A mixed methods evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project.

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Abstract:

This study aimed to contribute to the small evidence base on the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project. The ELSA project is an Educational Psychologist led training programme for Teaching Assistants' (TA) providing modular input combining background psychological theory with practical guidance to meet the emotional needs of pupils in the context of a school (Burton, 2008). Existing research (Burton, Osborne and Norgate, 2010) has demonstrated that the ELSA project has a significant impact on teaching assistants' perceptions of pupil emotional literacy and behavioural adjustment. However, current evaluations are unable to demonstrate if these impacts are recognised by the pupils themselves. This research aimed to explore the perceptions of recently trained ELSAs regarding their role and training in supporting the development of emotional well-being. The study was also interested in exploring whether there the ELSA project has a measurable impact on pupils' emotional well-being.

A pragmatic, mixed methods design is discussed, first in terms of a pre-test – post-test non-equivalent groups design, quantitative method that included 5 TA and 5 pupil experimental group participants and 1 TA and 5 pupil comparison group participants. The Emotional Literacy Checklist (Faupel, 2003) and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) measured pre and post-test changes in teacher and pupil participant scores. Secondly qualitative methods included thematic analyses of focus group and questionnaire data gathered at different time points from the recently trained ELSAs.

It was not possible to determine whether the ELSA project had an impact on pupils' emotional well-being. However, thematic analyses suggested that participants perceived the ELSA training to be of value in terms of their personal and professional development and the support gained. There was also evidence to suggest that participants shared a perception that the perceptions of their colleagues regarding their role and time restraints were a

primary challenge to their role. Professional implications of these findings and future research, in light of methodological limitations, are discussed.

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1. Introduction:

This thesis consists of a mixed methods evaluation of an Educational Psychologist (EP) led training programme for Teaching Assistants (TAs) titled Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) project. The study aims to investigate the impact of ELSA on pupils' emotional well-being and explore the perceptions of ELSAs in relation to their role and training. This chapter will outline the background, rationale and research questions of the study; provide details of the structure of the thesis before considering the researcher's personal and professional interest in this research.

1.1. Background, rationale and research questions

Within the last decade the Department for Education and Skills (DfES; now the Department for Education, DfE) recognised that schools needed to be concerned with the holistic development of children and young people as well as academic attainment (Burton, 2008). This was shown by the introduction of the Every Child Matters (ECM; DfES 2004a) outcome measures but also the investment and development of the Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL; DfES, 2005) initiatives for both Primary and Secondary schools. In 2009 the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) developed guidance for those who have a direct or indirect role and responsibility for children's emotional and academic wellbeing. The foundations of these recommendations were that good mental health not only protects children and young people from social, emotional and behavioural problems but also supports their academic achievement (NICE, 2009).

This study reports an evaluation of the host local authority (LA) Educational Psychology Service's (EPS) implementation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) project on pupils' emotional well-being. The ELSA project provides modular input combining background psychological theory with practical guidance to meet the emotional needs of pupils in the context of a school (Burton, 2008). A rationale for this approach is grounded within key areas of psychological theory. For example, Maslow's (1970) theory of

motivation stipulates in order to enjoy and achieve one must have the basic needs met (physiological, safety, love, esteem and self actualisation). Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) is used to highlight the importance social relationships have upon one's development and the idea that behaviour is modelled more than taught. In addition, Salovey & Mayer's (1990) concept of Emotional Literacy is used to suggest that the more one is able to recognise and define the emotions experienced the more one can learn from them and develop resilience.

ELSA training is provided by EPs to groups of TAs from different regions of the host LA. Following the training programme ELSAs are then expected to put new knowledge and skills into practice by working with pupils requiring additional support in their setting. Group supervision sessions, facilitated by EPs, are intended to support the process of planning and development of an ELSA based intervention. Whilst in its second year of use by the host EPS, there has been no formal evaluation of the ELSA project's impact on pupil outcomes. The author therefore concluded, in consultation with service managers, that an evaluation of the ELSA project was timely for the host EPS.

The researcher aims to investigate the impact of the ELSA project on pupils' emotional well-being but also to explore the perceptions of TAs enrolled on ELSA. These led to the following research questions.

> Does the ELSA project have a measurable impact on pupil and TA perceptions of emotional well-being?

> How does the ELSA project impact on TAs' perceptions of the emotional well-being of pupils, and their role and training in supporting the development of pupil emotional well-being?

1.2. Structure of the thesis

In chapter 2, relevant literature will be reviewed that relate to the development of social emotional skills and behaviour, the development and deployment of the TA role and the EP role in training of TAs. A systematic review of literature

focussing on the impact of TA led interventions, supplemented by EP training, on pupil SEBD outcomes shall be presented followed by a review of existing ELSA evaluations.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology used to address the research questions. Varying epistemological positions and research designs are presented and critiqued. A rationale for the decision to adopt a pragmatic epistemology, utilising mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative design will also be presented.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from the quantitative and qualitative methods used. Key findings pertinent to the research questions are then identified and summarised.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed discussion of the current study. The findings are discussed in relation to the individual research questions and relevant literature. A critical reflection regarding the trustworthiness of the current study is also presented, along with implications and considerations for future research.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the main findings of the research, the unique contribution of the study and final conclusions.

1.3. Personal and professional interest

This research was of personal interest to the author for a number of reasons. For example, prior to their professional training on the doctorate of applied educational psychology, the researcher had experience as a behaviour support worker in a mainstream secondary school setting, supporting the social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils. This role required the researcher to use a range of approaches and interventions to support the

varying needs of pupils. However, very little training was provided regarding the approaches or interventions, the underpinning theory or rationale for their use. This raised the researcher's interest in developing knowledge and understanding regarding the training of support staff to meet the often, complex social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils.

These personal interests coincide with the researcher's professional interest provoked by the introduction to the ELSA project early on in their placement by the host EPS. Having attended a number of the ELSA training days the researcher felt that ELSA provided invaluable support for the TAs, directly supporting their professional development and indirectly supporting pupils they worked with. Furthermore, EPs are increasingly being encouraged to work at various levels via in-service training and organisational development (Curran, Gersch & Wolfendale, 2003). Therefore it was felt that this research would support the combination of the author's personal and professional interest and be both relevant for the host LA, EPS and the wider EP profession.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction to the Literature Review

The literature review begins with an outline of the various search strategies the author used to obtaining the literature. Having introduced the development of the ELSA project and its current deployment in North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC), this chapter introduces the concepts of emotional literacy in the context of social, emotional and behavioural development. Included in this are details regarding the prevalence of these constructs and how these contribute to what is understood as emotional well-being in the context of this study. As the ELSA intervention aims to develop the knowledge and skills of teaching assistants (TAs), the chapter goes on to explore the literature concerning their developing role, deployment and development in the changing context of government initiatives and reform. This will then be extended by considering the role EPs have in the training and development of TAs with regard to supporting the social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils. The chapter then presents a systematic review of the literature focussing on the evidence base for interventions such as ELSA. Finally the literature review concludes with an outline of the aims, purpose and research questions for this study.

2.1.2. Obtaining the Literature

This literature review draws on both systematic and non-systematic search strategies to source relevant literature. Non-systematic search strategies allow for a broader, explorative review of the literature or topic area. This involves entering a range of carefully selected key words into relevant search engines and online journal databases. Individual search strategies shall be explained at the outset of each section, together with inclusion and exclusion criteria. In addition to online searches the author used article reference lists and hand searches of relevant journal articles to facilitate a broader consideration of each topic area identified in the literature review. Finally, in order to consider the relevant literature and research focussing on the evidence base for interventions (such as ELSA) in detail a systematic search strategy is used.

2.2. Development of social and emotional skills and behaviour

2.2.1. Aim

As its name states, the ELSA project explicitly refers to the concept of 'emotional literacy'. This section introduces this construct and its theoretical underpinnings in the context of the development of children's social and emotional skills and behaviour. The author intends to define what is meant by 'emotional literacy' but also children's 'emotional well-being' in the following sections:

- Development of Emotional Literacy
- From Emotional Intelligence to Emotional Literacy
- Emotional Literacy and Emotional Well-being
- Defining Emotional Well-being
- Emotional literacy and well-being in the educational context

2.2.2. Search strategy

To obtain a broad overview of the available literature, an exploratory search strategy was used. Therefore several searches using UNLOC (the University of Nottingham's Online Library Catalogue) were conducted. For the searches to be as effective and sensitive as possible the following was considered:

- Different terms relating to, and including, 'emotional literacy' and development of social and emotional skills and behaviour e.g. emotional intelligence, SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning), emotional well-being, well-being, mental-wellbeing.
- Hand search of text / article reference lists.
- Additional searches were conducted via the Department for Education (DfE) database and archive.
- Where necessary only articles and literature relating to school aged pupils (ages 5 – 16) were included as this is the focus of the study.

2.2.3. Development of Emotional Literacy

In order for 'emotional literacy' to be understood attention must first be given to early conceptualisations of emotions and social intelligence more commonly referred to as a framework of 'emotional intelligence' (Salovey &

Mayer, 1990). The concept, and terminology, of emotional intelligence has been used for several decades and led to many researchers targeting this construct for study in the mid 1990's (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000).

Said to be the first to describe emotional intelligence, Salovey & Mayer (1990) define emotional intelligence as a subset of social intelligence, which in itself is considered as a subset of personal intelligences (intra – or understanding the self, and inter – understanding others; Gardner, 1983). From this emotional intelligence could be seen as an:

> *"…ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions"* (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; p189).

Theoretically, emotional intelligence is said to involve the mental processing of emotional information to enable one to recognise and monitor our emotions in order to guide our actions and solve problems. With this in mind the extent to which individuals differ relates to their varying levels of skill with which they recognise, monitor and regulate their behaviour (Salovey &Mayer, 1990).

Since its initial development the concept of emotional intelligence has been revised to include not just perceiving and regulating emotion but to thinking about one's feeling; this is represented in the following definition that has been cited in recent years (for example Weare, 2004) as:

> *"…the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings which facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth."* (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; pp 10)

These abilities are further defined by arranging them in order of relatively basic psychological processes (e.g. perceiving and expressing emotion) to more psychologically integrated processes (e.g. intentional reflective

regulation of emotion; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). This model describes four areas of skill that are further subdivided into four, that build up toward more complex skills:

1. Perception, appraisal and expression of emotion
2. Emotional facilitation of thinking
3. Understanding and analysing emotions, employing emotional knowledge
4. Reflective regulation of emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

(Mayer & Salovey, 1997; p11)

At around the same time Goleman (1996) described a model of emotional intelligence that was developed from much of the same literature and made similar claims to that of previous models (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000 & Weare, 2002). Goleman (1998) developed existing definitions of emotional intelligence from being purely abilities based to including emotional and competencies. Goleman's model, the Emotional Competence Framework, is summarised in table 2.1 below:

Emotional Competence Framework	
Personal Competence	Social Competence
• Self-awareness – Knowing one's internal states • Self-regulation – Managing one's internal states • Motivation – Emotional tendencies that guide actions	• Empathy – Awareness of other's feelings • Social skills – Adeptness at inducing desired responses in others

Table 2.1.: Goleman's emotional competence framework, adapted from Goleman (1998; p26-7)

Several claims have been made with regard to the wider implications of developing one's emotional intelligence according to this framework. Goleman (1998) asserts these successes can be made in the home, school and work environments, and more generally, will serve as an advantage in any domain

of life. These claims have been questioned with regard to the predictive validity of his model (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000 & Weare, 2004).

Further criticism can be found with regard to the terminology used by Goleman (1998) and Mayer & Salovey (1997) to define such a concept. The two models of emotional intelligence illustrated in this section can be distinguished further, as Mayer, Salovey & Caruso (2000) demonstrate, based upon their theoretical underpinnings. Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model, considered a mental abilities model, assumes individuals have a capacity for processing emotional information (Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts, 2004). By Contrast a mixed model (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000), such as Goleman's, assumes that emotional intelligence is a diverse construct that includes aspects of personality and motivational factors as well as the ability to recognise, process and regulate emotions (Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts, 2004). The broad nature of these models is said to make an accurate scientific construct unobtainable and some authors claim that current definitions, therefore, have little conceptual meaning (Zeidner, Roberts & Matthews, 2004). These conceptual differences raise further issues with regard to practitioners and researchers seeking to measure and assess emotional intelligence (Wigelsworth, Humphrey, Kalambouka & Lendrum, 2010).

However, research into emotional intelligence sparked much interest in regard to how the brain works and the role emotions play in that process, with many seeking to investigate possible links with educational outcomes (Weare, 2004). This is reflected in the more recent use of Goleman's (1998) model of emotional intelligence to underpin the UK's national strategy that aimed to develop the social, emotional aspects of learning (SEAL; DfES, 2005) in primary and secondary schools. Furthermore an adaptation of Goleman's (1998) classification of knowledge skills and competences contributed to the development of a measure of Emotional Literacy (Southampton Psychology Service, 2003), discussed later. Developments such as these demonstrate how influential research into emotional intelligence has been with regard to

current thinking regarding children's social and emotional education (Weare, 2004).

2.2.4. From Emotional Intelligence to Emotional Literacy

The change of terminology to 'emotional literacy', at least in the context of UK education sector, developed predominantly out of dissatisfaction with the term 'intelligence'. It was felt that the controversial term 'intelligence' assumes that an individual's social and emotional capacity is innate, fixed and could not be taught (Weare, 2004). 'Emotional Literacy', therefore, is a term that is predominantly used and understood by the UK and education sector and has led to extensive publications, research and work with schools (Weare, 2004). A definition of emotional literacy as it relates to the individual is described as the:

"…ability to understand ourselves and other people, and in particular to be aware of, understand, and use information about the emotional states of ourselves and others with competence." (Weare, 2004; p2)

Within this definition is the notion that an emotionally literate person has the ability to understand, communicate and regulate their own emotions and respond to others' emotions in ways that are helpful to them both (Weare, 2004). Similar to assertions made by Goleman (1996), emotional literacy is said to have far reaching benefits beyond the school environment (improving standards and inclusion; Weare, 2004), for example, benefits in the workplace, and improving children and young people's mental health, which may then have far reaching benefits to society and the community (Weare, 2004).

As suggested these claims are not new and may highlight a complexity with regard to terminology of such a broad construct. Nevertheless more and more practitioners and researchers are using both (if not other) terms when referring to a similar thing and there seems to be little consensus about how terms such as these should be differentiated (Weare & Gray, 2002). In this study the author uses the term 'Emotional Literacy', as this refers directly to

the intervention under study and acknowledges the origins of emotional intelligence (Gardner, 1983 & Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and subsequent developments by Goleman (1996) to the current definition of emotional literacy.

2.2.5. Emotional Literacy and Emotional Well-being

It has been established that several commentators and theorists postulate that high levels of emotional literacy contribute to greater success in various areas of life, education, employment and interpersonal relationships (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). But what commentators also theorised is that high emotional literacy would also contribute to increased feelings of emotional well-being (Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, Mckenley & Hollander 2002). It is put forward that those who are able to recognise, comprehend and manage their emotions, should be able to not only have a better outlook on life, but also experience improved emotional health (Schutte et al, 2002).

Research evidence supporting an association between emotional intelligence (ability to understand and regulate emotions) and emotional wellbeing (positive mood and high self-esteem), is cited by Schutte et al (2002). In their article, Schutte et al (2002) present the findings from 3 small-scale studies in the US, each consisting of a different sample. In study 1, participants completed the Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al. 2002) and the positive affect negative affect schedule (PANAS, Schutte et al, 2002). In study 2 participants completed a Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965 in Schutte et al. 2002) and Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al, 2002). In study 3, participants completed all 3 of the measures as well as completing negative state and elation inducing measures (Velten, 1968 in Schutte et al. 2002). Findings from study 1 & 2 suggested that higher emotional intelligence was associated with more characteristically positive mood and higher self-esteem but not lower characteristically negative mood. And findings from study 3 suggested that participants with higher emotional intelligence were better able to maintain positive mood and self-esteem when faced with a negative state induction whilst increasing the impact on positive mood of a positive state

induction (Schutte et al. 2002). The authors assert that high emotional intelligence and emotional well-being is associated with less depression, greater optimism and greater life satisfaction, (Schutte et al, 2002). However these findings are restricted by methodological limitations, namely the comparison of 3 separate samples for each study and the lack of assessment of variables not expected to be associated with those under study.

