Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants online course

At the time of writing, there are nearly 400,000 teaching assistants (TAs) working in schools in England and Wales. This equates to annual government spending of more than £5bn. Yet, despite the significant rise in the number of TAs working in schools, there has been little in the way of effective guidance as to what good practice looks like – at a school level, and at a classroom level.

This presents a difficult question. Does schools’ current use of TAs have the level of impact on pupil achievement we want? Or, to put it another way, are significant resources within the education system being put to best use?

When we use the term resource here, we are not commodifying TAs by failing to acknowledge their validity as individuals and professionals. Rather, we are highlighting the fact that all school budgets are hard-pressed and any large amount of money spent represents an allocation of resources that could go in a different direction. The opportunity cost of spending money on TAs is not spending it on other options, which might potentially have a greater impact on outcomes, such as employing more teachers.

In 2015, we published the report ‘Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants.’ Drawing on a strong research base, this report set out to demonstrate that TAs can have a positive impact on pupil achievement – but that this could only happen if they were given the support, setting and tools through which to best make an impact.

The report contains seven key recommendations. It presents school leaders with a compelling message:

Making best use of teaching assistants is a leadership issue. There are specific things any school leader can do to effect change. By doing these things you can improve the quality of work teaching assistants are able to do. They will then be in a position to help raise achievement.

This course takes you through the EEF guidance. Using a combination of text, video, curated links and downloadable documents, you will gain a clear understanding of what the guidance advocates, and how to make change happen in your school.