners, as evidenced by the positive responses from the participants in the study.

The wonderful thing about break time to me is that many [learners] do not open up, but they do with her [the teaching assistant]. (P6CT)

Many of them share things with me which they do not share with XXX [the class teacher]. I will then tell her, so that she can also understand. [...] look I am their colour, coloured, and the teacher is a white woman. Like they say: "a white woman." So, many times, we coloreds feel more comfortable sharing with our own people. (P7CTA)

These assistants can also act as bridges between teachers and learners and families. Learners feel more comfortable at school when they have someone they trust from their surrounding communities. Additionally, teaching assistants can provide valuable insights into learners' lives, which teachers can use to better understand and support learners and their parents. As a result, the teaching assistant acts as a mediator between the school and families, ensuring that the system effectively supports and includes all learners (Turner et al., 2018).

So, when there is something wrong with a learner, I ask the assistants: "Listen, what is going on at their homes?", and they will know, as they live close to them. So it is that community connection the school can use. (P8ALST)

Teaching assistant training

The topic of teaching assistant training is controversial. Some countries mandate that teaching assistants have some form of training, whereas others require specific training. At the time of the study, teaching assistants did not have to meet any training requirements. The teachers were responsible for everything after the learning support advisor facilitated the induction process. Based on this study, it was found that all assistants who participated were enthusiastic about working with children and had received some form of training or certification. Most of them had previous experience as caretakers in preschools and schools. They were all from the same community where the schools were located and were eager to provide support to the learners, both during class and outside of their working hours.

It is interesting to note that according to previous studies, the personalities of teaching assistants are considered more important by teachers than their level of education or the training they have received (Butt, 2018; Cassim & Moen, 2020). The data collected in this study support this conclusion. It is worth noting that some of the teachers suggested providing training to teaching assistants, whereas most of the assistants expressed a desire for additional training. The comments below express some of the participants' views.

I do not need her to know more in my class. As she has so much empathy, she knows enough. For her to get further training will not necessarily help me; it will help her. She does not need to know more; she does it intuitively. (P2AT)

I would like if she could help the children to learn how to knit or do something that I cannot do. (P4BT)

I, yes, I think there can be a lot more [training], I can do with quite a few more courses, you know, I can't tell you that I know everything. [...] I think I can do with quite a bit more training. (P5BTA)

In many classrooms, the teacher works with most learners, while the teaching assistant focuses on a smaller group that requires more support. However, as reported in the literature, this approach can be problematic because teaching assistants are often not trained to assume pedagogical roles. Instead, they tend to observe the teacher and assist learners in a way that the teacher models. Teaching assistants use various tools to achieve activity system objectives, such as previous teaching experience, their experience as parents, and their ability to communicate effectively with learners. Nevertheless, it is clear from the comments that their ability to observe and emulate their teachers' behavior is also an important factor. They learned in the process and appreciated it as a vital part of the optimal functioning of the class.

The teacher must first show how, and the assistant must first observe how it should be done, and then from there, she continues. (PILSA)

We talk about it beforehand, but she knows by now, we do the sums this way, I first give the lesson, ... and from there, out of that it flows... (P6CT)

DISCUSSION

The main role of teaching assistants is to provide support wherever needed, as evident from the data. Rather than understanding their role as either "paint pot washers or pedagogues" (Clarke, 2019, p. 273), their role and tools can be understood as both paint pot washers and pedagogues, albeit in a supportive way. They fulfil many roles that consist of

various tasks. As illustrated the Figure 2 the study found that teaching assistants provide interconnected academic, administrative, social, and emotional support (Němec et al., 2015; Blatchford et al. 2013). The support activities of teaching assistants were interrelated. When learners are supported,