There still remains an issue with regard to terminology and what emotional wellbeing precisely refers to. If we take Schutte et al's (2002) description, emotional well-being may refer to one's emotional reflection on life and the external environment, but the term is also suggestive of including an aspect of 'health'. It is therefore important to establish a definition of emotional well-being and in what context this construct is best placed.

2.2.6. Defining Emotional Well-being

Emotional well-being is a construct that has been described as:

> *'A holistic, subjective state which is present when a range of feelings, among them energy, confidence, openness, enjoyment, happiness, calm, and caring, are combined and balanced'.*

> Weare & Gray (2003) citing Stewart-Brown (2000), p19.

Emotional well-being is a term that is widely used in both educational and health contexts (Weare, 2004). Because of the broad, generic and positive nature of the term several advantages are associated with its use. For example, when used and understood across a range of educational, social care and health related environments, it may support greater cohesion between these contrasting groups (Weare, 2004). It is also a term that has fewer negative connotations as one might expect from Mental Health, for example (Weare, 2004). But also use of a broad term like 'well-being' encourages us to consider the context and environments that nurture emotional literacy, such as risk and resilience factors (Weare, 2004). Emotional well-being therefore may be considered as inextricably linked to the

development of social emotional competence, which is considered an integral part of emotional literacy (Weare, 2004). When discussing the importance of emotional literacy and well-being in relation to schools, Weare (2004) suggests that an emotionally literate school is one that makes positive steps to promote the emotional and social well-being of its pupils and adults. One may consider that good emotional literacy supports the development of emotional well-being, which in turn underpins the development of emotional literacy. The circularity and complexity of these constructs is also highlighted by those claims made earlier by Shutte et al (2002).

Whilst emotional literacy may be an integral part of emotional well-being, this construct is also considered to be part of a much wider concept of mental well-being, also understood as positive mental health (Adi, Killoran, Janmohamed & Stewart-Brown, 2007). In their broad definition of mental well-being, which assumes that mental illness and well-being represent opposite ends of a spectrum, emotional well-being is but one of three constructs that make up this broad term:

- *"Emotional wellbeing (including happiness and confidence, and the opposite of depression and anxiety).*

- *Psychological wellbeing (including resilience, mastery, confidence, autonomy, attentiveness/involvement and the capacity problem solve)*

- *Social wellbeing (good relationships with others, emotional intelligence, the capacity to manage conflict and the opposite of conduct disorder, delinquency, interpersonal violence and bullying)"*

(Adi et al, 2007, p9)

2.2.7. Emotional literacy and well-being in the educational context

Schools may be regarded as having a direct influence on the emotional health and well-being of their staff and pupils (DfES, 2004b). Therefore, the promotion of emotional literacy and well-being in schools is regarded as

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critical for the development of a healthy and successful school community (DfES, 2004b). For this to happen a focus must be on the development of pupils' social and emotional skills and behaviour (DfES, 2004b). Additional benefits have also been linked to school improvement in the areas of teaching and learning, behaviour and attendance and staff recruitment and retention (DfES, 2004b).

A number of government policies in the context of educational initiatives have contributed to, and stressed the development of children and young people's emotional well-being, for example Every Child Matters: Green Paper (DoH, 2003) in the UK. This document described five outcomes for children indicating good well-being, Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Making a Positive Contribution and Achieving Economic Well-being (DoH, 2003). From this came the Children's Act 2004 (DfES, 2004c), providing a legislative foundation, supporting a reform of children's services. This Act made explicit new statutory duties and accountabilities for children's services. Along side this Act came the Every Child Matters: Change for Children (DfES, 2004a) which set out a national framework for early intervention, encouraging schools to be pro-active and work preventatively to support and promote children's well-being.

2005 saw the national introduction of one of the UK's foremost educational strategies, the Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL; DfES 2005). SEAL is a comprehensive, whole school approach that sought to promote those skills thought to underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, attendance and emotional well-being (DfES, 2005). As well as being a whole school approach, SEAL also has curricula components to allow for programmes to be targeted at the whole class, small group and individual level (DCSF, 2008). At the heart of SEAL are those domains originally proposed by Goleman (1995), self awareness, self regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. It is these domains in which SEAL seeks to develop children's social and emotional skills (DCSF, 2008). In 2008, approximately

80% of primary schools and 20% of secondary schools were thought to be using the SEAL resources, making it the most widely used approach at the time (DCSF, 2008). SEAL is but one of many educational strategies that seek to promote children's emotional well-being, but it is this and the emergence of the Children's Act 2004 which underpinned the early development of the ELSA project (Shotton & Burton, 2008).

This section highlights the difficulty and complexity when it comes to correct terminology of these constructs. In the context of this study, emotional well-being refers to the positive and pro-social emotional state underpinned by those social and emotional competences of emotional literacy.

2.3. The Teaching Assistant role and impact in the UK

2.3.1. Aim

The ELSA project is an EP led intervention that seeks to develop TA knowledge and skills by providing them with training and supervision combining both psychological theory and practical guidance to meet the social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils with whom they work in the context of a school (Burton, 2008). Therefore this section aims to provide background information and context regarding the role of the TA and their effectiveness in supporting the emotional, social and behavioural needs of pupils in the UK. The following areas shall be explored:

- Prevalence rates of TAs in the classroom
- TA role, deployment and impact
- Support for social, emotional and behavioural needs

2.3.2. Search strategy

To obtain a broad review of the available literature, an exploratory search strategy was used. For the search to be as effective and sensitive as possible the following was considered:

- Different terms relating to the role of TA were used (teaching assistant, support assistant, learning support assistant, classroom assistant) including terms such as role, deployment, training and supervision.
- A meta-search of several databases and search engines (Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts – ASSIA, PsychInfo, EBSCO, British Educational Index and Science Direct) using The University of Nottingham's E-Library gateway was used to obtain relevant literature. Additional searches were conducted via the Department for Education (DfE) database and archive including The Teaching Agency.
- Hand search of journal article reference lists.
- Only articles related to TAs working in the UK with school aged pupils (age 5 – 16) were included as this is the focus of this study. This

criterion was to ensure that only those articles relevant to the study were selected.

2.3.3. Prevalence rates of Teaching Assistants

Before the prevalence of TAs in the classroom or even their role is explored, the issue of terminology must first be addressed. A substantial amount of literature has been afforded to this role with different researchers using different terms. Webster et al. (2011) make reference to the fact that the term 'teaching assistant' (TA) may be used to cover similar classroom based paraprofessional roles including support assistant, learning support assistant and classroom assistant. Even the intervention under study uses the term 'support assistants' to describe classroom based support staff. However, McVittie (2005) stated that government guidance of the time addressed all support staff within the classroom as 'teaching assistants', for this reason this shall be the term used throughout the study.

It is widely acknowledged in the literature that a dramatic increase in investment into additional support staff for schools in England and Wales contributed to the increased number of TAs in UK classrooms (Blatchford et al, 2011). There are several reasons that commentators give for the rise in numbers of support staff and TAs, government policy directions over the past 15 – 20 years for example. Review data into the impact of adult support staff on pupils and schools suggested that, initially, the increase may be a result of the increase in pupils with statements of special educational needs being educated in mainstream schools (Alborz, Pearson, Farrell & Howes, 2009). This is reflected in the 1997 Green Paper, Excellence for all Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs (DfES, 1997) and subsequent Green Paper, Teachers: Meeting the Challenge of Change (DfES, 1998). This latter document referred to the increase in TAs who provide general support in the classroom, not just for those with special educational needs, as a result of the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies being implemented (Blatchford et al, 2011).

2.3.4. TA role, deployment and impact

The concept of support staff working in a mainstream classroom alongside teachers is nothing new. Kerry (2005) made reference to the discussion of the role as early as 1967 in the Plowden Report (HMSO), which considered all aspects of primary education at the time. Since then there has been a substantial increase in research attention for this population, focusing on their role, deployment and impact in relation to changing government policies and strategies (Kerry, 2005). The government at the time sought to define the TA role into distinct categories, supporting pupils, supporting teachers, supporting the school and supporting the curriculum (DfES, 2000).

The meaning behind the use of the term TA has already been established in the context of this literature review, however it has long been a debate amongst commentators. The author proposed to use the term TA, cited by McVittie (2005) in relation to those adults who work in the mainstream classroom directly with pupils. However it has been noted by some that even this loose definition the TA role may be subcategorised into 11 distinct job titles (Balshaw & Farrell, 2002). However, criticism may be found in that these titles only refer to those TAs who work with pupils with special educational needs rather than those with more general responsibilities (Kerry, 2005). This then led to research conducted with this group, which resulted in a further classification of 'learning support assistant' (O'Brian & Garner, 2001). This gives rise to further debate as to whether their role is to support learning or to support teaching (Kerry, 2005). Kerry (2005) added to this debate by conducting a search of the available literature and research at the time in an attempt to find patterns within the literature that may reveal distinctions in job roles and responsibilities. Like Balshaw & Farrell (2002), Kerry generated 11 descriptions, with definitions, for a typology of the TA that may be considered as being a spectrum of duties:

- Dogsbody
- Routine administrator/teachers PA
- Factotum
- Carer/mentor
- Behaviour manager

- Curriculum supporter
- Ring fenced operative
- Specialist
- Delineated paraprofessional
- Teacher support and partial substitute
- Mobile paraprofessional

(Kerry, 2005; p377)

Kerry's (2005) research aimed to contribute to the existing debate regarding the TA role to support future discussions regarding training. The extent to which these descriptors clarify what we mean by the term TA is questionable as different employers and settings may share some or many of these different duties in their description of the TA role, where as others may not.

What commentators in the literature appear to agree on most is that the TA plays a role in supporting both the teacher and the pupil. Subsequent research has attempted to investigate the views of stakeholders regarding the role of TAs supporting the teaching and learning of pupils and their impact. One such study, using a multi-method longitudinal design, aimed to investigate how the TA role, training and professional satisfaction is perceived by key parties, as well as, the impact of their interactions on pupils and class teachers (Russell, et al, 2005). The data reported here was taken from a larger research project (Class Size and Adult – Pupil Ratios Project – CSPAR) that began in 1996 and drew on questionnaire data sent annually to class teachers, head teachers and TAs of a key stage 1 cohort and followed them through into key stage 2 (Russell et al, 2005). TA sample data suggested that 50% of the TAs were specifically employed to support at least one pupil with a statement of special educational needs. The data also identified different areas in which the TAs perceived their main duties were located:

- General support for all pupils – 37%
- Support for specific groups (SEN and/or Behaviour) – 32%
- Named pupils with special educational needs – 12%
- One identified pupil with special educational needs – 16%
- Other – 4%

(Russell et al, 2005; p178-9)

Results suggested that TAs perceived their main role is interacting directly with pupils, and that this may predominantly be a teaching role for the neediest of pupils. However TAs themselves reportedly viewed themselves as supporters of pupils' learning (Russell et al, 2005). Whilst this study establishes the TA role as being complex and challenging at various levels (pupil, teacher, school and curriculum) it is unclear as to what is determined as the precise specification of the role, teaching the neediest of pupils or support for learning, be it social, emotional or academic. A limitation regarding the extent these findings can be generalised is to be found in context in which the research took place. For example these findings may represent the influences of the inclusion movement, which is recognised as having an influence on TA role and deployment. These results may not reflect current trends or TA experiences.

A more recent article presented results from another large-scale longitudinal study (the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools – DISS, 2003 – 2008) that sought to fill in the gaps left by from previous studies with regard to knowledge of TA roles and to analyse the impact of support staff on teachers, teaching and pupil learning and behaviour (Webster et al, 2010). The DISS project was conducted over a pivotal five year period that saw an increase in TAs in the classroom and was funded by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF; now Department for Education, DfE). The study design comprised of two strands designed to be naturalistic in order to capture everyday circumstances in school settings (Webster et al, 2010). Strand 1 consisted of three national questionnaire surveys targeted at schools, teachers and TAs (referred to as support staff). Strand 2 integrated both qualitative and quantitative data analysis to study the effect of the amount of support received by pupils on their academic progress and approach to learning, as well as observations of deployment and practice (Webster et al, 2010). Results suggest that TAs are deployed to work directly with pupils and their interactions were predominantly with pupils identified as having special educational needs (32% at school action, 41% at school action plus or with a statement), but still worked with those not considered as having

special educational needs (27%; Webster, 2010). The researchers considered the findings of this research under the topics of deployment, practice and preparedness. With regard to deployment, it was found that TAs were inextricably linked to the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs; however, they had inadvertently become their primary educators, leading to negative effects on academic attainment (Webster et al, 2004). This was reflected in the practice observed, as the majority of the interactions observed were with pupils with special educational needs. This raised the question as to quality of these interactions, which were often reactive and focused on completion of work rather than supporting learning and understanding (Webster et al, 2004). If TAs were to have more of a teaching role, then this raises additional issues with regard to their preparedness, as many were considered to be acting blind to the expectations and requirements of the class teacher and the pupils' needs (Webster et al, 2004). The authors conclude by highlighting two possible outcomes. First, should TAs continue to have a pedagogical role, then this must be more tightly defined and further supported with relevant training, and second, if their role is not to be pedagogical then this too must be defined.

As with Russell et al's (2005) study, interpretations made from Webster et al's (2010) findings may be limited, as data gathered during strand 1 (three biennial large scale questionnaires) was conducted during an early stage in the workforce remodelling process (DfE, 2010). As a result there may have been significant changes in school practice before, or even during, strand 2 (structured observations, case studies, pupil support surveys) of the research. This limits the extent to which they may be compared and interpretations made on the data.

2.3.5. Support for social, emotional and behavioural needs.

Literature presented thus far has identified a primary role of the TA as working directly with pupils identified as having special educational needs or indeed statement of special educational needs. As well, a growing number of TAs are

being deployed to work with those whose special educational needs are specific to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD; Groom & Rose, 2005).

Groom & Rose (2005) report the ways in which the role of the TA have been developed to support the SEBD needs of pupils aged 7-11 in one local education authority. Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected over three stages from 247 primary schools. The first stage consisted of questionnaires sent to head teachers of each school, of which 97 responded. This was followed by a more in-depth study, using questionnaires, with line managers of TAs from 20 of the 97 schools. And finally semi-structured interviews were conducted in five of the schools, with head teachers, governors, teachers, TAs pupils and parents (Groom & Rose, 2005). Responses from follow up surveys with line managers suggested various success criteria for determining effectiveness of TA deployment in relation to supporting pupils with SEBD:

- Pupils included in majority of lessons
- Pupils meeting targets
- Reduced periods of exclusion
- Reduced amount of 1:1 support
- Pupil feeling part of school community

(Groom & Rose, 2005; p26)

In this case TA impact is not seen as related to academic outcomes, rather as a judgement on a pupil's well-being and inclusion, offering an alternative interpretation and assessment of TA impact. What Groom & Rose (2005) also found were the various successful interventions schools felt TAs employed to support the SEBD needs of these pupils, the most successful being 1:1 support and small group work, the next being:

- Reward systems
- Pastoral care
- Circle time and other interventions
- Mentoring
- Lunch time support
- Nurture groups
- Self esteem programmes

- Peer support.

