

# Impact of higher level teaching assistant education essay



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In 2003, there has been a reform that was signed in order to reform the school workforce. Sets of National Standards' were produced in order to reflect the production of Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA). The main purpose of posting HLTA's is to provide a high level of classroom support to help ensure that teachers can focus on their teaching role. A HLTA post-holder will be expected to take on more involved roles in support of teaching and learning and may line manage other support staff (e. g. TAs, LSAs). The precise details of the role will be determined by the school/college.

HLTAs work strictly under the direction and guidance of a teacher, within the framework of management and supervision of their school/college.

Responsibility for teaching and learning remains with the teacher (and ultimately the head/principal), who will exercise their professional judgment based on what is best for pupils.

The distinction between HLTA's and TA's is that HLTAs take on higher level roles than other TAs, including planning their own role within the classroom (in support of the teacher's planning) and undertaking some teaching activities within an appropriate system of supervision provided by a teacher. HLTAs may line manage other support staff, including TAs.

This paper shall discuss the impact made by HLTA's on teaching and learning. This shall also look into the cost being incurred by posting HLTA's as well as supply rates as opposed to covering of teaching assistants.

Impact of HLTA in Teaching Practice

The NFER 2007 report 'Deployment and impact of support staff...' cited in the CwD Council e-bulletin no. 06 August 2007 revealed "more than 90% of the senior leaders who responded believe Higher Level Teaching Assistants are having a positive effect within schools and on pupil performance."

In some school localities the opportunity to use able TAs in community liaison and fund raising has been a real bonus, bringing very diverse communities closer together. Equally comments such as "C. contributes to the School Improvement Plan and represents TAs and chairs TA meetings every two weeks," clearly demonstrates how the role of the TA can be moved forward to the benefit of a whole setting particularly as many settings now have a considerable number of TAs. One setting had twenty three TAs, all of whom need managing and timetabling. "She (the HLTA) has a base room and allocates other TAs to specific classes," were the words from one setting.

TAs also need to be kept informed of happenings and discussions within settings thus a HLTA representative at meetings has aided the ability to keep TAs informed as they cascade information. It also means that TAs do not all need to attend meetings and yet are all kept informed. This means that numbers at meetings are more manageable and it means TAs who are paid less do not need to give up more unpaid time.

There is also the security of knowing that the person covering a class understands and works to the standards but there are difficulties if the HLTA is absent as there are no HLTA supplies currently and so frequently a supply teacher has to be brought in to cover the absent HLTA. In fact there is no

insurance to cover the supply when covering for a HLTA. This also raises the issue of pay as the supply would earn more than the TA. There was however one school which had Level two TAs taking classes during PPA time this was questionable as neither wished to undertake HLTA but it is not known if these two had other qualifications that would make this more acceptable.

Webb (2010) however argued that while teachers acknowledge the expertise of the assigned HLTA's, as well as the contribution that they are making, most of the teachers believe that their professionalism are being compromised. According to Webb's study, this is because of the HLTA's lack of teaching qualifications. Stewart (2009) shares this same argument. On his study, teachers viewed that the creation of HLTA's is a threat for their professional status.

Moreover, a review of Children's Services Scrutiny Committee was conducted in Oxfordshire County Council with regards to the impact of having support staff in classes. In summary, there have been varied response with regards to the advantages and disadvantages of such. The impact on teachers' workload and morale has been positive, though many teachers report that workload continues to increase. Some head teachers, especially, suggest that many teachers have become less flexible. The impact on head teachers' workload has been considerable, notably in small schools, especially where they have taken on the responsibility for the details of organization and additional teaching commitments. This has had a negative effect on morale. The impact on support staff has been extremely varied. Some, especially those training to be teachers or HLTAs have greatly welcomed the increased responsibility of leading classes. Of those teaching assistants leading classes

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without additional training, some enjoy the additional responsibility, but most feel that they do not have the necessary skills, expertise and experience, especially those working with older children. Support staff are often treated with less respect than teachers. Most planning takes account of the medium-term plan, but the responsibility for planning sessions varies widely. Those releasing teachers unwillingly are often concerned about the quality of lessons and sometimes about the health and safety implications. Most support staff have little or no timetabled time to prepare. Much the most common concern, even from those who welcomed the new opportunities, is that any increased levels of pay, by no means universal, in no way matches the additional responsibility. The benefits for teachers' workload and morale are perceived to be mainly at the expense of head teachers and support staff who do not wish to lead classes but are doing so.

