Working with Support in the Classroom

Anne Campbell & Gavin Fairbairn

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Edited by Anne Campbell
and Gavin Fairbairn

●●● Contents

●●● Preface

The time is ripe for this book. Over recent years there has been a vast increase in the number of people who support children's learning in classrooms and other educational settings, both as employees and as volunteers. In the controversial Workforce Remodelling initiative the government is planning to recruit around 50,000 teaching assistants in its efforts to raise standards and reduce workloads in education. In order to make the best and most productive use of these 'significant others' in the classroom, teachers need to have a source of advice and guidance in relation to the range of ways in which they can best collaborate with them. *Working with Support in the Classroom* will provide such a source.

Using stories of successful practice and ideas for improving collaborative work, the book explores and maps the development of the roles in relation to children's learning that can be played by people other than qualified teachers. The work of teaching assistants, learning mentors, classroom assistants for children with special educational needs, student teachers, nursery nurses and parent and community helpers are all illustrated in this book, which focuses on the whole range of educational settings from the early years through primary to secondary classrooms. Between them the editors and contributors have a wide range of experience of working in schools and early years settings with teachers and support workers, including experience in special educational needs and in work with multilingual children for whom English is a second language. It is from that experience that this book has arisen.

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●●● Acknowledgements

●●● List of contributors

Wendy Bignold is Vice Dean of Education at Liverpool Hope University College, where she leads courses in the 'Advanced study of early years', and is one of the central members of the team who have written a new pathway and foundation degree on special needs in a disabling world. Wendy has worked as a teacher in a language support service and has much experience of teaching and other educational work in the Indian subcontinent. For example, she was vice principal of a rural school in northern Pakistan, worked as an educational consultant for the Aga Khan Foundation in Tajikistan and was a consultant to the Bangladeshi government in relation to non-formal education.

Christine Bold is the Foundation Degree Director in the Education Deanery at Liverpool Hope University College. She has written *Progression in Primary Design and Technology* (David Fulton, 1999) and edited a foundation degree text for teaching assistants, *Supporting Learning and Teaching* (David Fulton, 2004). Her primary school experience included the role of the assessment co-ordinator, and she has conducted small-scale research projects on assessing learning and learning processes. She is interested in many educational issues and has extensive experience, including secondary primary, ITT, Ofsted and consultancy. Over the past three years she has been involved in developing and delivering courses for both primary and secondary teaching assistants.

Anne Campbell, Professor of Education at Liverpool Hope University College, has researched mainly in the area of teacher development. She has published in the fields of early years education and educare. She is the author, with Ian Kane, of *School-based Teacher Education: Telling Tales from a Fictional Primary School* (David Fulton, 1998) and, with Olwen McNamara and Peter Gilroy, *Practitioner Research and Professional Development in Education* (Paul Chapman Publishing, 2004). She has also published many articles about professional development in academic journals. Anne is currently leading two research and evaluation projects for the Teacher Training Agency and the National College for School Leadership.

Sue Cronin is a senior lecturer in mathematics and is a module leader on the new Liverpool Hope University College foundation degree for teaching assistants, 'Supporting learning and teaching', and she has provided various

in-service courses for teaching assistants. She has published web-based materials for gifted and talented pupils for John Moores Astronomy Department and for Excellence in Liverpool.

Sue Crowley, senior lecturer, is ICT Curriculum Leader at Liverpool Hope University College. In her career in primary education, she has held senior management positions, has been an advisory teacher for ICT and co-ordinator of newly qualified teachers in Sefton. Her experience in higher education includes lecturing in primary education and ICT at Edge Hill College, Liverpool University and Liverpool Hope University College. Her publications include work for the DfES on learning mentors and ICT.

Gavin Fairbairn, Professor of Ethnics and Language at Leeds Metropolitan University, worked for many years in special education and social work before entering primary teacher education in 1985 as a senior lecturer, then Reader. He joined Liverpool Hope University College in 2002, from a chair in Professional Development in Nursing and Midwifery. He has wide-ranging research interests in education, professional ethics, health and social care. He has published many articles in education, and, in applied ethics relating to the caring professions. His book, with Chris Winch, *Reading, Writing and Reasoning* (2nd edn, Open University Press, 1996) is now in its twelfth year, and *Reading at University: A Guide for Students*, with Susan Fairbairn, was published by the Open University Press in 2001. *Integrating Special Children: Some Ethical Issues* (Avebury, 1992), which he edited with Susan Fairbairn, was published in a Polish translation by the Ministry of Education in Warsaw in 2000, and is an example of the crossover between his educational and ethical concerns.