<div align="right">(Groom & Rose, 2005; p24)</div>

Groom & Rose (2005) highlighted the importance of specific training and support for TAs to successfully meet the needs of pupils with SEBD due to the complex nature of these difficulties. This would enable the TA to provide effective support at each of the four strands (support for pupil, teacher, curriculum and school) identified by the DfES (2000). The main limitation with this research, however, is to be found with the small sample size from which the study is based, thus limiting the extent to which conclusions can be generalised to a national context.

The role and deployment of the TA is considered to be varied by many of the researchers illustrated in this section. What is clear is that TAs play a vital role at various levels within the context of the school, supporting the pupil, the teacher and the curriculum. What the author hopes to have highlighted is that what ever role a TA is seen to have, there has been, and may continue to be, a need for further training and development in order for this support to be most effective. In the context of this study, the ELSA intervention is underpinned by the assumption that the TA has a vital role to play in supporting the SEBD needs of pupils and aims to provide them with knowledge and practical strategies to support their development with this.

2.4. The Educational Psychologist's role in the context of training and supervision of TAs

2.4.1. Aim

The ELSA project is an EP led intervention that seeks to develop TA knowledge and skills by providing them with training and supervision combining both psychological theory and practical guidance to meet the social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils with whom they work in the context of a school (Burton, 2008). Therefore this section aims to explore the available literature of EP role with regard to the training and supervision of TAs. This section will consider the following areas:

- The psychology of training and learning
- Training needs of TAs
- Training and the role of the EP

2.4.2. Search strategy

To obtain a broad review of the available literature, an exploratory search strategy was used. For the search to be as effective and sensitive as possible the following was considered:

- Different terms relating to the role of TA were used (teaching assistant, support assistant, learning support assistant, classroom assistant) including terms such as training and supervision.
- A meta-search of several databases and search engines (Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts – ASSIA, PsychInfo, EBSCO, British Educational Index and Science Direct) using The University of Nottingham's E-Library gateway was used to obtain relevant literature. Additional searches were conducted via the Department for Education (DfE) database and archive including The Teaching Agency.
- Hand search of journal article reference lists.

- Only articles related to TAs working in the UK with school aged pupils (age 5 – 16) were included as this is the focus of the current study. This criterion was to ensure that only those articles relevant to the study were selected.

- Sources obtained via a search of the University of Nottingham's Library Catalogues using the terms 'Psychology' and 'Training'.

- Additional sources obtained via searches conducted in online journal articles relevant to the EP profession, Educational Psychology in Practice, Educational and Child Psychology. Search terms were, 'EP', 'Training', and terms relating to the TA (see above).

- Articles relating to EPs training each other were excluded.

2.4.3. The Psychology of training and learning

Before the psychology of training and learning can be addressed, there must first be a definition of training from which we can begin. A definition cited from the organisational psychology literature describes training as:

> *"A planned process to modify attitude, knowledge or skill behaviour through learning experience to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose, in the work situation, is to develop the abilities of the individual and satisfy the current and future needs of the organisation."*
> (Reid and Barrington, 1997. P7 cited by Statt, 2003; p3)

This definition makes reference to training in an ideal situation whilst acknowledging the actual situation that trainers must deal with, that being the individual or one receiving the training (Statt, 2003). Attention is also given to the terminology of training and its relationship with that of the term 'education'. Whilst some argue that both terms can be used synonymously, referring to the same activity, it may also be that the former emphasises knowledge, whilst the latter, techniques (Statt, 2003). However, whatever the distinction, both are considered rooted within the psychology of learning (Statt, 2003). That is, the individual psychological processes of learning, personality and motivation; social psychological processes, such as group dynamics, and the psychology of the training experience, communication and analysis of training

needs (Statt, 2003). The term that shall be used throughout this section shall be training, as the ELSA project is concerned with enhancing participants' knowledge *and* practical skills.

Learning is considered an integral part of any training intervention, and it may be considered that unless learning has taken place there has been no training (Statt, 2003). The concept of learning may be broadly defined as:

> *"The relatively permanent process by which changes in behaviour, knowledge, feelings or attitudes occur as the result of prior experience"*
> (Statt, 2003; p14)

This broad definition highlights the challenge faced when attempting to define this concept (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). If learning is considered to be a process rather than an end product then how are these processes explained? There are many explanations of learning (learning theories); some are more comprehensive than other and there are different ideas as to how they are grouped for discussion (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Four basic orientations have been identified by Merriam & Caffarella (1991), Behaviourist, Cognitive, Humanist and Social Learning. Each present different assumptions about learning that relate to adult learning and these shall be addressed in turn. It should be noted, however, that these are not exclusive or exhaustive.

The Behaviourist orientation

Within this orientation, commentators distinguish between three forms of behaviourist theory of learning: imitation, connectionism and conditioning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991 & Jarvis, 2010). Imitation, considered the most fundamental of all learning (Jarvis, 2010), assumes that our learning (behaviour change) occurs through observation of the world around us. Connectionism, or 'trial and error' learning (Jarvis, 2010), focuses on the way in which if a learner discovers an act or explanation to be effective they will most likely repeat the behaviour (Jarvis, 2010). Finally conditioning, in relation to adult learning, focuses on the 'teacher' as being central to bringing about

learning through rewarding/reinforcing a desired behaviour or response (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

The behaviourist orientation is said to underpin much of adult learning; for example a teacher's role would be to design an environment (instructional programme) that elicits desired behaviour (learning outcomes; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). However, criticism of this approach can be found in the exclusive attention to overt behaviours to explain learning and ignores the cognitive or information processing of learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

The Cognitive orientation

The main difference between the cognitive and behaviourist paradigms is with the control of the learning activity. Where behaviourists view control being in the environment, cognitivists view control as being with the learner (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Many of the contributions have come from Gestalt learning theories, where one looks at the whole rather than its parts or individual events. The cognitive orientation therefore views the learner as one that reorganises and interprets sensations, giving meaning to situations or the environment (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). A learner is conceived as one who thinks about those factors/issues necessary to solve a problem and constructs the solution cognitively (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Whilst this orientation may view the adult as a holistic learner it may not explicitly acknowledge the possible relationship with previous learning experiences or potential for growth (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

The Humanist orientation

Within this paradigm, learning occurs due to the learner's need to be self directed or autonomous, otherwise known as self-actualisation (Tennant, 2006). The concept of the self was seen to be going against the scientific explanation of the individual found in other paradigms (Tennant, 2006). Maslow's (1970) theory of human motivation based upon a hierarchy of needs assumes that self-actualisation is the goal of learning, and is something that educators or trainers should seek to bring about (Tennant, 2006). Maslow believed that learning requires the individual to move through a hierarchy of

lower level motives, satisfying their desires, before reaching the eventual motive of self-actualisation, seen below:

1. Physiological needs

2. Safety needs

3. Love and belongingness needs

4. Self-esteem needs

5. Self-actualisation

<div align="right">(Tennant, 2006; p12, citing Maslow, 1968)</div>

This paradigm suggests a positive relationship between the learner and trainer/educator, as the latter attempts to satisfy the former's needs according to Maslow's (1968) hierarchy. However a challenge to this orientation may arise with the concept of self-directed learners not responding to an educator's attempts to satisfy their needs in a training context (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

The Social Learning orientation

Put simply, social learning theory assumes that people learn through observation of others in their environment/social setting (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). How this learning occurs draws upon previously discussed paradigms. For example social learning theory acknowledges the importance of observations being imitated and reinforced, but also the importance of the cognitive aspect of this observational learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). That is, all learning can occur vicariously through observations of other people's behaviour and the consequences for the learner (observer), popularised by Bandura in the 1970s (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). In addition to similarities with behaviourist and cognitivist thinking, social learning theory identifies the learner as being just as important in the learning process though self-regulation of behaviours (Merriam &Caffarella, 1991). This orientation has relevance to adult learning in that it acknowledges the individual, behaviour and the environment as having a reciprocal role in the learning process. In relation to adult learning this orientation may lead to a deeper understanding as to how adults learn when considering the interactions between an

individuals behaviour, mental processes, personality and context (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

In summary, the four orientations explored here hoped to demonstrate the varied insights psychology can bring to understanding learning in the context of adult learning. As each orientation has different set of underpinning assumptions, there may be just as many implications for instructors or programme planners when developing interventions that will enable adult learning to occur. In the context of this study these orientations may provide useful insights into how the ELSA training was delivered and have implications for future delivery based upon participants experiences.

2.4.4. Training needs of TAs

Previous sections of the literature review have explored the political context of the rise of TAs in the classroom, as well as, their role and deployment. Research also shows characteristics of the role with regard to TA training and professional development. A recent topic paper (DfE, 2010) presents research statistics from three national studies into school support staff conducted over the last 15 years, the School Census, the DISS (deployment and impact of school support staff) project and the Training and Development Agency's (TDA) Support Staff Study (SSS).

Training and development

The issues in training and professional development of TAs have long been a focus for research. Dyer (1996) analysed documentary evidence and semi-structured interviews of TAs (referred to as LSAs) to explore the central issues relating to their continuing professional development (CPD). Dyer's (1996) research highlighted the importance of CPD opportunities provided by individual settings through dedicated finances and budgets, as well as further support and accreditation from higher education institutions. The conclusions made by the author, however, were based upon data collected from a small sample of TAs in one local education authority, and as a result may not represent the national context at the time.

Whilst it is recognised in the literature that the workforce remodelling identified the need for TAs to receive effective training and have clear and open routes for career progression (Groom, 2006), national studies reflect a different picture. Training and development for teaching or subject curriculum was often likely to be picked up via the class teacher's whole class input rather than through formal training methods/approaches (Blatchford et al, 2009). Case study data also suggests that some school leaders felt formal training was not a priority for their staff or setting (Blatchford et al, 2009). The same was found with regard to TAs supporting behaviour management, with strategies being used that are similar or the same as those used by the class teacher (Blatchford et al, 2009). This may appear to be a positive and consistent approach to behaviour management, but it is not clear as to the precise methods/strategies used or if they are implemented at a whole school level.

Professional development is essential to supporting the development of skills, understanding, experience, knowledge and effectiveness of those working in schools (Groom, 2006). Typically the responsibility for overseeing this need lies with a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) or head teacher in primary and secondary schools (DfE, 2010). Varying practices for supporting the CPD needs of TAs are identified in the literature, for example work shadowing, observation and mentoring (Groom, 2006). In addition to this much of the training for TAs has been provided during school based INSET time, typically provided by local authority providers (DfE, 2010). INSET days are spread over an academic year and are usually expected to be used for training purposes, although this is not guaranteed (DfE, 2010). Only 50% of TAs felt that this form of training and development supported them in carrying out their role, and only 15% felt that it led to improved outcomes for children with whom they worked (DfE, 2010). This highlights a need for TA training to reflect the needs of the school, the pupils and the TAs themselves (Moran & Abbott, 2002).

Often barriers to effective training have been associated with releasing groups of TAs to attend training during contracted hours and difficulty with locating

sources of funding for external training most relevant to the TA role (DfE, 2010). Groom's (2006) discussion paper suggests that central to the success of professional development is the development of a collaborative school culture that builds on partnerships to share good practice and problem solving strategies to overcome challenges. It is suggested that this may begin from initial, well planned induction programmes, supported throughout the school setting and underpinned by further sessions involving peer support and mentoring (Groom, 2006).

The literature presented here suggests that, currently, TAs do not necessarily require previous experience, training or qualifications to acquire their role. However research suggests that TAs value training and some recognise the influence this can have on pupils with whom they work (DfE, 2010). Interviews with TAs have also revealed that they would value both accredited and non-accredited training courses to support their career progression (Farrell, Balshaw & Polat, 2000). Furthermore, commentators assert that the most effective training should be rooted in practice and involve participant discussion and reflection (Groom, 2006). This may have implications for the role of the EP with regard to their role in training and development and shall be reviewed in greater detail.

2.4.5. Training and the role of the EP
Since the publication of Gillham's Reconstructing Educational Psychology (1978), the role of the EP has progressively shifted away from work with individual children to work with teachers and schools through indirect and preventative methods aimed at the organisation (Jones & Frederickson, 1990). Throughout the literature commentators have attempted to determine what the distinctive role of the EP is. Curran, Gersch & Wolfendale (2003) put forward a pragmatic and more traditional model of service delivery, where the EP operated at the individual level (assessment and intervention) and the organisational level (e.g. providing in service training) and the systems level (e.g. developing provision). However these may not be considered as unique or exclusive to the EP. In his discussion paper Cameron (2006) posits that the

role of the EP has the potential to use psychology in a way that opens the minds of individuals with whom they work and empowers them in their role.

Other researchers have suggested this unique aspect of the EP role may involve the in-service training and development of TAs and teachers (Farrell, Balshaw & Polat, 2000; Norwich, 2000 & Ashton & Roberts, 2006). It has been suggested that this role, as well as emerging from the reconstruction of the profession, can be see to have emerged from policy developments such as Every Child Matters (DoH, 2003; Baxter & Frederickson, 2005). Project work and in-service training is considered both a complex and demanding role (Balchin, Randall & Turner, 2006). For training and development to be most effective it needs to be planned and organised, owned by the trainee/setting rather than the EP and embedded in a the context of the setting addressing their individual needs (Balchin, Randall & Turner, 2006). In addition, effective in-service training ensures that there are opportunities for trainees to engage in experiential learning via coaching modelling and scaffolding, which can also encourage independence in the learner (Balchin, Radall & Turner, 2006).

A particular method of EP led training, illustrated in the literature, suggests that there are multiple objectives and aims associated with this role:

- Direct effect – Have an effect on individual pupils
- Training effect – Develop skills of staff to sustain future change
- General effect – whole school development / organisational change

(Balchin, Randall & Turner, 2006)

These effects were illustrated in the use of a Coach Consult Method that combined project work and in-service training to enable schools (n=4) to manage and have ownership of individual play projects and sustain change (Balchin, Randall & Turner, 2006). Evaluation of this method suggested that post-test measures demonstrated direct effects on pupils' play experiences across all four schools, whilst analysis of post training evaluations suggested that this method had both a positive training and general effect for participants and settings (Balchin, Randall & Turner, 2006). However a criticism of this

study is its small scale and the limited amount of data gathered mean that it may not be possible to generalise the findings to other contexts. This approach may be seen as one of many EPs use as a staff development tool, incorporating different elements such as soft systems methodology (Frederickson, 1990), problem analysis (Monsen, Graham, Frederickson & Cameron, 1998) and a consultative model (Wagner, 2000) makes it possible for development work to be more effective according to the criteria outlined by Balchin, Randall & Turner (2006). In this regard the Coach Consult Method may be seen as a set of principles rather than a 'model' of training (Balchin, Randall & Turner, 2006).

Although Balchin, Randall & Turner's (2006) model aimed to achieve all three effects (direct, training and general), other studies of EP training have aimed to achieve a training effect by skilling up staff within a setting. For example, a study by Hayes, Richardson, Hindle & Grayson (2011) sought to develop secondary school TAs skills in positive behaviour management via video interaction guidance. Through video capture and feedback sessions (x2) based upon their interactions with pupils, TAs felt that this approach had a positive impact on their skills and confidence to support challenging behaviour (Hayes, Richardson, Hindle & Grayson, 2011). It may be argued however that by achieving a training effect (skilling up of staff) there may also be an indirect effect on the pupil. This may be seen in research that sought to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of children via Precision Teaching (Downer, 2007 & Roberts & Norwich, 2010).

Very little research on EP-led training applies all of the principles set out by Balchin, Randall & Turner (2006), making it difficult to determine the most effective model of training that could be used to develop staff skills, implement and sustain a change at the organisational level whilst having a direct effect on the pupil. With these principles in mind an argument may be made with regard to the various effects the ELSA project may have. In theory this training project seeks to develop the skills and knowledge of the TA to meet

the SEBD needs of pupils with whom they work (Burton, 2008), thus achieving a direct and a training effect. The following section, therefore, seeks to review the evidence base of this intervention, which will form the basis for the author's current study.