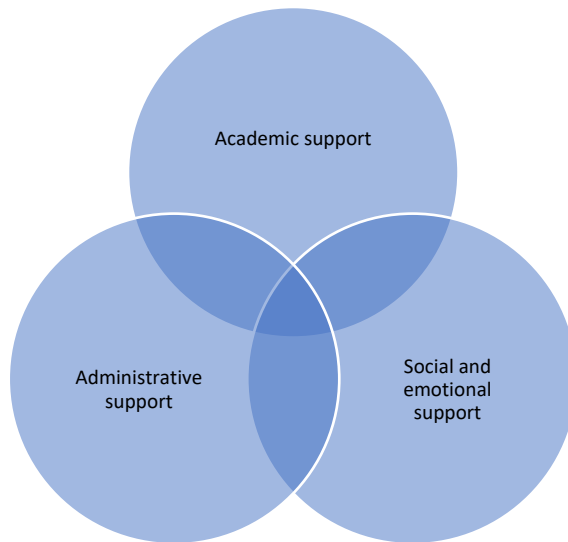


Figure 2: The teaching assistant job

Despite vague job descriptions, teaching assistants know what to do (see Sharma & Salend, 2016). Contrary to the literature reviewed (Clarke & Visser, 2019a; Cockroft & Atkinson, 2015; Sharma & Salend, 2016), the teaching assistants who participated in this study reported that they had sufficient time to collaborate with teachers in planning. This planning allowed them to gain a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Consequently, they were better equipped to support both learners and teachers in achieving their collective goals the following day. The teachers and teaching assistants in these schools have built supportive relationships that enable them to rely on their help at short notice in the classroom (Clarke & Visser, 2019a). This supports Slater and Gazeley's (2019) argument that in inclusive classrooms, having supportive relationships is more important than titles or ranks. This is because teachers and teaching assistants may need to share responsibilities in a fluid

teachers are supported, and vice versa (Alborz et al., 2009). This activity system is interconnected, with each player's actions influencing the system as a whole (Patchen & Smithenry, 2014). A common purpose (objective), namely, the child's learning, binds these systems together.

manner, rather than having separate and fixed roles.

The findings of this study support those of other researchers that communication is of key importance in resource classes (Clarke & Visser, 2019a). Teaching assistants are like teachers in that they assume multiple roles throughout the week, such as being a nurse, mentor, teacher, mother, confidant, helper, and cleaner. When required, they were expected to perform each of these roles. To ensure that the collaborative effort between the teacher and teaching assistant works effectively, it is important to have healthy communication and time to plan together, share ideas, and provide constructive feedback. Such collaboration is a fundamental aspect of practice in resource classes and a cornerstone of inclusive education (Paju et al., 2021).

Effective utilization of tools can be a valuable resource for a system, leading to positive outcomes. However, the inefficient

or inadequate use of tools can prevent the desired results from being achieved (Sannino & Engeström, 2018). Teaching assistants use various tools and artifacts to perform daily tasks that mediate their actions (Gretschel et al., 2015). These tools include not only the language they use when communicating with learners but also their training, personal characteristics, relationships with the teacher, learners, parents, previous experiences, and material resources available in the classroom. The data revealed that the actions of teaching assistants were largely influenced by the teacher (Bennett et al., 2021; Clarke & Visser, 2019b). Teaching assistants learn how to support learners effectively by observing and imitating teachers' methods. After observing and learning the "how to," they are able to provide learners with the necessary support while also developing their own skills in the process.

As teaching assistants work towards achieving their objectives within the activity system, they can rely on their personal characteristics as an additional tool (Cassim & Moen, 2020). Based on the participants' feedback, personal traits such as patience, understanding, flexibility, adaptability, honesty, humility, kindness, positivity, respectfulness, open-mindedness, good communication skills, helpfulness, and hard work were reported as essential and beneficial. The findings of this study suggest that effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is facilitated by the aforementioned personal characteristics. This correlates with Cassim and Moen's (2020) findings, stating the gravity of good working relationships between teachers and teaching assistants, which are partly influenced by the personal characteristics of the teaching assistants.

Teaching assistants played an important role in fostering positive relationships between the school community and teachers as well as between teachers and learners in these classrooms. They often act as mediators, bridging the

gap between two groups. By actively facilitating these relationships and exercising agency, teaching assistants were often able to alleviate tension and spark positive changes that improved the system. Additionally, their agency allows them to better understand the learners, enabling them to provide effective support and inclusion according to their roles (Clarke & Visser, 2019b; Johnson, 2018). In the broader school context, there is a contradiction in which the teaching assistants are not officially authorized to act as intermediaries between learners in the resource class and other teachers in the school. However, they must frequently shield learners in their classrooms from bullying and judgment by other teachers in the school which raises concerns about exclusion.