Wendy Hall is a tutor in charge of special needs in the Education Deanery at Liverpool Hope University College, and she is currently tutoring students in Hong Kong and has supported PhD students in India. Wendy has extensive experience in the area of special needs in mainstream schools, including interagency liaison. Both her BEd and her Master's Degree focused on special needs. She holds a certificate in deaf awareness and a specialist teaching qualification in relation to dyslexia (a diploma in SpLD). She has recently written course material for the Hornsby distance learning programme.

Deirdre Hewitt taught in primary schools for 20 years before joining the staff of Liverpool Hope University College as a senior lecturer in September 2002. She has experience of working alongside students, teaching assistants and nursery nurses.

Pat Hughes is Senior Lecturer in Primary Education, Liverpool Hope University College. After a degree at Durham University, Pat worked as a social worker, pre-school playgroup worker, cleaner, laboratory assistant and FE lecturer before training to be a primary teacher. After doing this for nine years, she entered teacher training. She has been a registered Ofsted inspector, a non-executive director of Knowsley PCT and an external assessor for performance management. Pat has published many books and training packs with a number of publishers, including Heinemann, Hodder, Wayland, Nelson and David Fulton, and chapters in books published by Routledge, Paul Chapman Publishing and Multilingual Matters.

Ann-Marie Jones has recently started to work as a senior lecturer at Liverpool Hope University College, following a career in teaching nursery nurses in further education. Recently she has successfully completed her MA studies at Liverpool University and has studied partnerships between professionals in early years and nursery settings.

Mike Richardson, Senior Lecturer in ICT, is joint Head of Year 1 Education, Liverpool Hope University College. His career in education includes teaching in secondary and primary schools; work with ICL as a teacher adviser and curriculum consultant in literacy and numeracy; mentoring in schools accepting ITT students; responsibility for 'Parents in partnership' in a primary school; and lecturing in education and ICT pedagogy at Liverpool Hope University College.

Deborah Smith has recently been appointed as a senior lecturer at Liverpool Hope University College. She taught for 18 years in primary schools and has a great deal of experience working with students and nursery nurses in classrooms.

●●● Chapter 1

Introduction

Anne Campbell and Gavin Fairbairn

Over the last few years there has been a significant increase in the number of people who work in supporting children's learning in classrooms and other educational settings. Some of these people – nursery nurses, teaching assistants, learning mentors and learning support staff – are paid for their work. Others are unpaid and work as volunteers, including parents and grandparents as well as community members who aspire to a career in education and who want to gain some experience before applying for a place on an initial teacher education course, quite often on one of the more flexible routes. There are government plans to recruit another 50,000 teaching assistants in an effort to raise standards and to reduce workloads for teachers. The government's initiative to establish higher-level teaching assistants (HLTAs) (DfES, 2002) has already begun amid a flurry of controversy from teaching unions. In 2001 Nigel de Gruchy of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, made his famous 'pig-ignorant peasants' remark, which was understood to refer to classroom assistants. His denial was quoted in the *Independent*: 'I said you could not have pig-ignorant peasants supervising classes, but you needed people of good education with appropriate training.' (Garner, 2001).

There is also concern from the practitioners themselves, as evidenced in Slater's (2004) article detailing teachers' views that claim an increase in time and work when working with support staff. The 'remodelling the workforce' agenda claims to help reduce teachers' workloads and improve standards in schools. But, of course, employing more teaching assistants will only reduce workloads for teachers if the benefits to be gained by their input are not outweighed for teachers by the extra management responsibility that comes from having another adult in one's classroom to direct. And this is not always the case.

Randall (2004), in her study of one school's approach to managing and developing support workers in classrooms, found little, if any, reduction in teachers' workloads. A more frightening scenario is conjectured by Wragg in his regular back-page column in the *The Times Educational Supplement* (9 January, 2004). In considering a spoof leaked DfES document, he reveals that the government is even considering a school without teachers. The leaked document outlined a plan for schools whereby headteachers would be the only qualified teachers employed. Somewhere along the continuum between spoof and duped is a danger that teachers' previous goodwill about workplace reform is being tested to the limit.