2.5. Systematic literature review and review of ELSA evaluation research

2.5.1. Aim

This section aims to set the present study within the context of recent research into developing children and young people's social, emotional and behavioural skills via a TA delivered intervention, supported by adult training.

2.5.2. Search strategy

To obtain a broad review of the available literature, a systematic search strategy was used. For the search to be as effective and sensitive as possible the following was considered (individual search audits can be found in the appendices):

- Different terms relating to the role of TA were used (teaching assistant, support assistant, learning support assistant, classroom assistant) including terms such as training and supervision. Additionally different terms relating to, and including, 'emotional literacy' and development of social and emotional skills and behaviour e.g. emotional intelligence, SEAL, emotional well-being, well-being, mental-wellbeing, behaviour, social emotional skills.

- A meta-search of several databases and search engines (Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts – ASSIA, PsychInfo, Education Resources Information Centre - ERIC) using The University of Nottingham's E-Library gateway was used to obtain relevant literature.

- Examination of article titles and abstracts were used to determine their relevance.

Inclusion criteria:

- Only articles related to TAs working in the UK with school aged pupils (age 5 – 16) to support their social emotional behavioural skills were included as this is the focus of the current study. This criterion was to ensure that only those articles relevant to the study were selected.
- Articles that include training in targeted interventions for TAs.
- Outcomes related to pupil's identified as having social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- Articles published since 2000.
- Articles are peer reviewed.

Exclusion criteria:

- Articles that relate to universal / whole school or class based interventions to support pupil social, emotional and / or behavioural skills.
- Articles relating to pupil's outside primary or secondary school population (such as early years or college / further education).
- Articles not set in the UK context
- Articles not available as full text

Using the search terms described above, each systematic search produced many results (ERIC – 33, ASSIA – 30 & Psychinfo – 96). Undertaking a process of reviewing the usefulness and relevance of these articles the author, using the inclusion / exclusion criteria, was able to reduce these to 4 articles for review. 1 additional article related directly to the ELSA however this is not included in this review, but considered in section 2.5. Table 2.2 provides details of the studies that met the selection criteria:

Author	Study title	Relevance to review
Smith (2001)	Using social stories to enhance behaviour in children with autistic spectrum difficulties.	- TAs, class teachers and parents given training on targeted intervention (social stories) and their application with pupils. - Study sought to evaluate impact of social stories against pupil behavioural

			outcomes
Frederickson, Warren & Turner (2005)	"Circle of Friends" – An exploration of impact over time.	-	School staff given training on Circle of Friends approach to support future use.
		-	Study investigates potential gains made in the social inclusion of a target child and if these are maintained over time.
Waters (2008)	Therapeutic story-writing: The use of therapeutic story writing groups to support pupils with emotional difficulties.	-	Training given to SENCOs in one LA regarding the therapeutic story writing intervention.
		-	Study aimed to assess the impact of this group based intervention on pupils' social, emotional and academic learning.
Humphrey, Kalambouka, Wigelsworth & Lendrum (2010)	Going for Goals: An evaluation of a short, social emotional intervention for primary school children	-	Study aimed to assess the efficacy of a SEAL based small group based intervention on targeted pupils social and emotional skills, behaviour and emotional well-being.
		-	Intervention under study is a wave 2 intervention developed as part of the Primary SEAL, Wave 1 curriculum introduced to schools in 2005. As such staff participants would have been trained in its use.

Table 2.2: Description of the studies and their relevance that met the selection criteria for the systematic review

Review of literature

Smith (2001) describes an evaluation of the impact social stories (Gray, 1994) have on supporting the needs of children with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) in mainstream schools. Together with special school staff, the researcher (EP), developed a 2 ½ day training session for TAs, class teachers

and parents on the theory and application of social stories (TAs and class teachers attending training n=62, pupils n = 19). The study gathered data via evaluation forms that provided information such as pupil details (age, gender, key stage, and diagnostic status), behaviour (inappropriate and desired), design of the story, successfulness (using a 1 'not at all' - 10 ' completely' likert scale) and other comments related to expected or unexpected outcomes. Findings suggested that 16 of the 19 stories were rated above the mid-point of the scale, whilst 13 of the 19 were rated between 7 and 10. Additional findings suggested that participants perceived the stories as enjoyable, practical and effective (Smith, 2001). Claims as to the impact the training session and subsequent development of social stories have on pupils' behavioural outcomes are limited. This study reports adult perceptions regarding the utility of social stories as a means of determining their effectiveness. Without data to demonstrate a reduction of inappropriate behaviours over time it is not possible to make such claims. As such the methodology used in this study means it is not possible to assert the efficacy of social stories.

Frederickson, Warren & Turner (2005), report data and findings from a follow-up of a previous study exploring the impact of a 'Circle of Friends' (CoF; Taylor, 1997) approach. CoF is an intervention developed to support the inclusion of pupils with SEN or SEBD in their mainstream setting by enlisting the support of a target child's peers to form a group or 'circle of friends (Frederickson, Warren & Turner, 2005). Findings from the initial study suggested differences in non-target children's attitudes towards a target child, but not the target child's behaviour (Frederickson & Turner, 2003). The aims of this study were to investigate potential gains made in the social inclusion (increase in social acceptance and decrease in social rejection) of a focus child, and establish whether gains were maintained over time. Using a 2-phase design, pupils (n=14) were assessed by the school EP as having peer relationship problems for which a circle of friends approach was considered to be appropriate. Phase 1 consisted of establishing the circle of friends with weekly meetings building school's knowledge and skills to support future uses. Pupil data was collected at 4 time points using forced choice

sociometric questionnaire (LITOP Questionnaire from the Social Inclusion Survey, Frederickson, Warren & Turner, 2005). Findings from phase 1 suggested statistically significant increases in social acceptance and decreases in social rejection over the first 3 time points. Phase 2 was an 18-week follow up at time 4 of 7 of the 14 original participants, using the same measures. Follow-up assessments suggested that gains made in social acceptance steadily returned to baseline whilst the reduction in social rejection remained stable. These findings offer support to the claims of an earlier study (Frederickson & Turner, 2003), that the circle of friends approach impacts on the attitudes of the peer group rather than the behaviour of a target child. However, they also demonstrate that changes made in peer attitudes may not be sustained without a behavioural change of the focus child. However generalisations of these findings may be limited due to the small sample size (n=14) in phase 1 and the 50% reduction rate in phase 2.

Waters (2008) reports the findings from a research report commissioned by the South East Region Special Educational Needs (SERSEN) partnership evaluating the impact of therapeutic story-writing groups on pupils' social, emotional and academic learning. Following a 3 day training event for 50 SENCos the research study focused on a sample of 21 pupils drawn from 4 schools whose SENCos had attended the training. This was a mixed methods evaluation using predominantly qualitative methods supplemented by quantitative measures. The intervention consisted of groups of pupils, identified as benefiting from this approach, attending at least 10 therapeutic story-writing sessions. Specific methods included; group semi-structured interviews with 5 groups of pupils, individual pupil interviews, semi-structured interviews with SENCos leading the groups and quantitative analysis of interview responses. Qualitative data from one school was analysed using thematic analysis, and the resulting themes were then checked for their reliability across the whole sample. Qualitative analysis was used to display grouped responses to closed questions. Findings of this evaluation suggest that overall there was a positive effect on pupil's emotional, social and academic learning. For example, pupil were able to use the medium of story-writing to process emotional experiences, improve their self-esteem as writers

and increase their motivation and concentration to engage with story-writing. However, it may not be possible to assert the claims that therapeutic story-writing groups have a positive impact on the social, emotional and academic learning of pupils as there was no formal method of measuring differences made on these variables over time. In addition positive findings may be expected due to the sample being selected on the basis that they would benefit from the approach. Whilst self-reports in interviews may suggest positive outcomes for individuals or groups, these are only individual perceptions. The methodology used in this study means that it may not be possible to generalise the findings to other groups, thus limiting the extent to which one can assert the efficacy of this intervention.

The final study to emerge from the systematic review is one presented by Humphrey, Kalambouka, Wigelsworth & Lendrum (2010). This UK based study aimed to investigate the immediate and long term (seven week follow-up) effectiveness of a short social and emotional intervention called 'Going for Goals'. Developed as part of the Primary SEAL programme, it aims to support pupils to take responsibility for their learning and develop goal directed behaviours. This study used a quasi- experimental design taking both pre and post-test measures of pupil social emotional skills using the emotional literacy assessment and intervention measure (ELAI: Southampton Psychology Service, 2003) and behavioural adjustment using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1997). The sample was obtained from 22 schools and comprised of 182 primary aged pupils, 102 in the experimental group and 80 in the comparison group. The variables under study were between group (wait list control versus experimental group) and role (extra support versus role model) as well as within group factors, such as time (pre-test to post-test and follow-up) and subscale scores (for SDQ). Each participating school completed (measures for pupil, parent and teacher) before the intervention (pre-test), immediately at the end (post-test) and after 7 weeks (follow-up). The intervention lasted for 8 weeks with a single session per week lasting for 45 minutes led by a TA. Despite variance in the number of completed measures returned, the findings from staff and pupil self reports suggested that the Going for Goals intervention had a positive impact on the

staff perceptions of the social and emotional skills of participants selected for extra support. However, these improvements were marginal and associated effect (ES) sizes were small (f=3.697 p=.057 ES=0.29). The most significant finding was to be found in the teacher rating of behavioural adjustment, which suggested that the intervention led to an overall reduction in difficulties for the child (f=7.187 p<0.01 ES=0.32 small). Analysis of follow-up data suggests that positive effects were sustained. Whilst this study benefits from its quasi-experimental method there had been no random allocation to groups, therefore it may not be representative sample. Despite several significant findings found in experimental group scores from pre to post-test the reported effect sizes suggest that the study may only be able to report the general effectiveness of the intervention rather than its efficacy. A reason for this may be due to the differences in completed measures returned to the researchers at each time point.

Summary

Only one of the studies outlined above was able to demonstrate the effectiveness of an individual or group based intervention, supported by adult training, through the use of pre and post-test measures compared to a comparison group. Whilst the other three studies suggested findings that supported the usefulness of the interventions under study they did not employ evaluative designs. As such positive findings may not have been investigated objectively. This review demonstrates the limited research available regarding the impact of interventions supported by adults training on pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills and well-being. This suggests that further research of an evaluative nature is needed.

2.5.3. Review of existing ELSA evaluations

What follows is an in depth and critical review of recent and relevant research on the ELSA project. The review seeks to answer the question, what do we know about the impact of the ELSA project for pupils and TAs? The author conducted various searches of online databases linked to Psychology and Education (PsychINFO, ERIC and ASSIA) using terms relevant to the

intervention under study; "ELSA", "Emotional Literacy Support Assistants", "Teaching Assistants" and "Support Assistants". However, these searches produced many results, only one of which was relevant to the intervention under study. The author also requested support from practising EPs via an online e-mail forum (EPNET), asking for recent evaluations of the ELSA project in their local authorities. This led the author to access the ELSA Network website (www.elsanetwork.org), here local authorities implementing ELSA were able to provide information and evaluation data of ELSA in their area.

Of the 12 local authorities in the ELSA network, only 5 provide a summary of an evaluation of the ELSA project. In one instance an abstract was provided for an evaluation completed by a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) for an as yet unpublished, Doctoral Research (Grahamslaw, 2010). Despite attempts (direct request via email to the researcher) the author was unable to obtain access to this. This evaluation differed to those presented as the researcher aimed to focus on the impact the ELSA project had on TAs self efficacy beliefs for working with children and children's own self efficacy beliefs (Grahamslaw, 2010). Using a mixed methods approach the researcher used a four-phase design. Through the facilitation of focus groups during phase one, the self-efficacy beliefs of support assistants and pupils were explored. Phase two was a cross sectional investigation exploring the views of those who had received ELSA training and those who hadn't. Phase three was a pre and post test control group design further investigating the impact of the ELSA project on self efficacy beliefs of pupils and TAs. Finally phase four used a second cross sectional investigation providing Head Teachers implementing ELSA an opportunity to share their views regarding it (Grahamslaw, 2010). A claim of originality of the study was made by the researcher as the self-efficacy beliefs had not been previously evaluated (Grahamslaw, 2010). As only an abstract of this evaluation was provided it is not possible to provide a detailed critique or confidently establish the relevance to the author's study in this review.

Whilst there are few evaluations available using an experimental design there are those that have sought to demonstrate ELSA's effectiveness through other means. In 2005, the researcher obtained questionnaire data from 22 schools completed by ELSAs, Head Teachers, SENCos, pupils and teachers following an ELSA project indicated that ELSAs felt more able to support vulnerable pupils. In addition, ELSAs felt more empowered from the training and supervision sessions leading them to feeling more valued in their new roles in school (Burton, 2008). Responses from pupils indicated that they felt happy working with ELSAs and that where attendance had been a concern the majority had improved (Burton, 2008). Although a positive reflection of this intervention is offered, the research was conducted by its author highlighting a potential issue of researcher bias. Also, without a control group, hypotheses and generalisations of the results to other contexts cannot be made.

More recently the impact of ELSA work was independently evaluated in Dorset by a TEP, with the aim of assessing the change in pupils' emotional literacy as a result of ELSA support (Mann & Russell, 2011). Pre and post ELSA intervention data was collected in the form of Emotional Literacy Checklist (Southampton Psychology Service, 2003) data for staff, parents and pupils. From a sample of 72 ELSAs trained in Dorset, 30 had provided the researchers with pre and post intervention data for 170 children, representing 18 settings. Analysis of this data indicated an improvement in the perceived emotional literacy of pupils, yet only the Teacher checklist produced statistically significant results ($p<.001$; Mann & Russell, 2011, p4). However without a control group for comparison a causal relationship cannot be hypothesised.

Bravery & Harris (2009) conducted an evaluation of ELSA using questionnaire data and semi structured interviews. The aims were to explore how the first ELSA cohort (n=21) were establishing their roles one year after training by gaining Head Teacher (n=17) perceptions as to the impact ELSA had on their school (Bravery & Harris, 2009). The methods used to measure impact and outcomes of emotional literacy consisted of a 1 to 5 point scale, indicating no awareness of emotional literacy (1) to high awareness of emotional literacy (5)

(Bravery & Harris, 2009). Furthermore, researchers present questionnaire and interview responses as a way of demonstrating positive pupil outcomes and impact of ELSA project on academic achievement, emotional well-being, behaviour and attendance without any statistical data pre and post (Bravery & Harris, 2009). Therefore, the extent to which this evaluation can demonstrate an improvement in pupil outcomes as being based upon the support received from an ELSA trained TA or some other targeted intervention is limited. What is of interest to the current research are the additional research aims into the extent ELSA training is valued in settings, the appropriateness and value of on-going support for ELSAs, the extent to which the training equips ELSAs to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils, the difference the ELSA work is having and what additional support would enable ELSAs to do their job better. Responses to these questions were given on a similar 5-point scale, key features from the responses included; ELSAs needing to have their own identity, more time to plan and deliver ELSA based support, more resources, further training, access to external support via network meetings or with other professionals (EP for example), recognition and support from colleagues in their settings. Whilst these findings may support future ELSA training they remain subjective accounts, as such may not generalise to other settings or contexts.

In 2010 a study was conducted evaluating the impact ELSAs have on the development of pupils' emotional literacy (Murray, 2010). The author of this study was in their final year of professional training and their study was submitted as their doctoral research. The study used a mixed methodology, consisting of a quasi-experimental repeated measures design, gathering quantitative data from an experimental (n=12) and wait-list control group (n=6) using the ELC at pre-test and again at post-test (6 weeks later). Complementary qualitative data was also obtained from the experimental group at post-test via class teacher, ELSA and pupil feedback forms. Additional response sheets were also used with Head Teachers and SENCOs. Pupil feedback forms provided information as to the progress made and usefulness of the ELSA sessions via rating scales, whilst quantitative analysis was used to interpret and summarise the ELSA targets in addition to

opinions on the competency and impact of the ELSA. The frequency of ELSA sessions varied from 1 hour per week, half an hour per week and 1 hour per day. The experimental group sample was obtained from 11 primary schools whilst the control group was obtained from 6.