The teaching assistants who were interviewed had some form of training that they found useful but expressed a desire for more training to enhance their skills. This supports the findings of Butt's (2018) study in which participants sought to increase their available tools. They also made suggestions regarding contracts with schools. It is important for teaching assistants to have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to avoid confusion and miscommunications. However, according to the participants' responses, it was evident that teaching assistants have multiple and diverse roles that change on a day-to-day basis (see Hemelt et al. 2021). Therefore, it is impractical for the contract to be too specific, as teaching assistants are there to fill in the gaps and it would be impossible to list every role and responsibility that they may have. Other full-service schools could benefit from these recommendations in the absence of clear guidance.

On a critical note: The aim of this research was not to present the resource class as an ideal microcosm; to the contrary. One of the contradictions in these full-service (so-called inclusive) schools is that the resource class is segregated from the

rest of the school. The assistants work with learners already screened and diagnosed, and both teachers and assistants often refer to 'us' and 'them' when referring to the rest of the school. DoBE's report to the Parliamentary Monitoring Committee on the Implementation of Education White Paper 6 indicated that the province was in a process of transforming these units "that continue to segregate" (DoBE, 2015, p. 71) to move from integration to inclusion. Therefore, this type of activity system should ideally be present in all the classrooms. Circular S4 of 2019 (DoBE, 2019) addresses the weaknesses identified by the Auditor General. We recommend further research on full-service schools as activity systems, including all teachers, learners, and teaching assistants, to inform the department's operational procedures and the development of evidence-based practices (see DoBE, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to understand the experiences and responsibilities of teaching assistants in resource classes within full-service schools. We employed an interpretive case study approach to examine the resource class activity system in the Western Cape Province. The findings of this study confirmed and contradicted those

REFERENCES

- Alborz, A., Pearson, D., Farrell, P., & Howes, A. (2009). *The impact of adult support staff on pupils and mainstream schools*. Report no. 1702T. Social Science Research Unit. [http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Portals/0/PDF reviews and summaries/Support staff Rpt.pdf?ver=2016-04-23-122500-213](http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Portals/0/PDF%20reviews%20and%20summaries/Support%20staff%20Rpt.pdf?ver=2016-04-23-122500-213)
- Bennett, S., Gallagher, T., Somma, M., & White, R. (2021). Transitioning towards inclusion: A triangulated view of the role of educational assistants. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 21(3), 1–
- of previous studies on the same subject. The findings of this study align with the existing literature, indicating that healthy relationships, positive personal dispositions, effective communication, and collaboration in resource classes are crucial. These factors are essential not only for supporting learners and their education but also for ensuring job satisfaction among teaching assistants. Unlike other studies, the teaching assistants in this study were valued members of the team and did not experience any role confusion. Although there were some contradictions within the activity system, the teaching assistants understood their roles and contributed to learners' education as collaborators and boundary brokers.
- To excel in their multifaceted roles, teaching assistants rely on teachers to model and provide classroom guidance. In addition, they benefited from opportunities for ongoing training. The teaching assistants who participated in this study found their work fulfilling, felt valued for their contributions, and played an important role in advancing the goals of Education for All. Their experiences serve as testaments to the vital role of teaching assistants in supporting learners' success.
11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12508>
- Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Brown, P., & Webster, R. (2009). The effect of support staff on pupil engagement and individual attention. *British Educational Research Journal*, 35(5), 661–686. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920902878917>
- Blatchford, P., Webster, R., & Russell, A. (2013). *Challenging the role and deployment of teaching assistants in mainstream schools: The impact on schools: Final report on the effective deployment of teaching assistants (EDTA) project*.