### Impact of HLTA in Learning

The main benefits for learning are raised standards and support for the students and greater ability to monitor children's progress. There is also greater continuity and one person questioned said, ' we are able to deliver sessions more effectively as they (TAs) know the expectations.' The TAs also " support booster groups, reading," and " extends the gifted and talented," and ' writes reports.'

According to Walker (2010), there are positive impacts of HLTA's especially those assigned in mathematics and the sciences. According to the students that was interviewed in his case study, the HLTA's made it easier for them to concentrate and stay focused on their tasks; HLTA's also made them feel

comfortable, confident and allows them to ask questions; and made the learning experience fun and also HLTA's have helped them to recognize the importance of the subject matter.

Moreover, a review of Children's Services Scrutiny Committee was conducted in Oxfordshire County Council with regards to the impact of having support staff in classes in terms of the students learning and progress. During PPA time, some schools continue with the usual curriculum, especially for children in the Foundation Stage and nursery schools. A changed curriculum is more usual, with PE, Art/Design Technology and a modern foreign language being the most common subjects covered by specialists. Where teaching assistants lead sessions, spelling, handwriting, guided reading and math practice were popular, with other aspects of literacy and numeracy rarely covered. ICT, PSHCE and RE were less frequently mentioned science, history and geography only occasionally. The impact on the quality of the curriculum during PPA time depends very substantially on the quality of the staff leading classes. Where these are specialist teachers or coaches, most schools thought the curriculum was enriched. Unchallenging lessons result in lessons less well differentiated for those of different abilities. This often leads to poor behavior where staff leading a class were not well qualified and familiar with the children, especially with older children in Key Stage 2. Children who find change difficult were reported as finding a range of adults difficult, but the Review Group believes it is good for children to learn to relate to different adults, as long as this change is not too frequent.

The range of the curriculum was usually thought in schools where specialists are used to have been broadened, sometimes in the subjects covered,  
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sometimes in extending provision to a wider age range. The evidence suggests that the quality of teaching and learning has improved in the rest of the week, particularly because of improved planning and assessment. However, time for curriculum coordinators has been reduced. Though many support staff, especially, are concerned about reduced targeted support for children with special educational needs, the evidence on the overall impact on this group is not conclusive. The use of outside specialists runs the risk of reducing opportunities for cross curricular links and, unless the National Curriculum is closely followed, not providing full curriculum coverage and appropriate progression within a subject. Monitoring both at class and at whole-school level of the impact of PPA time on the curriculum has mostly been informal.

#### Impact of HLTA in Engagement

The feedback from one setting with regard to engagement was “ using TAs has engaged the children and given a sense of purpose.” Another setting remarked that there was now “ very good constant contact with all the staff and children,” which is clear evidence of good practice. Overall the engagement appeared to be better or “ what we already do” or “ just reinforced” or “ brilliant” as one setting put it.

The feedback to ‘ Have HLTAs had an impact in the workplace’ was generally positive, HLTAs have undertaken PPA, they have covered a range of subjects, some of the OFSTED reports have commented on the good work of the TAs and evidence was in raised standards in some subjects. They had ‘ enriched practice’ as a direct result of their personal and varied experience. One

head-teacher even went so far as to say that “ experience has more of an impact than the qualification/ status,” but as another head remarked “ an unqualified set of staff is a mum’s army.”

Generally only those HLTAs who could manage the children were given extended roles as no setting wishes to create further problems. The skills and strengths of the TA were always taken into consideration. The tracking of children had been developed in some settings. One setting said “ they had fewer problems as it is a familiar adult.”