Statistical analyses (parametric tests) suggest that the experimental group made significant progress in emotional literacy (as measured by the ELC) compared to the comparison group who made no significant progress from pre-test to post-test, but regressed on motivation subscale. Deductive thematic analysis was used to interpret qualitative data, given on pupil response forms as quotes, and to summarise ELSA targets and beliefs about progress and impact on pupils'. The author claims results from this study provide strong evidence for the positive impact of the ELSA intervention on pupil progress. Additionally qualitative analyses of targets set were said to demonstrate how social emotional learning occurs according to McKown et al's (2009) model, that is social emotional information is encoded, interpreted and practised. The extent to which the findings demonstrate an impact of ELSAs on the emotional literacy of pupils is tentative, as the low sample size would typically call for the use of non-parametric tests as opposed to parametric tests (Pallant, 2010) used in this study. Any findings therefore may be a result of the statistical analyses used. Additionally the study only took measures from the ELSAs themselves; without pupil data the results are reliant on a perceived impact on pupils' emotional literacy only and would benefit from obtaining pupil self-report measures.

Finally, Burton, Osborne & Norgate (2010) examined the impact of the ELSA training on primary and secondary pupils using a quasi-experimental design. Pre and post-test measures of pupil and staff perceptions of emotional literacy and behaviour were taken from an experimental and waiting list control group. Pre and post-test measures used were the Emotional Literacy Checklist (Faupel, 2003) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997). Pupil participants were predominantly male and were drawn from a range of primary and secondary schools (Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010). All participating pupils were identified as requiring ELSA support by

their individual schools. Those receiving ELSA support formed the experimental group and those yet to receive ELSA support formed the waiting list control group (Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010). Due to variance in return rates (pre to post-test) for teacher and pupil measures the researchers matched participants in both groups based upon pre-test scores. This resulted in equal sample sizes (n=60 experimental teacher with n=60 control teacher, n= 48 experimental pupil with n=48 control pupil) ensuring that both groups were comparable. Results indicate (see table 2.3) that the ELSA intervention received by pupils had a successful impact, with the most significant results observed in the teacher rated measures of emotional literacy and behaviour (Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010):

Measure		Statistical significance at follow up
SDQ –Teacher rated	Conduct problems	f=9.36 p<0.005
	Hyperactivity	f=4.97 p<0.05
	Peer problems	f=13.27 p<0.001
	Total score	f=8.41 p<0.001
ELC – Teacher rated	Empathy	f=5.01 p<0.05
	Motivation	f=9.15 p<0.005
	Self Awareness	f=20.19 p<0.001
	Self Regulation	f=17.83 p<0.001
	Social Skills	f=5.37 p<0.05
	Total score	f=14.34 p<0.001

Table 2.3: Statistically significant findings from teacher rated SDQ and ELC in Burton, Osborne and Norgate's (2010) study

The quasi-experimental design used in this evaluation strengthens the claims made for ELSA having a positive impact on the emotional literacy of pupils receiving ELSA support. Although there had been no random allocation to groups the researchers had matched participants across groups allowing for comparison. However this had meant a substantial amount of data had to be discarded from the control group. Furthermore the participant selection methods used in this study may have resulted in a non-representative sample.

Summary

Having reviewed the available literature there appears to be a need for improvements in level of rigour in this field. Burton (2008) and Bravery & Harris (2009) had issues with regard to the study design, such as lack of comparison or control group and data collection methods intended to demonstrate impact. Mann & Russell (2011) suffered similar issues with regard to design with a lack of control group for comparison. Finally Burton, Osborne and Norgate (2010) and Murray (2010) were the only evaluations available that used a quasi-experimental design as part of their evaluation of ELSA. Both studies utilised a waiting-list control group enabling the researchers to compare data in an attempt to demonstrate an impact on pupils' emotional literacy and behaviour. Therefore these studies represent an enhanced level of rigour in this field. The aim of this research study is to contribute to a small, albeit growing, evidence base for the ELSA project. In order to do this the author has generated a number of specific research questions (section 2.5.2.). It further aims to explore ELSA trained teaching assistants' perceptions regarding their role and the training they received, as this is an area that has yet to have been fully explored in the literature available. These aims led to the research questions outlined below and to the consideration of the design and methodology outlined in the next chapter.

2.5.4. Research Questions

The present study seeks to address the following questions:

1. Does the ELSA project have a measurable impact on pupil and TA perceptions of emotional well-being?

2. How does the ELSA project impact on TAs' perceptions of the emotional well-being of pupils, and their role and training in supporting the development of pupil emotional well-being?

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology and design of the present study. This will include the procedures related to the chosen research design, participant details and selection procedures, measures used, methods of data analyses and also a consideration of the ethical implications of the study. However, the author must first give consideration to the epistemological issues that underpin all research and consequently in which paradigm they are situated based upon their worldview. This is an important first step to take when implementing a research project as Mertens (2010) highlights:

"Researchers' philosophical orientation has implications for every decision made in the research process, including the choice of method."

(Mertens, 2010; p7)

3.2. Epistemological Paradigms

Over the years commentators have described four major paradigms within the research community, Post positivism, Constructivism, Transformative and Pragmatic (Mertens, 2010). Cresswell (2003) describes the same four paradigms, but identifies the Transformative paradigm as an Advocacy / Participatory paradigm (Cresswell, 2003; p5). The lines between each

paradigm have often been a source of debate within the literature (Mertens, 2010). In order for a researcher to identify the particular paradigm that approximates their own, four basic belief systems should be considered to help further define each paradigm:

1. Axiology – The nature of ethics
2. Ontology – The nature of reality
3. Epistemology – The nature of knowledge and the relationship between the known and would be known
4. Methodology – The approaches and procedures for systematic enquiry

(Guba & Lincoln, 2005)

These basic beliefs may help further define each paradigm as each belief system influences and gives rise to the next (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

3.2.1. Post positivism

Post positivism may be considered as one of the dominant paradigms that guided early educational and psychological research. Having evolved from Positivism, this philosophical position is considered the 'standard view' of science, as it is assumed that objective knowledge can be achieved from direct observation and is the only knowledge that is available to us (Robson, 2002). Positivists hold that assumptions and methods from the natural sciences can be transferred to the study of social sciences, that such research is value free and the purpose of the observer (researcher) is to establish and demonstrate causal laws in an objective way (Robson, 2002). As can be seen in Table 4 research methods are typically quantitative in nature. The attempt to establish the existence of a constant relationship between variables may be ideal in a laboratory situation, but in social science and psychological research such a relationship is often considered so rare commentators argue it does not exist (Robson, 2002). This argument led some commentators to feel that such a scientific view is inappropriate for social science, which then led to the evolution of the post positivist paradigm.

Acknowledging the criticisms made of the Positivist paradigm, some researchers sought to incorporate aspects of the scientific view within its own standpoint. For example, post positivists hold firm a belief in the importance of objectivity and generalisability but rather than claim all knowledge is based upon certainty, the view is modified so that knowledge may be based upon probability (Mertens, 2010). Furthermore, whilst positivism asserts that objective knowledge can only be gained from direct experience free from value, post positivists hold that what is observed can also be influenced by the researcher's own theories, hypotheses, existing knowledge and values (Robson, 2002). With these in mind post positivism reflects a deterministic and reductionist philosophy whereby the researcher begins with a theory, collects data that supports or refutes the theory and then makes necessary revisions before further tests are conducted to enable understanding of an objective reality (Cresswell, 2003).

3.2.2. Constructivism

Those who place themselves within a constructivist paradigm, also known as relativist approach (Robson, 2002), may consider themselves to be the polar opposite of post positivism as the central tenet is that reality is socially constructed (Mertens, 2010). In relativist terms there is no external reality that is independent of human consciousness only different sets of meanings that people attach to the world (Robson, 2002). Constructivist researchers therefore, borne out of hermeneutics (the study of meaning), seek to generate theories and interpret meaning from these different viewpoints (Mertens, 2010). Several assumptions identified by Crotty (1998) are associated with this paradigm; firstly as already highlighted people construct meanings by interpreting the world they engage in. Second, a person's engagement and meaning making of the world is based upon historical and social perspectives. And the final assumption is that all generation of meaning is social, arising from one's interactions with others.

Considering that the task is to understand multiple and varied social constructions of meaning and knowledge, constructivist researchers often utilize qualitative methods such as interviews and observations to obtain multiple perspectives (Robson, 2002). Via open-ended questioning the participants help to construct the reality in a particular context with the researcher. Whilst post positivists may acknowledge the influence their own background has on what is observed positioning themselves outside the research, constructivists embrace this concept and position themselves in the research and acknowledge how their own interpretation of meaning flows from their own experiences (Creswell, 2003). The existence of multiple realities however means that research questions cannot be established in advance discrediting the approach from holding any scientific validity such as generalisability of findings (Robson, 2002).

3.2.3. Transformative

Also referred to as an emancipatory/advocacy/participatory approach, this paradigm arose out of dissatisfaction with dominant research paradigms and practices (Mertens, 2010) already illustrated. Individuals felt that the post positivist assumptions and practices marginalized individuals or groups (for example; feminists, people of colour, those with disabilities) and whilst acknowledging the philosophical claims regarding reality made by constructivism, it did not go far enough to advocate for social justice (Creswell, 2003 & Mertens, 2010).

Researchers within this paradigm seek to directly address the political issues in research, confronting social oppression by aligning with those less powerful in an attempt to bring about social change (Mertens, 2010). In practice it is assumed the researcher will work collaboratively with participants to reduce further marginilisation, involving them in the process of design, data collection and analysis so that there is a united voice from which an agenda for change can occur (Creswell, 2003). Criticism of this approach lies in the supposition that particular advocacy of one marginalized group may in turn ignore other

groups (Robson, 2002). Depending upon the underpinning assumptions and purposes of the researcher qualitative and/or quantitative research methods may be used within the transformative tradition (Mertens, 2010), thus exposing the researcher to the limitations and criticisms that are inherent within each of these approaches.

3.2.4. Pragmatic

Aligned within a realist approach, a pragmatic paradigm provides the researcher with a model of scientific research that avoids a purely positivist or relativist world-view (Robson, 2002). The utility of realism for social research has been advocated across various fields, of which education is one. In research terms the task of the researcher is to invent theories that seek to explain the 'real world', testing these using rational criteria, the explanation of which is concerned with how mechanisms produce events and that these events occur in context (Robson, 2002). Pragmatism therefore is proposed as a philosophical position that seeks to achieve a middle ground, if not a solution, to what has been referred to as the 'paradigm wars' between positivists and constructivists by amalgamating features of both (Robson, 2002).

Pragmatists would argue that there is more in common between the traditions of positivism and constructivism than would appear to be the case if one is to study their philosophical assumptions (Robson, 2002). Reichardt & Rallis (1994) identify a set of fundamental beliefs underpinning the pragmatic approach that are compatible with both post positivist and constructivist researchers:

1. Enquiry is value laden

2. Facts are theory laden

3. Reality is multiple, complex and constructed

4. Any particular set of data can be explained by more than a single theory

In applied research, those advocating a pragmatic approach would argue; use whatever philosophical or methodological approach works best for the problem or issue at hand (Robson, 2002). Leading to mixed method studies that draw upon both qualitative and quantitative approaches, using the criteria of "what works?" to determine which method to use to answer specific research questions (Mertens, 2010; p296). This approach appears to have particular value in educational and psychological research, which is often complex, when it is necessary to have multiple questions to address multiple purposes (Mertens, 2010). In these circumstances researchers base their choice of using mixed methods on the nature of the phenomena under study (Greene & Caracelli, 2003), and that pragmatism is one philosophical orientation that guides mixed methods research stating that the research question is more important than either the method or underpinning assumptions associated with these (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). However a primary criticism of this approach is that mixed methods are in fact impossible due to the incompatibility of the paradigms underpinning the different methods (Mertens, 2010). This criticism may be countered in that each method has complementary strengths that can be of benefit to the investigation of a phenomenon.

3.2.5 Adopting an approach

The notion of 'real world' research is an important influence on this research as the study took place in naturalistic settings such as schools, with school staff and pupils. It may therefore be seen as being realistic in nature. Given the nature of the intervention under study, training adults in the domain of emotional literacy to support the development of children's emotional wellbeing, and the explanatory and exploratory research questions described in the literature review, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches is likely to be more suitable. Therefore the author is taking a

pragmatic viewpoint in their research as opposed to choosing one philosophy of science over another. One of the central tenets of pragmatism is that the research questions are ultimately more important than any method or underpinning philosophical assumption (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In this project the research questions were influenced by the previous research in the area, the need to contribute towards an existing evidence base as well as practicalities of conducting real world research.

3.3. Methodological considerations

When conducting research the strategies of inquiry (Creswell, 2003), also known as methodologies, depend upon the type of research questions one seeks to answer (Manstead & Semin, 1988). Therefore the methodological choices that direct research procedures available to the researcher are in turn influenced by one's philosophical assumptions (Creswell, 2003). Research methodologies, it is argued, have multiplied over the years as social science research has become more complex (Creswell, 2003). There are however several major strategies that are typically employed in social science research. Table 3.1 summarises the philosophical assumptions, strategies of inquiry and methods typically used within the three commonly used approaches to research according to Creswell (2003).

Typical features	Quantitative Approaches / Fixed Designs	Qualitative Approaches / Flexible Designs	Mixed Methods Approaches / Multiple Designs
Hold these philosophical assumptions	Post positivist knowledge claims.	Constructivist / Transformative knowledge claims	Pragmatic / Transformative knowledge claims
Employ these strategies of enquiry	Surveys and fixed experimental designs	Case study, grounded theory, Phenomenology	Sequential, concurrent and transformative
Employ these methods / procedures	Closed ended questioning, predetermined approach, numerical data	Open ended questions, emerging approaches, text or image data	Both closed and open ended questioning, qualitative and quantitative data

			and analysis

Table 3.1: A summary of the philosophical assumptions, strategies of enquiry and research methods typically employed within each methodological approach to research (adapted from Creswell, 2003; p19)

Although the summery in table 3.1 illustrates the various features more commonly associated with each research methodology, it is by no means exclusive. Gelo et al (2008) assert that issues of methodology should be seen as a continuum rather than a dichotomy. By taking a pragmatic stance the author's choice of methodology is directed towards a mixed methods approach incorporating both quantitative and qualitative elements to both explain and explore a research problem (Creswell, 2003).

By choosing a mixed methods approach further considerations must be given to the design strategy that is to be implemented. Creswell (2003) suggests four questions that may contribute toward selecting a mixed methods strategy:

1. In what sequence are the quantitative and qualitative data to be collected?

2. What priority will be given to the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data?

3. At what stage in the research study will both types of data be integrated?

4. Will an overall theoretical perspective be use in the study?

The decisions made based upon these four questions may support the researcher to develop and implement a particular framework. Although not exhaustive the following is a discussion of different mixed methods strategies illustrated in the literature, that have been influenced by these questions. Those strategies discussed here are those that may be considered most relevant to research grounded within a pragmatic epistemology.

The most straightforward mixed method approach is the sequential explanatory strategy. Characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by qualitative data, priority is typically given to the former and integration of both methods occurs during a final interpretation phase (Creswell, 2003). In this regard the qualitative data may be used to interpret surprising or interesting results from quantitative analysis. This strategy has the benefit of being very straightforward to design, implement and report. However there are time implications associated with having to collect and analyse different types of data during different phases, representing a real issue if the research is conducted in real-world situations such as schools.