- <https://maximisingtas.co.uk/assets/content/edtareport-2.pdf>
- Breyer, C., & Gasteiger-Klicpera, B. (2023). The relative significance of contextual, process and individual factors in the impact of learning and support assistants on the inclusion of students with SEN. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, online first <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2023.2184510>
- Butt, R. (2018). 'Pulled in off the street' and available: What qualifications and training do teacher assistants really need? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22(3), 217–234. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1362478>
- Butt, R., & Lowe, K. (2011). Teaching assistants and class teachers: Differing perceptions, role confusion and the benefits of skills-based training. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(2), 207–219. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603111003739678>
- Cassim, N. (2016). *Perspectives of Grade 1 teachers on the need for teaching assistants* [degree thesis/dissertation]. University of Pretoria. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-349-95988-4_957
- Cassim, N., & Moen, M. (2020). Contribution of teaching assistants to quality education in Grade 1 classrooms. *South African Journal of Education*, 40(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v40n1a1719>
- Chenail, R. J. (2012). Conducting qualitative data analysis: Reading line-by-line, but analyzing by meaningful qualitative units. *Qualitative Report*, 17(1), 266–269.
- Clarke, E. (2019). Paint pot washers or pedagogues? Is gender an issue for teaching assistants? *Educational Review*, 73(3), 263–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2018.1559800>
- Clarke, E., & Visser, J. (2019a). Is a good teaching assistant one who 'knows their place'? *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 24(4), 308–322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2019.1625207>
- Clarke, E., & Visser, J. (2019b). Teaching assistants managing behaviour – who knows how they do it? Agency is the answer. *Support for Learning*, 34(4), 372–388. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.12273>
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 297–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613>
- Cockroft, C., & 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. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.12081>
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. L. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Deakin, H., & Wakefield, K. (2014). Skype interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative Research*, 14(5), 603–616. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794113488126>
- Department of Basic Education. (2010). *Guidelines for full-service / inclusive schools*.

- <http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&btnG=Search&q=intitle:Guidelines+for+Full-service+Inclusive+Schools#0>
- Department of Basic Education (2015). *Report on the implementation of Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education*. <https://static.pmg.org.za/160308overview.pdf>
- Department of Basic Education. (2019). *School fees and exemption*. <https://www.education.gov.za/Informationfor/ParentsandGuardians/SchoolFees.aspx>
- Department of Basic Education. (2019). Temporary suspension of the designation of full-service schools. Circular S4 of 2019. <https://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=rU374xsmjgQ%3D&tabid=587&portalid=0&mid=9542>
- Department of Basic Education. (2023). Progress report on the implementation of inclusive education. Presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Basic Education 23 September 2023. https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/37416/?utm_source=transactional&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=minute-alert
- Department of Education. (2001). *Education white paper 6: Special needs education- Building an inclusive education and training system*. <http://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=gVFccZLi/tI=&tabid=191&mid=484>
- Engelbrecht, P. (2019). Die toepassing van inklusiewe onderwys: Internasionale verwagtinge en Suid-Afrikaanse realiteite. *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 59(4), 530–544.
- <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2224-7912/2019/v59n4a5>
- Engeström, Y. (2015). *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Engeström, Y., Kajamaa, A., Lahtinen, P., & Sannino, A. (2015). Towards a grammar of collaboration. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 22(2), 92–111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10749039.2015.1024326>
- Engeström, Y., & Sannino, A. (2010). Studies of expansive learning: Foundations, findings and future challenges. *Educational Research Review*, 5(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2009.12.002>
- Feldman, A., & Weiss, T. (2010). Understanding change in teachers' ways of being through collaborative action research: A cultural-historical activity theory analysis. *Educational Action Research*, 18(1), 29–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790903484517>
- Foot, K. A. (2014). Cultural-historical activity theory: Exploring a theory to inform practice and research. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 24(3), 329–347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2013.831011>
- Galindo, C., & Sanders, M. (2019). Final thoughts: Working towards the sustainability of full-service community schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 24(3), 314–319. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2019.1615919>
- Giangreco, M. F. (2013). Teacher assistant supports in inclusive schools: Research, practices and alternatives.