There is some confusion surrounding the role of support workers due to the fact that there are many different types of support workers with many different names giving rise to several nominalist fallacies. Some clarification can be discovered in the findings from a DfEE-funded research project (2000). The project investigated the management, role and training of learning support assistants and identified four areas of support: for pupils, for teachers, for the curriculum and for the school. The term 'teaching assistant' was employed in this good practice guide to signify a subtle change in role for some support staff. In order to make the best and most productive use of a growing number and types of support workers in the classroom, teachers need to have a source of advice and guidance in relation to the range of ways in which they can best collaborate with them. *Working with Support in the Classroom*, we hope, will provide such a source. It is hoped, in tune with O'Brien and Garner's (2001) feelings, to make visible the high-quality work undertaken by those who serve as support workers in schools. There has been little recognition in the past of the range of expertise support workers have been developing. No longer are they seen as doing purely menial jobs, such as washing the paint pots – although someone has to do that! The complex staffing structures being developed in most schools demand exceptional leadership and management skills to ensure everyone understands his or her own and others' roles and responsibilities, who to go to for advice and help, and how to access professional development opportunities.

In editing this book, we believed that, although there was a job to be done in offering support to teachers in deciding on the most productive ways of working alongside non-teaching adults in their classrooms, this was a job that would be better accomplished by gathering together a group of people who could each cast light on one part of the area, rather than entering into a make-believe world in which a couple of college professors pretend to have worthwhile expertise in the range of situations in which teachers and other significant adults work

together with children in educational settings. So the book looks back at previous practices, but also towards the future as we make our way along the rocky road to 'remodelling the workforce'.

Our intended audience is primarily teachers and student teachers. However, we hope the book will also be of relevance if you are one of the 'significant others' to whom we are referring – if, for example, you are a teaching assistant, a nursery nurse or aspire to be an HLTA. You may even be a hybrid – both a teacher and a 'significant other' – if you are, for example, a qualified teacher who works in special needs or in a service that offers support to children for whom English is a second language.

The book covers early years settings in schools, and primary and secondary classrooms. It will be of special interest to those who work with children with special educational needs. It will, we hope, also be of interest to teaching assistants themselves as they develop their roles and relationships with those with whom they work in classrooms and schools. It is also hoped that student teachers and newly qualified teachers might find it useful as they begin to understand the complexities of schools as organizations and the importance of interpersonal skills and facilitative management strategies that are so important in the day-to-day running of schools.

In inviting contributors we were anxious to encourage them to adopt an easy and engaging writing style, and have done our best to ensure that they have done so. Our hope is that *Working with Support in the Classroom* will make easy and enjoyable reading, making general points about the topic through the careful selection of exemplars of good practice. Much of the time this has meant that authors have written in the first person, introducing stories from personal experience in the classroom. However, in order to make such stories effective, they are often used in order to support general points.

The content of the book is organized in a way that raises a range of issues, contexts and roles to be discussed from a number of perspectives. The following roles, contexts and issues will be represented at some point in the text, whether in individual chapters or in the joining narrative in this introduction. Particular roles that are discussed and illustrated in this book are those of the teaching assistant, learning support worker, learning mentor, nursery nurse, parent, teacher, student teacher, care assistant, community visitor, lunchtime organizer, pupil and headteacher. The contexts covered in this book range from those where the support of children with special educational needs is the main focus to those where the support of children with English as a second language is taking place; work in

early years settings; work in primary and secondary classrooms; and work in the wider school environment, such as the playground. Some examples of Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zone projects, where learning mentors have been developed, are also illustrated in Chapters 4 and 10.

The book provides guidance for teachers who have responsibility for directing the work of teaching assistants and significant others in the classroom. It does so in a number of ways.

- An editorial overview in Chapter 11 draws attention to professional concerns (including ethical issues) in relation to the use of adults other than teachers in supporting pupils' learning.
- First-hand accounts of successful classroom practice show what works. These accounts have been written from a range of perspectives, including those of teaching assistants, classroom assistants, nursery nurses and others working alongside teachers, headteachers, parents and pupils.
- Various chapters discuss the development of effective collaborative practice between teachers and others in a range of contexts.

In *Working with Support in the Classroom* we want to explore and map the development of roles and functions of people other than qualified teachers in classrooms. The individual chapters provide stories of successful practice and ideas for improving collaborative work between teachers and significant others who work alongside teachers to support children's learning.

●●● Structure of the book

In this, the introductory chapter, we have presented a joining narrative that we hope helps to weave the individual contributions into a coherent whole. This narrative includes ideas for ways in which readers can develop their practice in relating to, and working with, other colleagues in the classroom. These ideas may be simple general statements or occasionally blinding flashes, inspirational moves and organizational tips. A number of the authors are publishing for the first time. The challenge to the editors has been to 'get inside' the chapters to make the book a coherent whole and to join up what appears to be a complex and challenging area of education as the government tries to reshape and remodel the workforce in schools.