The next approach, sequential exploratory strategy, has many features in common with the sequential explanatory strategy, in that it is conducted in two phases with priority given to the first phase (Creswell, 2003). However the initial phase consists of gathering and interpreting qualitative data followed by the collection and analysis of quantitative data. Like the prior strategy the latter form of data is used to assist in the interpretation of the former form of data. Researchers however may use this strategy to explore a phenomenon whereas the previous strategy might be used to explain and interpret relationships (Creswell, 2003). Like the prior strategy, there are implications of time associated with the collection and analysis of data during each phase, which may be a draw back in some real-world circumstances. There is an additional challenge for the researcher moving from the analysis of qualitative data to the subsequent collection of quantitative data (Creswell, 2003). These mixed methods strategies are typically used to generate an answer to one type of research question using two different types of data and making inferences based upon analyses of both (Mertens, 2010).

Considered the most familiar mixed method strategies (Creswell, 2003), the concurrent triangulation strategy is often the model selected by researchers

who seek to use two different methods to confirm, cross-validate or triangulate findings within a single study (Mertens, 2010). The strategy is concurrent in that generally two different types of data are collected in one phase, using both quantitative and qualitative methods as a means to offset limitations with one against the strengths inherent in the other. The priority is often equal between the two methods, however in practical terms priority may be given to one over the other (Creswell, 2003). An integration phase follows the data collection phase, at which time the integration of individual analyses may either note a convergence of the findings, strengthening the assumptions of the study or explain a lack of convergence. The data collection phase is typically shorter by comparison to that of the sequential approaches and can result in claims being substantiated via the integration of both types of data. Limitations associated with this model, however, are to be found in the challenge faced by the researcher having to study a phenomenon using two fundamentally different methods, comparing the findings and make final inferences based on these findings. An additional challenge for the researcher would be to resolve any discrepancies that may be present in the results.

The final pragmatic mixed method strategy to be considered is the concurrent nested (or embedded, Mertens, 2010) strategy. Like the concurrent triangulation approach this strategy has one data collection phase in which both types of data are gathered simultaneously. It differs from the previous model as the nested strategy has a predominant method guiding the project (quantitative or qualitative) with the other method (quantitative or qualitative), given less priority, embedded in the predominant method (Creswell, 2010). Although not given priority, the embedded method may be addressing a different research question to the predominant method. The data collected from both methods is then analysed together during an analysis phase. This model allows the researcher to gain a broader perspective of a phenomenon by using different methods rather than using the predominant method. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2009) highlight a potential benefit of this model if a researcher seeks to study a phenomenon at various levels or with different groups, describing the approach as a multi-level design. Again the strengths

of this mixed method model can be found in the ability of the researcher to gather two types of data concurrently, drawing on the relative strengths of both methods. However similar limitations with the previous model are to be found here as the researcher has the added challenge of transforming the different types of data in some way so that they can be integrated in a final analysis phase. Specific to this model however is the fact that both methods are unequal in their priority and therefore would result in unequal evidence being generated, this may be a disadvantage to the research claims when findings are interpreted (Creswell, 2010).

3.3.1. Adopting a strategy

The original intention was to adopt a concurrent triangulation mixed methods strategy using both quantitative methods, supplemented by qualitative methods. However, during the course of the research there was a significant attrition in the overall sample size which meant that the quantitative data collected was insufficient to allow for a full and thorough data analysis. Therefore a reconsideration of the research strategy was required that would take into account a reduced emphasis on measurable data over the need for a much deeper exploration of the qualitative data.

The Pragmatic position held by the researcher allowed for flexibility in the research design and reconsideration of the composition and balance of the mixed methods research strategy adopted in this study. Pragmatists would argue that ultimately the research questions are more important than the methods or underpinning philosophical assumption (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The flexibility of the pragmatic paradigm meant that the researcher was able to make subsequent adjustments to the research questions posed and research strategy. The research design whilst maintaining a mixed methodology was adapted to place more emphasis on qualitative methods and data. These adjustments represented a shift in the focus of enquiry from investigating impact to exploring the mechanisms that contribute to any changes observed in the perceptions of the ELSAs.

Based upon the information presented so far the strategy adopted in this study may be considered as a concurrent nested strategy for several reasons. Firstly, due to the nature of the intervention under study the author seeks to both understand the views of those who have recently completed ELSA and how they perceive their role and training, whilst at the same time attempt to explain the utility of the ELSA project for the Local Authority. And secondly, because of real world constraints the research strategy required adjustment to allow for greater emphasis on qualitative data whilst simultaneously gathering exploratory quantitative data. Therefore both quantitative and qualitative data are to be collected in order to answer the following research questions:

1. Does the ELSA project have a measurable impact on pupil and TA perceptions of emotional well-being?

2. How does the ELSA project impact TAs' perceptions of the emotional well-being of pupils, and their role and training in supporting the development of pupil emotional well-being?

3.4. Overall study design

By adopting a mixed methods design this study implements two different methodological approaches as part of a concurrent nested strategy (Creswell, 2003), gathering quantitative data nested within a predominantly qualitative method guiding the study. Individual analyses from both types of data will be integrated during a final stage so that inferences can be made based on these findings. Whilst the qualitative data is considered the predominant method, for simplicity, each method shall be considered in turn with regard to their individual designs, followed by a consideration of the trustworthiness of the study, research ethics and overall study procedures.

3.4.1. Quantitative methodology and design

Typically quantitative, or fixed designs, are aligned with a post-positivist epistemology, are theory driven (Robson, 2002) and concerned with the issue of causality (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Fixed or experimental designs are an approach used in social research where the design is pre-determined, or fixed, before the collection of data. The essential feature is that the researcher deliberately controls and manipulates one or more variables (independent variables – IV) that determine the events in which they are interested and then introduce an intervention, measuring the difference that then makes on a dependent variable - DV (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Within the fields of applied research there are various fixed/experimental designs that can be used to investigate a phenomenon. That which is considered the 'gold standard' is the randomized control trial (RCT) and is often described as a 'true' experimental design and is considered the design of choice if seeking to undertake quality research (Robson, 2002). Because of random allocation of participants to groups, it is argued that RCTs provide the best evidence for effectiveness of an intervention or treatment as it may establish a linear causality (Robson, 2002), controllability and generalisability (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). However several commentators (Robson, 2002 & Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) have highlighted the controversy of using this type of fixed design in social research as such an adherence to randomization of a sufficient sample size and the controllability of the design may not be possible in social settings such as schools. Additionally realists would argue that, aside from ethical concerns regarding randomization of participants to groups, the use of RCTs to investigate complex social interventions by concentrating on outcomes does nothing to explain why the intervention is a success or failure (Robson, 2002). This is one basis for the use of a mixed methods approach in this study.

Another fixed design that has prominence in social research is the quasi-experimental design. This differs to the RCT in that it is "a research design involving an experimental approach but where random assignment to treatment and comparison groups has not been used" (Robson, 2002; p133). Quasi-experimental designs have been described as the second best choice for researchers who wish to maintain a basic experimental stance outside the laboratory setting when it is not possible to randomize allocation to groups (Robson, 2002).

Quasi-experimental designs come in various forms, for example:

1. Pre-experimental designs: One group pre-test – post-test design, one-group post-tests only design, non-equivalent post-test only design.

2. Pre-test – post-test non-equivalent group design.

3. Interrupted time series design.

4. Regression-discontinuity design.

(Robson, 2002 & Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011)

The first of these quasi-experimental designs, the pre-experimental designs, are to be avoided due to difficulties interpreting the results (Robson, 2002) based upon methodological weaknesses such as lack of pre-testing, non-equivalence of groups or lack of a comparison group. The second quasi-experimental design compensates for the short-comings of the pre-experimental designs by incorporating a pre-test and by randomly assigning participants to groups or seeking equivalence of groups through matching on some other variable (Robson, 2002). The final two quasi-experimental designs offer additional approaches to observing differences over time with a particular group or observing differences over groups at the same time (Robson, 2002).

The purpose of the quantitative design in this mixed methods study was to explore whether there may be a measurable impact of the ELSA project on pupils' emotional wellbeing following an EP implemented training and supervision course for TAs. It was not possible to randomly assign participants to groups, as the researcher was not able to control for those participants who wished to enroll on the ELSA training. Neither was it possible to match groups based on pre-set criteria due to the way in which ELSA training was deployed in the host local authority. Therefore this study utilised a pre-test – post-test non-equivalent groups design, enabling the pattern of both pre-test and post-test results of a treatment group to be compared with those of a control group, and thus to assess the effectiveness of the ELSA training.

3.4.2. Qualitative methodology and design

Qualitative methods used in flexible designs are considered as a possible alternative to fixed designs in social science research (Robson, 2002). Commonly known as qualitative research designs, Robson (2002) refers to these as flexible designs as it is not uncommon to incorporate elements of quantitative data collection into such studies as the design emerges. In essence it is flexible as "ideas for changing your approach may arise from your involvement and early data collection" (Robson, 2002; p165). This assumes the researcher has a key role in the research process, needing to be open and responsive to the data that is gathered. Research that exclusively uses qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis is typically aligned within a constructivist paradigm. This assumes there are multiple socially constructed realities and through the interaction between researcher and participant values are made explicit and findings are co-constructed (Mertens, 2010). Establishing the validity or generalisability of findings to a population has often been the subject of much debate. Whilst replication may be a measure used in quantitative research it is not something that can easily be done in a qualitative exploration. The main problem is the fact that the social and contextual elements under study cannot be re-created, as there are elements that are generalisable and there are those that are particular to given settings and situation (Robson, 2002).

Creswell (2003) suggests several steps for a researcher to consider when developing a qualitative research proposal; these are as follows:

- Identify the specific strategy of enquiry that will be used

- Provide some background information of the strategy, its discipline origin, the applications and definition

- Discuss why it is an appropriate strategy

- Identify how the use of the strategy will shape the types of questions asked, form of data collection, steps of analysis and the final narrative.

In the initial sections of this chapter the author positioned their research within a pragmatic epistemology. This position informed the decision to use a mixed methods strategy of enquiry, as the nature of the research question is more important than any method or underpinning world-view (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). A pragmatic approach is therefore taken with regard to the type of qualitative research methods used in this phase of the study. Mertens (2010) identifies several different types of research strategy practiced in educational and psychological research for example, ethnographic, case study, phenomenological research, grounded theory, participatory, clinical and focus group.

3.5. Methods

The following sections present methodological details regarding the procedures, data collection and data analysis for both the quantitative and qualitative research methods used in this study (see appendix 1 for study timeline).

3.5.1. Intervention

The type of intervention under study is the Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) project, a five day training and supervision programme for TAs provided by Educational Psychologists trained in its delivery. Following successful moderation of modular tasks, TAs receive an accreditation by the Open College Network (OCN). Following the training programme ELSAs are then expected to put new knowledge and skills into practice with pupils requiring additional support in their setting. Group supervision sessions, facilitated by EPs, are intended to support with the process of planning and development of the intervention. In the context of the author's local authority, the ELSA project is delivered to groups of TAs, by EPs trained in the delivery of ELSA, from a different locality each academic term. A typical day consists of a discussion regarding the accreditation process and getting tutor feedback, EP delivery of topic area that includes presentation of materials and

activities, such as individual reflection and group discussion. Table 3.2 illustrates the course content for each day:

DAY	CONTENT
1	Session 1: Introduction to Emotional Literacy and raising emotional awareness Session 2: Active Listening Session 3: Introduction to Circle Time
2	Session 1: Introduction to Therapeutic Stories Session 2: Introduction to Self Esteem
3	Session 1: Introduction to Friendship Skills Session 2: Introduction to Anger Management
4	Session 1: Introduction to Social Communication Difficulties Session 2: A practical introduction to interventions for social communication difficulties.
5	Session 1: Introduction to the use of Nurture Groups to support vulnerable pupils in schools. Session 2: Introduction to Programme Planning
6	Group Supervision
7	Group Supervision
8	Group Supervision

Table 3.2: Details of the ELSA project training days including modular input.

The ELSA Project originated from the work of peripatetic ELSAs operating within a small Local Authority (LA) Educational Psychology Service (EPS) providing tailored packages of support for individuals referred to the service with various social and emotional needs (Burton, 2008). Upon moving to a larger authority Burton (an Educational Psychologist) was keen to replicate aspects of her previous work (Burton, 2008). She concluded that due to the size of the authority a school-based approach became more practical. A pilot project was established in one area of the authority and a 5-day training package was delivered to school-based support assistants for approximately one term including subsequent group supervision sessions (Burton, 2008).

3.5.2. ELSA Module content and aims

Day 1 Session 1: Introduction to Emotional Literacy and raising emotional awareness

The aim for session 1 is to develop ELSAs' understanding of the term Emotional Literacy, understand why it is important and learn more about their own Emotional Literacy skills. ELSAs are introduced to the psychological foundations of Emotional Literacy, for example, self-actualisation (Maslow, 1970), self-concept and self-esteem (Bandura), theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983), Emotional Intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and Goleman's corresponding processes of Emotional Intelligence, Personal Competences (Self-awareness, self-regulation, Motivation) and Social Competences (Empathy, Social Skills). Emotional Literacy is the term used within this session and the ELSA training as it attempts to break away from the concept of a fixed level of underlying intelligence to a more flexible construct that can be developed.

Day 1 Session 2: Active Listening

ELSA's introduction to Emotional Literacy is developed further via an introduction to Active Listening and effective communication skills when considered in relation to building and maintaining genuine relationships and enabling children's social and emotional development and learning. ELSAs learn that the key to building positive relationships is by conveying respect, genuineness, empathy and neutrality. Underpinned by the work of Carl Rogers (1980), these values are then applied to the principles and practice of active listening as a means of supporting and empowering children and young people.

Day 1 Session 3: Introduction to Circle Time

Within the context of supporting Emotional Literacy, ELSAs are introduced to the benefits this intervention has on children's development of empathy, social, emotional and behavioural development and social communication

skills. ELSAs are then given practical guidance on how to implement this a 'Circle Time' intervention and encouraged to plan their own session.

Day 2 Session 1: Introduction to Self Esteem

This session aims to develop their understanding of what self-esteem is, how it develops and why it is important. ELSAs will also consider how low self-esteem can be recognised, gain familiarity with useful strategies and a framework for raising self-esteem so that they may support a pupil with low self-esteem. ELSAs are taught that the concept of self-esteem is one's own evaluation of the self in relation to one's ideal self. ELSAs are then introduced to a theoretical framework developed by Michelle Borba (1989) known as the building blocks of self-esteem. Borba's model identifies 5 component parts of self-esteem, which enables a more closely targeted focus and support for development, and these are considered sequential:

1. Security – Feeling safe and at ease. Being able to trust others.
2. Selfhood – Self-awareness, knowing the sort of things that make you ' you'.
3. Affiliation – A sense of belonging, knowing that others want and need us; knowing that we matter.
4. Mission – Motivation. Having a sense of purpose in our lives, feeling empowered to make choices, being bale to look ahead and take responsibility.
5. Competence – An awareness of one's own abilities. Being realistic about our achievements and able to accept our limitations and that we have the ability to develop new skills.

The session asks ELSAs to consider the first 3 building blocks of self-esteem with a particular pupil(s) in mind and consider how they might support the sequential development of a pupil identified as having low self-esteem.

Day 2 Session 2: Introduction to Therapeutic Stories

This session aims to develop their understanding of how stories can be used to help pupils with a variety of difficulties in school and provide practical

guidance on how to construct a therapeutic story to support a pupil known to have a particular social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulty. This module draws upon literature by Sunderland (1993) and Pomerantz (2007) that illustrates how therapeutic stories can work for children by helping them to reflect on their feelings, find comfort and support and develop new strategies for situations they are finding difficult.

Day 3 Session 1: Introduction to Friendship Skills

This session aims to support ELSAs' to identify key skills involved in building friendships and reflect on the purpose of friendships. Become more aware of the impact of a lack of friendships for pupils both, emotionally and behaviourally. And provide practical guidance on how to set up a Circle of Friends intervention in school for a target child. Background information is given with regard to the UK origins and principles of the Circle of Friends (Newton, Taylor & Wilson, 1996) intervention and how it can be implemented with pupils of all ages from infant through to secondary school. ELSAs are then guided through the process of creating, implementing and evaluating a Circle of Friends intervention.