- Australasian Journal of Special Education*, 37(2), 93–106.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/jse.2013.1>
- Glegg, S. M. N. (2018). Facilitating interviews in qualitative research with visual tools: A typology. *Qualitative Health Research*, 29(2), 1–10.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318786485>
- Gretschel, P., Ramugondo, E. L., & Galvaan, R. (2015). An introduction to cultural historical activity theory as a theoretical lens for understanding how occupational therapists design interventions for persons living in low-income conditions in South Africa. *South African Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45(1), 51–55.
<https://doi.org/10.17159/2310-3833/2015/v45no1a9>
- Groom, B., & Rose, R. (2005). Supporting the inclusion of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the primary school: The role of teaching assistants. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 5(1), 20–30.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2005.00035.x>
- Gustafsson, J. (2017). *Single case studies vs. multiple case studies: A comparative study*. School of Business, Engineering and Science, Halmstad University.
<http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:1064378%0Ahttp://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1064378/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Harris, L. R., & Aprile, K. T. (2015). “I can sort of slot into many different roles”: Examining teacher aide roles and their implications for practice. *School Leadership and Management*, 35(2), 140–162.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2014.992774>
- Hemelt, S. W., Ladd, H. F., & Clifton, C. R. (2021). Do teacher assistants improve student outcomes? Evidence from school funding cutbacks in North Carolina. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 43(2), 280–304.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373721990361>
- Hooijer, E. L., Van der Merwe, M., & Fourie, J. (2021). Symbolic representations as teachers reflect on inclusive education in South Africa. *African Journal of Teacher Education*, 10(1), 127–152.
<https://doi.org/10.21083/ajote.v10i1.6549>
- Johnson, G. (2018). Sustainable support: A case of the role and deployment of teaching assistants implementing a unique early literacy intervention. *Education 3-13 International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*, 46(7), 729–740.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2017.1339723>
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120–124.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092>
- Lichtman, M. (2014). *Qualitative research for the social sciences*. Sage.
- Muthukrishna, N., & Engelbrecht, P. (2018). Decolonising inclusive education in lower income, Southern African educational contexts. *South African Journal of Education*, 38(4), 1–11.
<https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38n4a1701>

- Nathan, M. J., & Sawyer, R. K. (2014). Foundations of the learning sciences. In R. K. Swayer (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of the learning sciences* (2nd ed., pp. 21–43). Cambridge University Press.
- Nel, M. (2020). Inclusive and special education in Africa. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1008>
- Němec, Z., Šimáčková-Laurenčíková, K., Hájková, V., & Strnadová, I. (2015). ‘When I need to do something else with the other children, then I can rely on her’: Teaching assistants working with socially disadvantaged students. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 30*(4), 459–473. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2015.1035904>
- Nussbaumer, D. (2012). An overview of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) use in classroom research 2000 to 2009. *Educational Review, 64*(1), 37–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2011.553947>
- O’Connor, H., & Madge, C. (2017). Online interviewing. In N. G. Fielding, R. M. Lee, & G. Blank (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of online research methods* (2nd ed., pp. 416–434). Sage. <https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473957992>
- Oliffe, J. L., Kelly, M. T., Gonzalez Montaner, G., & Yu Ko, W. F. (2021). Zoom interviews: Benefits and concessions. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 20*, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211053522>
- Paju, B., Kajamaa, A., Pirttimaa, R., & Kontu, E. (2021). Collaboration for inclusive practices: Teaching staff perspectives from Finland. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 66*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2020.1869087>
- Patchen, T., & Smithenry, D. W. (2014). Diversifying instruction and shifting authority: A cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) analysis of classroom participant structures. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 51*(5), 606–634. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.21140>
- Pather, S. (2019). Confronting inclusive education in Africa since Salamanca. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 23*(7/8), 782–795. [10.1080/13603116.2019.1623329](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1623329)
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Elam, G., Tennant, R., & Rahim, N. (2013). Designing and selecting samples. In J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, C. M. Nicholls, & R. Ormston (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (2nd ed., pp. 111–146). Sage.
- Roth, W. M., & Lee, Y. J. (2007). “Vygotsky’s neglected legacy”: Cultural-historical activity theory. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(2), 186–232. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654306298273>
- Rubie-Davies, C. M., Blatchford, P., Webster, R., Koutsoubou, M., & Bassett, P. (2010). Enhancing learning? A comparison of teacher and teaching assistant interactions with pupils. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 21*(4), 429–449. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2010.512800>
- Sannino, A., & Engeström, Y. (2018). Cultural-historical activity theory: Founding insights and new