Chapter 2 describes the role taken by a senior citizen volunteer in Ellington Primary School, Maidenhead. It focuses on how valuing diversity can support the development of a child's self-esteem. The author interviewed the community visitor, the headteacher, a nursery teacher and the children to enable her to write the story of the collaboration. Valuing diversity is hugely important, and this chapter looks at the ways in which the prejudices that are held by all children and adults develop and become embedded from an early age. A consideration of some ways in which we can tackle the problems of prejudice by including adults other than teachers in classrooms is presented.

Chapter 3 explores those support workers employed specifically to help children with special educational needs. This chapter poses questions about what we want from our special needs learning support assistants and examines the skills they need. It also questions what we are currently asking of them – for example, is it right that, at present, many learning support assistants are doing the majority of teaching of some children? The chapter also discusses different ways of using support, including in-class, group and individual support; group and individual withdrawal; and a number of different ways of conceiving the role of support assistant, including the support assistant as strolling player, repeat-play tape recorder and demonstrator, and as an interpreter, challenger and thought-provoker. The chapter explores practical ways of working together and considers the strengths and weaknesses of working in teams. The author believes that a well informed teaching assistant and a teacher who is willing to make the most of the partnership is a dynamic and effective team that can make inclusion a reality in the classroom and enhance the learning of all children.

Chapter 4 describes the role of a relatively new breed, the learning mentor. It outlines training for learning mentors and gives a perspective on the role of the learning mentor and his or her contribution to supporting children with specific needs that is beyond the scope of Chapter 3. It draws on examples of practice given by 'Matthew', a learning mentor from the first pilot project in primary schools in Merseyside. Through reading Matthew's story it is hoped you will get an insight into the day-to-day work of a learning mentor as he tackles the educational, social and emotional problems of the pupils in his care. Matthew provides an important male role model for pupils, and he has close connections with the local community, which gives him credibility and status with pupils, parents and teachers. He works as a school-based counsellor and as an advocate, ensuring vulnerable children are looked after and have someone as their 'champion'.

The focus of Chapter 5 is on the ways in which teachers and other adults, in supporting roles, can work together for the most effective learning in the class-

room. Recent Ofsted and other reports about mathematics teaching suggest that learning is most effective when adults who support children are fully involved in planning and understand the learning objectives of the lesson. However, experience in working with such adults on training courses suggests that some teachers, particularly at Key Stages 2 and 3, are only recently becoming used to having other adults in the classroom. Training sessions with teachers confirm this view, and this suggests that there are many issues to resolve if working partnerships are to flourish. The chapter explores the qualities required of an adult working in a support role in mathematics lessons and the qualities required of the teacher in order to create effective working partnerships. The authors' experience of working with teaching assistants who support children learning mathematics leads them to believe that there are three crucial issues the classroom teacher must consider in order to ensure effective learning: communication, competence and confidence. All these can be developed through, and in turn strengthen, a good working relationship between the teacher and teaching assistant.

Chapter 6 looks at the different roles played in the classroom by adults other than teachers in addressing the ICT needs of pupils. In doing so it takes account of the classroom environment; programmes of study within the curriculum; the learning needs of individuals, and differences due to pupils' ages. It is argued that the teacher and classroom assistant should be able to create a good working environment for the children which embraces ICT in a natural way. A teaching assistant can also develop skills in ICT alongside children in activities if he or she is willing to see him or herself as a learner too. In the case of teaching assistants who are expert users of ICT, they will be invaluable in supporting the children in their learning. A teaching assistant could be very usefully employed working across the whole school with ICT, liaising closely with the ICT co-ordinator. The assistant who is designated to a class is also discussed in this chapter.

There is also some exploration of the scope for the classroom assistant to contribute to the preparation of materials when children wish to present their ideas. A consideration of the role of ICT in professional development is given and its use in collaborating in the production of materials, either for other staff in the school, outside agencies (including the LEA and Ofsted) or for communicating with parents and governors. The chapter also details many practical strategies and tools for collaborative work between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils.

The next chapter, Chapter 7, leads us into a story of why teachers and nursery nurses need to work well together. The reason for using the now discarded term 'nursery nurse' is that the author researched this role recently before the changes