Day 3 Session 2: Introduction to Anger Management

This session's aims are for ELSAs to develop a greater understanding of anger, become more aware of a range of strategies that can be used in school to manage angry children and highlight key elements of the Southampton Anger Management programme (Faupel et al, 1998). Tools such as the Firework Model, a useful three part model for describing angry outbursts (trigger, fuse and firework body), and the assault cycle (Breakwell, 1997; trigger stage, escalation, crisis, recovery and post-crisis depression) are used to support ELSAs progress toward the session aims. The key elements to support a young person who frequently displays angry outbursts that represent genuine loss of control include; support the recognition and reflection of their own feelings, present alternative ways of communicating needs/feelings, normalise 'anger', recognise the short term physical changes that happen in the body during and leading up to an angry outburst and consider a range of calming strategies.

Day 4 Session 1: Introduction to Social Communication Difficulties

This session aims to develop their understanding of social communication difficulties and related disorders. ELSAs learn about a range of effective strategies when working with pupils with social communication difficulties to develop their understanding of effective whole school as well as individual strategies to support pupils with social communication difficulties. ELSAs are introduced firstly, to the three basic elements that encourage the need to communicate, the need for identity, need for control and need for acceptance (Schutz, 1988). And secondly features of social communication. ELSAs are then introduced to typical features associated with young people who have a social communication difficulty such as ASC, such as the triad of impairments, theory of mind, central coherence, executive functioning difficulties, communication and sensory difficulties.

Day 4 Session 2: A practical introduction to interventions for social communication

This session builds on the content from Session 1 (day 4) by introducing ELSAs to a range of effective strategies that can be used to support the needs of pupils with social communication difficulties. This session focuses more on the practical strategies and provides guidance on their use. For example ELSAs are asked to consider ways to support individuals via environmental supports and visual structures (visual timetables/schedules/organisers). Social Stories (Gray, 1994) are also introduced as a practical approach to develop pupils understanding and expectations in situations they may find troublesome. Practical guidance is given on how to create and implement a social story for a pupil with social communication difficulties as well as how to develop basic social communication skills via explicit teaching.

Day 5 Session 1: Introduction to Nurture Groups

This session aims to develop their understanding of the rationale behind developing a school nurture group and the importance of identifying the group's purpose and aims. ELSAs also learn how to identify which pupils are

likely to benefit from attending a nurture group and plan a typical nurture group session. ELSAs are also made aware of the teaching objectives that could be addressed through a nurture group and the types of resources that would be helpful in delivering these objectives. Attachment theory is presented as underpinning the Nurture Group philosophy and reference is made to the topics in Day 1 by means of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. ELSAs are provided with practical advice and guidance on how to plan and implement a Nurture Group in a school setting as well as what tools may be used to assess pupils progress.

Day 5 Session 2: Introduction to programme planning

This session aims to support ELSAs' skills, knowledge and understanding of the ways in which they can evaluate pupils' strengths and weaknesses in terms of their emotional literacy skills, develop their understanding of what a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timed) target is and how to create one. This session also supports ELSAs' in the planning and implementation of a programme of intervention over 6-8 weeks, using a variety of resources, to support the needs of a pupil(s) in their setting.

3.5.3. Quantitative methods

This section considers the quantitative methods used as part of this mixed methods study. The adaptations that were made, by necessity, to the research questions and the mixed methods research strategy meant a change in emphasis toward qualitative aspects of this study was required. Adopting a concurrent nested strategy, the present study draws less predominantly on quantitative methods. By being more exploratory, the quantitative methods are a more minor aspect of the overall study design.

Participants

As this study sought to evaluate the impact of the ELSA project provided by a local authority Educational Psychology Service the participants (TAs) in the experimental group were selected opportunistically as they had already signed up to the training course. This method is typically referred to as 'convenience sampling' as it draws upon respondents who are easily available at the time they are required (Robson, 2002).

This sample consisted of 14 TAs, 4 of whom worked in secondary schools whilst the remaining 10 worked in primary schools. Informed consent was obtained from each of the TAs at the start of the ELSA project (see appendix 2). It was the intention of the researcher to use a wait-list control group with the same number of TAs from another locality of the local authority to be used as a comparison, allowing them to access the ELSA training following initial data gathering. However this was not possible due to the practicality of offering the ELSA training to schools from one locality, confirming numbers of TAs and gathering the appropriate pre and post-test data. Therefore the decision was made to abandon a wait-list control group and opt for a standard control group consisting of TAs who had not received any ELSA training or had no plans to apply. Whilst ethical issues are to be found in abandoning the wait-list control approach, the author attempted to limit this by providing information regarding future ELSA training. Again, the researcher intended to recruit the same number of TAs for the control group as the experimental group via a request for support from the researcher's colleagues within the service. This was not possible and the decision was then made to recruit participants from within the researcher's own allocation of schools to become a comparison group. This method limits the extent to which the sample can be considered representative (Robson, 2002). Each school was given information regarding the researcher's study, asked if they were running, or intended to run, 1:1 or small group work to support the social, emotional and behavioural development of targeted pupils and was invited to be part of a comparison group. Two out of thirteen schools were willing to be part of the research. However, only one was able to implement a 1:1 or a small group based programme from which measures could be taken.

This study was also interested in the pupils with whom the TAs worked. Each of the TAs in the experimental group, as part of the ELSA training, were required to plan and implement a programme intended to support the social emotional and behavioural development of an individual or group. In this study each of the TAs implemented a piece of work with one pupil, providing pre and post-test data for 14 pupils. Due to the challenges recruiting a control group it was not possible to recruit a similar pupil sample size. Instead 1 TA took pre and post-test data from a group of 5 pupils they were working with in a small group intervention. Therefore a total of 15 TAs participated in this study, 14 were part of the experimental group whilst 1 was part of the control group. Similarly there were 14 pupils in the experimental group (4 secondary aged and 10 primary aged), whilst 5 primary aged pupils were part of the control group.

It would appear that there were several pragmatic limitations with the sampling process and methods used for obtaining both TA and pupil participants and choosing the comparison group. Therefore these issues will have a considerable effect on the results and what can be concluded from this aspect of the mixed method study. For example, the mortality and attrition of the experimental group, as well as the limited size of the comparison group, will significantly influence whether or not the quantitative design can be considered truly experimental. The number of participants whose data can be collected for analysis falls below Cohen et al's (2007) recommended lowest number of participants for an experimental design; 15 participants in each condition. Therefore, the present study may not be considered a true quasi-experimental design, but a pre-test post-test non-equivalent groups design.

Procedure

This phase of the study is a pre-test – post-test non-equivalent groups design (see figure 3.1). Considering the real world context of this study this design was considered the best fit for the purposes of this phase.

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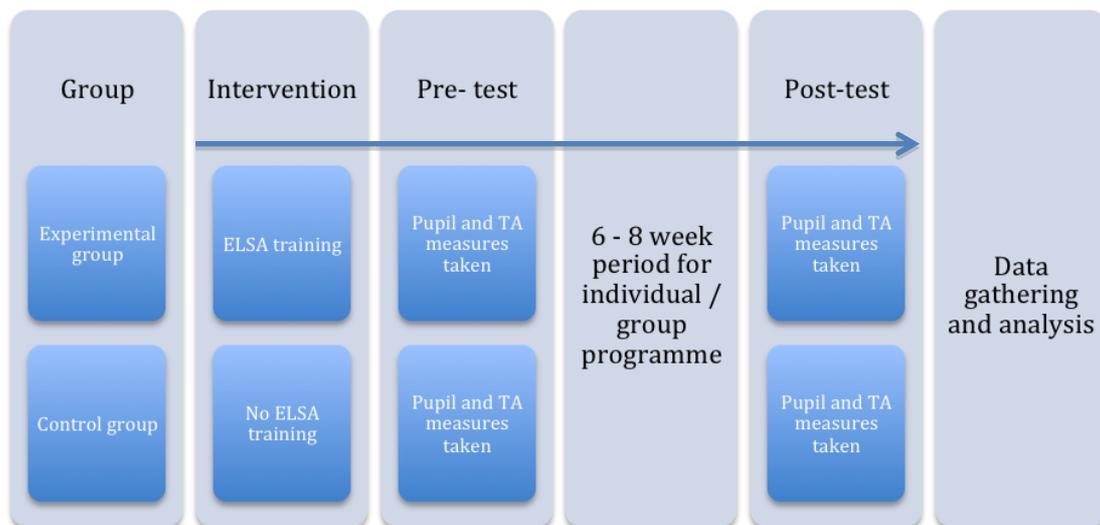
Figure 3.1: Quasi-experimental design procedure of this study.

Measures

In the Literature Review the author sought to provide a rationale for what emotional well-being refers to in the context of this study. The author makes a case for the concept of emotional well-being as consisting of the ability of an individual to recognise and communicate their emotions, as understood by 'emotional literacy', but also the ability to handle and appropriately express these emotions. The standardised measures chosen for this phase of the research study were the Emotional Literacy Checklist (Faupel, 2003) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – SDQ (Goodman, 1997). As these measures are standardised they offer the benefit of having their construct validity established i.e. there is a strong argument to suggest that these scales measure what they set out to measure (Robson, 2002). It is felt that whilst the ELC is a valid tool to assess the emotional literacy of pupils, it does not account for the behavioural manifestations or adjustment of pupils. Similarly it was felt that the SDQ alone would not be able to account for the personal and social competences that combine to form the concept of emotional literacy. For this reason it was felt that both the ELC and the SDQ combined would provide a method of investigating a pupil's emotional well-being.

Emotional Literacy Checklist

The emotional literacy checklist (ELC; refer to appendix 3) was selected for this study as it has been used in evaluation research illustrated in the Literature Review. Its author also recommends its use as an individual tool assessing pre and post-test scores following an intervention (Faupel, 2003). The ELC is available in primary school (ages 7-11) and secondary school versions (ages 11-16) examples of which can be found in the appendices. The dependant variable to be measured by the ELC is pupil's emotional literacy, as rated by the pupil's themselves and by school staff (TA). Parent versions are also available, however they were not selected as the intervention under study related to the development and training of TAs to support the emotional well-being of pupil's and it was these ratings which were most appropriate for study.

Overall scores and sub-scale scores can be calculated for the ELC from teacher (TA) perception checklists, whilst only overall scores can be obtained for pupil self rated checklists. This means that as well as an over all emotional literacy score, the checklists will also provide data for the following dimensions of emotional literacy:

- Self-awareness

- Self-regulation (managing one's emotions)

- Motivation

- Empathy

- Social skills

(Faupel, 2003)

It is hoped that by analysing both overall emotional literacy scores and sub-scale scores the researcher can then analyse a variety of different dimensions that might be affected by the intervention. However limitations with using repeated measures are to be found in their 'test-retest reliability', in other words the variation that may be found in measurements made by a single

person at different time points. An additional limitation could be found in that this measure shows the self-reports of pupils and TA perceptions of pupil emotional literacy as rated on a 1 – 4 scale (very true, somewhat true, not really true, not at all true). These self-reports may be exaggerated, understated or perhaps influenced by how the individual may be feeling at the time.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

The SDQ (refer to appendix 4) was selected for this study as it had been used in previous ELSA evaluations (Burton & Norgate, 2010). The SDQ is also extensively used as an evaluation tool within clinical settings and schools, and in research studies that seek to evaluate specific interventions (Goodman, 1997). The dependent variable to be measured using the SDQ is pupil's behavioural adjustment, as rated by school staff (TA). Teacher, parent and child self-rated versions of the SDQ are available however the child self-rated version is not standardised for pupils below the age of 11; therefore it was not used in this study. Similarly the parent rated version of the SDQ was not used for the same reasons as those given for the ELC; it was felt that a parent rating would not be appropriate to measure the impact of a school based intervention. For this reason only the teacher version of the questionnaire was used.

Like the ELC the SDQ calculates an overall behavioural difficulties score based upon 4 subscales: (Goodman, 1997)

- Emotional symptoms

- Conduct problems

- Hyperactivity/inattention

- Peer relationship problems

Whereas a fifth subscale asks about positive attributes of the pupil, Prosocial behaviour. The benefit of these subscale scores are that it may be possible for further analyses to be completed for a variety of different behavioural

attributes, as perceived by TAs, which may or may not be affected by the ELSA training.

Similar to the ELC, the SDQ suffers similar limitations regarding what could show. On this measure TA's perceptions are given on a three point rating scale (not true, somewhat true, certainly true). Scores on this measure report the TA perception and secondary report of a behavior change. With a lack of pupil self-report it is not possible to check the consistency of the different perceptions.

The analysis of the quantitative data gathered in this study shall be conducted using the statistical package for the social sciences – SPSS and is considered in more detail in chapter 4, section 4.2.1.

3.5.4. Qualitative methods

The adaptations that were made, by necessity, to the research questions and the mixed methods research strategy meant a change in emphasis toward qualitative aspects of this exploratory study was required. Adopting a concurrent nested strategy, the present study draws predominantly on qualitative methods in order to explore TAs perceptions in more depth.

Participants

TA participants that formed the experimental group that received the ELSA training of the quasi-experimental design were selected for this aspect of the study, and as such were a non-probability sample or convenience sample (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This form of sampling strategy is considered suitable for qualitative research methods so long as there is no attempt made to generalize findings outside of the sample population (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Procedure

The aim of this aspect of the study was to explore and understand the perceptions of recently trained ELSAs regarding their role and training in developing pupils' emotional well-being. To achieve this aim the decision was made to use focus groups as both a strategy and as a method of data collection with a single cohort. Additional complementary qualitative data will also be gathered using an open-ended questionnaire with the same focus group participants 6 months after receiving the ELSA training. The use of a range of methods allows researchers to build a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study, as there is the potential for research findings to be cross validated (Gilham, 2007). Further discussion regarding these methods shall be presented in the following sub-sections.

Focus Group

Focus groups are a form of group interview, although it does not take the form of a traditional interview between an interviewer and interviewee where there is a reliance on a question-and-answer format. The focus group relies on the interaction between the participants in the group (Mertens, 2010). Because the focus is on how the group interact with each other there is opportunity for participants' views to emerge rather than the researcher's agenda being dominant (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Focus groups are often a method of choice when researchers are interested in how individuals perceive a problem (Mertens, 2010) hence their use in this study. The focus group allows for exploration of individual understanding of how others interpret phenomena and their individual agreement or disagreement with any issues that are raised (Mertens, 2010).

Focus groups are often set up in contrived settings, which can be seen as both their strength and their weakness. For example, as illustrated by Mertens (2010) focus groups are useful for:

- Orienting to a particular field of focus

- Generating hypotheses that derive from the insights and data from the group

- Gathering data on attitudes, values and opinions, and at a low cost (time and resource)

- Empowering participants to speak out in their own words whilst simultaneously encouraging groups to voice their opinions

- Providing greater coverage of issues than would be possible in a survey

- Allow for triangulation with other data types.

However several disadvantages have been identified, for example Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) assert that focus groups:

- Are at risk of group size and dynamics hindering the data that can be gathered. Too small a group and they may yield less information than a survey, too large and the group may become difficult to manage.

- Non-participation of some members, possibly due to dominant members.

- Potential for conflicts to arise between individuals in the group

- Need to have an experienced moderator to manage the group

An initial pilot of the focus group approach was conducted during the final supervision day with a cohort who had recently completed the ELSA training, to trial prompts that were to be used with the current experimental group. Verbal consent was obtained prior to its undertaking. From this pilot it was felt that the prompting questions were appropriate and would be used with the experimental group.