Overall the engagement of children was very positive but the HLTA had to be competent as “ the classes need to see them as the teachers equal.”

Another setting said that “ children are open minded to any engaging teacher or TA,” thus where the HLTA demonstrates this, the outcome is positive.

#### Positives in Achieving HLTA

A study conducted by the Derby City Local Authority have results regarding the positive advantages of having TA’s in attaining HLTA. This new knowledge in turn makes the person feel more confident which in turn develops their sense of self and thus raises their own and others perception of themselves. The NfER report 2007 cited in the cwdcouncil e-bulletin no. 06 August 2007 claimed that “ 74% of HLTAs said their status had led to increased confidence and over half cited greater job satisfaction.

73% of TAs agreed that they would recommend HLTA to other TAs clearly demonstrating a positive view of the achievement. 75% believed HLTA had



opened up new opportunities for them. 92% felt HLTA was the best way forward in terms of professional development.

Currently the TAs are not convinced that HLTA has helped them to progress but there is still a slight increase in those who think it has as the following demonstrates. The question did not really apply to those who had not yet achieved HLTA. 31% said HLTA had helped them to progress professionally whilst only 15% said that HLTA had not helped them to progress professionally.

Overall those who had achieved HLTA were fairly positive and the results demonstrated that remodeling has had an impact but there is less clarity as to the role HLTA has played in this. 35% felt positive about achieving HLTA whilst only 4% were negative about achieving HLTA.

## Conclusion

There was quite clearly a role in most settings for a HLTA or equivalent and this person usually had effective interpersonal skills, was good at time management and planning, they frequently had an additional skill such as art or music and as one Head teacher put it, " they need to prove themselves as all employed people have to." The organisation of a setting often had an impact on the number of HLTA's or equivalents as some settings developed one TA's role whilst others split the extended role between two or more TAs. This could also reflect the number of TAs who are ready and experienced sufficiently for such a role as HLTA.

Deployment of HLTAs needs to be more attractive with remuneration but once this is achieved HLTAs can make a significant contribution to the management of other TAs, to scaffolding information and representing TAs at meetings.

The TAs are interested in further training with a small per cent age of TAs seeking HLTA or teaching and some TAs still requiring Key Skills. There needs to be a relevant professional development route for aspiring TAs with more recognition of the different routes.

The HLTA status training needs to include a direct observation of the potential HLTA working with a large group or class as happens to all NQTs and other adults working with classes.

TAs are making a considerable contribution to our schools and this research so far seems to demonstrate “ their distinct contribution” as stated in the TDA (2006: 3)HLTA Training pack but they are by their continued professional development also helping to create the “ World-class workforce for children, young people and families,” that is the Children’s Workforce Development Council’s vision. However as one TA remarked, “ I would not be interested in the HLTA as I feel that the work involved is far greater than the recognition and pay.” This needs to be addressed if we wish to encourage TAs to embrace the changes further. Yet 75% of TAs would still recommend HLTA to other TAs.

Overall, the presented literature show that in terms of HLTA’s impact on teaching, there are two opposing views. Some of the teachers view that HLTA’s are a threat to their profession. In spite of the contributions that <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-higher-level-teaching-assistant-education-essay/>

HLTA's are giving, it is believed that their professionalism are being compromised because of the lack of teaching experience of HLTA's. On the other hand, other teachers reported that HLTA's have positive contributions for the improvement of their teaching's quality. Many teachers still believe that the support that these HLTA's are giving helped them in reducing their workloads and stress.

In terms of learning, HLTA's support has contributed in the improvement of the students' understanding of the subject matter. Also, they have helped in the improvement of of the students' achievement and opportunities for their personalized learning.

Finally, in spite of varying opinions regarding the impact of HLTA, it is very important to note that these higher level teaching assistants are doing their best to aid the teachers. It is recommended that their skills should be monitored and upgraded periodically so that their outputs could be exceptional as well.