

“Some children, you know, physically so deformed, that it’s scary”: an interpretative approach to exploring the experiences of Teaching Assistants working in a special school for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Despite increasing empirical interest in the role and impact of TAs, there remains a paucity of research that acknowledges their perceptions and experiences, particularly in special schools. This study employed a qualitative methodology in order to explore how teaching assistants, made sense of their roles and experiences, of supporting pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. The intention of the study was to explore participants’ subjective experiences, rather than investigate academic or institutional outcomes, in order to illuminate other factors that may be impacting upon the role of the TA.

Purposive sampling was used to recruit 3 TAs working in a (SLD) special school in an Inner-London borough. Data was gathered using in-depth semi-structured interviews and then transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Three superordinate themes emerged, which were: supporting the pupil; conflicting models of disability; and working with the wider system. These were contextualised within the wider social and cultural context, and considered in relation to previous empirical and theoretical literature. Implications for special schools and educational psychology practice were considered.

By Dr Patrick Halcrow, (2014)

Educational Psychology & Specialist Support

2 Carrow House
301 King Street
Norwich
NR1 2TN



Phone: 01603 307550

Website: norfolkepss.org.uk

For further information about this research please contact: Patrick Halcrow (patrick.halcrow@norfolk.gov.uk)