- challenges. *Cultural-Historical Psychology*, 14(3), 43–56.
<https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2018140304>
- Sharma, U., & Salend, S. J. (2016). Teaching assistants in inclusive classrooms: A systematic analysis of the international research. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(8), 118–134.
<https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41n8.7>
- Sharma, U., & Subban, P. (2023). Utilizing a global social justice lens to explore indicators of inclusive education. In R. J. Tierney, F. Rizvi, & K. Ercikan (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Education* (4th ed., pp. 104–114). Elsevier.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-818630-5.12053-6>
- Slater, E., & Gazeley, L. (2019). Deploying teaching assistants to support learning: From models to typologies. *Educational Review*, 71(5), 547–563.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2018.1457011>
- Singal, N., Spencer, C., & Mitchell, R. (2021). *Primary schooling for children with disabilities: A review of African scholarship. Research report*. Cambridge Network for Disability and Education Research: University of Cambridge, UK.
<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.31580.72325>
- Smuts, S. (2021). Smuts, S. The roles and experiences of teaching assistants in resource classes in full-service schools [Master's dissertation, Stellenbosch University. SunScholar <http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/124199>
- Stuart, K. (2012). Narratives and activity theory as reflective tools in action research. *Educational Action Research*, 20(3), 439–453.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2012.697663>
- Sutton, J., & Austin, Z. (2015). Qualitative research: Data collection, analysis, and management. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, 68(3), 226–231.
- Trent, J. (2014). “I’m teaching, but I’m not really a teacher”. Teaching assistants and the construction of professional identities in Hong Kong schools. *Educational Research*, 56(1), 28–47.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2013.874147>
- Turner, J. C., Christensen, A., Kackar-Cam, H. Z., Fulmer, S. M., & Trucano, M. (2018). The development of professional learning communities and their teacher leaders: An activity systems analysis. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 27(1), 49–88.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10508406.2017.1381962>
- Usher, B. K., & Jackson, D. (2014). Phenomenology. In J. Mills, & M. Birks (Eds.). *Qualitative methodology: A practical guide* (pp. 181–198). Sage.
- Vogl, S. (2013). Telephone versus face-to-face interviews: Mode effect on semistructured interviews with children. *Sociological Methodology*, 43(1), 133–177.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0081175012465967>
- Walton, E. (2018). Decolonising (through) inclusive education? *Educational Research for Social Change*, 7, 31–45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2221-4070/2018/v7i0a3>
- Webster, R., Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Brown, P., Martin, C., & Russell, A. (2011). The wider pedagogical role of teaching assistants. *School Leadership and Management*, 31(1),

- 3–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2010.540562>
- Webster, R., Blatchford, P., & Russell, A. (2013). Challenging and changing how schools use teaching assistants: Findings from the effective deployment of teaching assistants project. *School Leadership and Management, 33*(1), 78–96.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2012.724672>
- Webster, R., & De Boer, A. A. (2021). Teaching assistants: Their role in the inclusion, education and achievement of pupils with special educational needs. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 36*(2), 163–167.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1901369>
- Wren, A. (2017). Understanding the role of the teaching assistant: Comparing the views of pupils with SEN and TAs within mainstream primary schools. *Support for Learning, 32*(1), 4–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.12151>
- Yamagata-Lynch, L. C. (2010). *Activity systems analysis methods: Understanding complex learning environments*. Springer.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-6321-5>
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. The Guilford Press.
- Zach, L. (2006). Using a multiple-case studies design to investigate the information-seeking behavior of arts administrators. *Library Trends, 55*(1), 4–21.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2006.0055>