A focus group was conducted with a second group with a TA sample (n=14) on the last supervision session for approximately 30 minutes. The aim was to

explore the TA perceptions of pupils' emotional well-being and the elements of their perceptions of the training they received. The script used by the researcher, including the initial question and additional prompts can be found in Appendix 5. The focus group data was transcribed verbatim in an attempt to address the issue of descriptive validity. Each TA was assigned a number to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the data.

Questionnaire

The purpose of using a follow-up open-ended questionnaire to gather additional qualitative data from focus group participants was to answer a question regarding recently trained ELSA views regarding their role and training in supporting the emotional well-being of pupils. As participants were part of a focus group immediately after receiving ELSA training, the author wished to explore the same participants' views after 6 months having had the opportunity to be in role.

Several issues guided the decision to use questionnaires. For example, it was not possible to bring the same group of participants together for another focus group due to practical issues such as geographical location of participants, time, and participants not being able to be released from current duties. Therefore questionnaires presented a cost-effective approach that placed less pressure on participants to provide an immediate response, ensured their anonymity and benefitted from a lack of interviewer bias (Gilham, 2007). Although questionnaires have several inherent benefits, there are several disadvantages associated with this method. For example, question wording may have an effect on answers, motivation of respondents to complete them, problems associated with data quality (accuracy and completeness) and typically low response rates (Gilham, 2007). To ensure as high a response rate as possible several steps, identified by Gilham (2007), have been taken by the researcher, these are:

- Design a questionnaire where the purpose is clear to participants

- Mailing questionnaires (1st class) direct to participant's at their settings (geography did not allow for hand delivery of questionnaires)

- Already knowing the participants supported the likelihood of returns

- Supporting emails direct to participants reminding them of the purpose and desired return date as well as offering additional support.

As a follow up to the training, Questionnaires (see appendix 6) were mailed to each of the 14 focus group participants 6 months after the ELSA training. The questionnaire design sought to gather brief demographic information regarding the individual programme(s) the participants implemented and the pupils' with whom they worked. Predominantly the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions to obtain participants views. Open-ended questions enable a greater level of discovery regarding participants' views (Gliham, 2007), provide an opportunity to express feelings spontaneously and do not participants to a pre-determined response (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 2002). Like the focus group data, each returned questionnaire was assigned a number to ensure the participant's anonymity. Commentators suggest that response rates of lower than 30% place the validity and reliability of this method in jeopardy (Gilham, 2007).

Analysis of qualitative data

To analyse the qualitative data transcribed from the focus group in this study, thematic analysis was used. Thematic analysis is considered to be a foundational method for qualitative analysis as it provides researchers with core skills useful for many other forms of analysis in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis has the benefit of being independent of theory and epistemology, enabling its application across a range of approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There is no clear agreement about what thematic analysis is or how one would go about it like many other named methods of qualitative data analysis such as grounded theory (Charmaz, 2002). It is a widely used method for identifying, analyzing and

reporting patterns, or themes, within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Its application enables a researcher to organize and describe their data in rich detail making it a widely used method of analysis in qualitative research and a suitable method of analysis within this study.

Braun & Clarke (2006) proposed that a central criticism of the validity of thematic analysis is to be found in its flexibility or 'anything-goes' approach. In an attempt to reduce this threat to the validity whilst at the same time to provide a clear procedure as to how to 'do it', several steps to conducting thematic analysis are outlined (Braun & Clarke, 2006; p87):

1. *Familiarization of the data* – reading and re-reading the transcribed data, making notes of any initial ideas.

2. *Generating initial codes* – coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set and collating the data relevant to each code.

3. *Searching for themes* – collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.

4. *Reviewing the themes* – checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and entire data set, creating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.

5. *Defining and naming themes* – ongoing analysis, refining the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

6. *Producing the report* – final opportunity for analysis. Selection of extract examples, analysis of these extracts relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature.

(Braun & Clarke, 2006; p87)

However, there are several potential risks the researcher needs to be aware of when conducting this method of analysis. For example, there is the risk that the data will not be analysed at all, instead there is a collection of extracts linked together with little or no analytic narrative or the interview questions

themselves are used as themes. Another risk could be found if there is too much overlap or internal inconsistency with the identified themes. Additional risks relate to the claims that are made based upon the analyses, for example if the data extracts contradict the claims that are made. Furthermore, a good thematic analysis needs to ensure that interpretations are consistent with the theoretical framework of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To protect against these risks the researcher will follow the steps set out by Braun & Clarke (2006).

Thematic analysis also provides researchers with a number of decisions with regard to the form of analysis undertaken. Firstly, whether the analysis is inductive or deductive. Inductive refers to analysis that is strongly linked to the data with emerging themes having little relationship to specific questions asked of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As such the analysis is data driven and not guided by a theoretical interest in the topic. Whereas deductive analysis tends to be guided by the researcher's interest, or when a researcher holds a specific question and therefore may provide a less rich picture of the data overall but a more detailed analysis of an aspect of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However it is argued that a thematic analysis can be both inductive and deductive (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In the context of this study the author holds a specific research question with which to approach the data, but also seeks to explore emergent themes that derive from the data. As such the analysis may be both inductive and deductive in nature.

The second decision is whether the approach is at the semantic or latent level. Themes identified at the semantic level have been identified within the explicit or surface meaning without looking for any further meaning to what is said or written (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Whereas latent approaches, often found in a constructivist paradigm, go beyond the semantic content and begin to examine underlying assumptions of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the

present study the researcher's analysis will use the latter approach, reviewing and examining the underlying assumptions within the data at the latent level.

3.5.5. Mixed Methods

As this research uses mixed methods careful consideration is needed during the individual analyses and integration of different forms of data for final interpretations. The procedures illustrated here are part of a concurrent nested strategy whereby a predominant guiding method (qualitative) and supplementary method (quantitative) are analysed together during a final analysis phase to provide a researcher with a broader perspective of the phenomenon under study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). Both types of data are collected in one phase, using both quantitative (quasi-experimental design) and qualitative methods (focus group and questionnaire) as a means to offset limitations with one against the strengths inherent in the other (Creswell, 2003). The integration of both types of data will either note a convergence of the findings, strengthening the assumptions of the study or help explain a lack of convergence.

3.6. Establishing trustworthiness

The author's epistemological position led to the development of this mixed methods study. As such it is posited that data will be gathered via different methods and individual analyses will be combined for a final interpretation stage. It makes sense that issues regarding trustworthiness be considered together also. However, the terminology regarding trustworthiness differ across epistemological paradigms and therefore will be considered in relation to the methods used (quantitative and qualitative research methods).

3.6.1. Trustworthiness of the Quantitative methods

Validity

Whilst the aims of the quantitative methods are exploratory, this aspect of the research designs is concerned with investigating causality. However, the ability to infer causality in the present study was limited by the non-equivalent groups and the sample size.

Within a realist perspective validity refers to the accuracy of results (Robson, 2002). In other words do the results adequately capture what is to be understood or are they due to the effect of something else? Internal validity refers to:

"Internal validity means that the changes observed in the dependant variable are due to the effect of the independent variable, not some other unintended variables"

(Mertens, 2010; p126)

By contrast external validity, also known as generalisability, is the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other contexts (ecological validity) or populations (population validity; Robson, 2002). Both internal and external validity are often considered inversely related, meaning that controls put in place to strengthen internal validity often fight against external validity. This highlights the challenge in real world experimental research to be able to control internal threats to validity whilst also controlling those that may threaten generalisability of the findings. It is the role of the researcher to consider which threats to validity may be present in their study and to what extent they may be justifiably discounted or controlled for (Robson, 2002).

Several commentators have identified potential threats to the internal validity of any experimental research design within the literature (Campbell & Stanley, 1963 & Cook & Campbell, 1979). These are presented in table 3.3 alongside steps taken by the author to control for their effects:

Threat type	Definition / description	Steps taken to control threat in this research
History	Events that occur during the course of he study that can influence the results, other than the independent variable.	- Use of a control group
Maturation	Biological or psychological changes in the participants during the course of the study	- Use of control group - Not possible to control for contextual changes
Testing	The use of the same pre and post-test measures can make the participants more sensitized to the aims of the study. Also known as practice	- Period of up to 8 weeks between pre and post-test - Measures used may have made participants more aware of the aims or the research

	effects.	
Instrumentation	Issues that occur as a result of changes in aspects of the way participants were measured between pre and post-tests or as a result of individual issues of reliability and validity associated with measures and testing procedures.	- Measures were implemented in the same manner at pre-test and post-test by the same individual - Scoring of measures was checked and re-checked - Use of existing standardized measures
Statistical Regression	Participants that have very high or low scores at pre-test may score closer to the mean at post-test, giving a misleading picture of increases or decreases in scores known as regression to the mean	- Descriptive analyses conducted on the data to ascertain distribution of scores - Use of appropriate statistical analyses based on outcomes from descriptive analyses
Selection	Initial differences / characteristics between experimental or control groups may account for group differences not necessarily as a result of a treatment	- Methods used to obtain control group sample may represent limitation as settings were asked to volunteer – convenience sampling
Experimental Mortality	Participants who drop out during the course of the study, for example; illness, non-attendance, choice	- A second control group setting (1xTA and 5x pupil participants) dropped out of study due to implementation issues
Selection – Maturation interaction	The tendency for groups to grow apart (or closer together if initially different).	- Groups were from different settings
Experimental treatment diffusion	When one group inadvertently receives the treatment or information only intended for the other group.	- Control group was selected with the full knowledge that they had not received ELSA.
Compensatory rivalry	Known as the 'John Henry' effect, this	- Study relies on self report checklists which may be a

	refers to the phenomena that those in a control group will make a special effort to compete, or outdo those receiving a planned change in an experimental group.	limitation - Measures were anonymous giving participants anonymity and confidentiality in an attempt to encourage honest responses
Compensatory equalization	The offering or giving of additional resources to the control group not receiving the intervention. This may come from organizational pressures or out of fairness and ethical considerations.	- Each group and participant was from a different setting - Control group participants were given information regarding how to apply for future ELSA training in their region.

Table 3.3: Threats to the internal validity of experimental research designs, their definitions (adapted from Robson, 2002 & Mertens, 2010; after Campbell & Stanley, 1963 & Cook & Campbell, 1979) and steps taken to reduce these.

To demonstrate that an approach or intervention works with other individuals or client groups, the researcher needs to consider the generalisability of the study. As described in Robson (2002), LeCompte & Goetz (1982) provided a classification of threats to the external validity of a study similar to those in table 5.

1. *Selection* – are the findings specific to the groups being studied?

2. *Setting* – are the findings specific to, or dependant on the context in which the study took place?

3. *History* – specific and unique historical experiences may affect the findings

4. *Construct effects* – the particular constructs studied may be specific to the group studied.

Like threats to internal validity the role of the researcher is to attempt to discount these. Due to the real-world context in which this study takes place, it was not possible to allocate participants randomly to groups. Instead a control group was used to enable comparison of data. This study therefore may be susceptible to the threats to validity highlighted above. For example, it was not possible in a real world context to overcome the limitations in the participant sampling methods used and the relatively small numbers of participants within each group. These therefore represent potential threats to the validity of this study's findings.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the stability or consistency with which something is measured (Robson, 2002). Therefore this relates directly to the measurements that are employed in experimental research. The measures used in this study are frequently used in research and intervention evaluation. Whilst the predictive validity of these measures has been argued for, this does not necessarily ensure the reliability within this study. The literature review has explored several issues regarding the measurement of the constructs under investigation. As such an argument has been made as to what emotional well-being refers and it is assume that this construct can be accurately measured using the instruments illustrated earlier based upon their construct validity. However, a further threat to reliability may be found in the test – retest reliability (repeatability) of the measures. To limit this threat the pre and post-test measures are taken 6-8 weeks apart, by the same person (TA) and under the same conditions (Robson, 2002).

3.6.2. Trustworthiness of the qualitative methods

While in flexible designs it may not be appropriate to consider the trustworthiness of qualitative research using terms typical of a post-positivist paradigm (such as reliability and validity) others have proposed the use of terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability

(Robson, 2002). There remains a need in qualitative research to abide by principles of validity, however these are operationalised in a different manner to traditional scientific explanations found in post-positivist research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). It is the natural setting that is the principle source of data, which in itself is socially and culturally embedded. The role of the researcher therefore viewed as being part of the research, describing the data in terms of processes rather than outcomes and generating meaning from this interpretation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

In qualitative research emphasis is placed on what might be considered internal validity, as it does not seek to generalize but simply to explain the phenomena as it occurs (Winter, 2000). Several threats to the validity of qualitative research are referenced by Robson (2002). These and the steps taken by the researcher to minimize their effects are found in table 3.4:

Threat type	Description / definition	Steps taken to limit threat in this research
Description	Inaccuracy, incompleteness or distortion of the data	- Use of audio device to record focus group. - Questionnaires rely on participants individual responses
Interpretation	Meaning imposed upon the data rather than allowing a theory to emerge through the researcher's involvement.	- The use of Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. - Clear audit trail to demonstrate processes and stages of analysis
Theory	Theoretical constructions the researcher brings to the research without considering the alternative theories that could explain the data.	- Awareness of potential impact the researcher has on the study and analyses. - Coding and analysis of entire data sets.

Table 3.4: Threats to the validity of qualitative research (Robson, 2002), their definitions and steps taken to reduce these.

Each of these 'threats' may be due to researcher biases or mistakes. To ensure validity a researcher may take a number of steps, such as, triangulating data with more than one method of data collection, as is the case in this study. Alternatively, a researcher may leave an audit trail, i.e. keeping a full record of their activities whilst carrying out the research. In addition the researcher may seek informant feedback by returning to the participants and presenting to them accounts or transcripts made from the data. Each of these is seen as a valuable method of guarding against researcher bias (Robson, 2002) and will be considered during the integration of the data in this study.

3.7. Ethical considerations

The researcher had the additional role of working as a Trainee Educational Psychologist in the local authority in which this study took place. Therefore the principles set out in the Professional Practice Guidelines of the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP; British Pyschological Society - BPS, 2002) were adhered to. These relate to a minimum standard below which behaviour should not fall and offer general principles to assist the judgments of individual practitioners. In addition, the ethical principles adhered to in this research study took into account those set out by the BPS Guidelines for minimum standards of ethical approval in psychological research (BPS, 2004), Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2009), Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2010) and the University of Nottingham (UoN) Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics (UoN, 2009). Obtaining ethical approval is required in doctoral psychological research (refer to appendix 7; BPS, 2004 & UoN, 2009), submission in December 2011 of the researcher's research proposal in accordance with UoN procedures allowed for scrutiny of the design and ethical safeguards within the research. In addition to this the researcher received appropriate supervision throughout the duration of the research study, in accordance with section 3.12 of the BPS (2004) guidelines regarding appropriate supervision of student investigators by a member of academic staff. The ethical considerations relating to this

study are based upon general principles applicable to all research contexts outlined in the BPS guidelines (BPS, 2004) and those broader ethical principles of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity within which all ethical issues are considered (BPS, 2009).

Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from each participant (TA) in the study. Information documents regarding the research procedures, what participants were asked to do and for how long were given to participants before consent was sought (see appendix 8). This included information on their rights to withdraw at any time. This ensured each participant was fully informed prior to volunteering to take part in the research. Participant TAs also gave letters to parents and carers informing them of the intentions and purposes of the study and seeking their agreement for the TAs to complete individual checklists on their child (see appendix 9).

Right to withdraw

As an additional safeguard participants (parents/carers and their child included) were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time without reason, including the removal of any data they may have provided. These steps ensured that the participant dignity and rights were protected and respected (BPS, 2009) and there had been no coercion in the recruitment of participants (BPS, 2004; 3.2, 3.4 & 3.5).

Anonymity and confidentiality

BPS (2010) guidance states "information obtained from and about a participant during an investigation is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance" (BPS, 2010; p22). Identities of participants (TAs, individual children and their parents) have been protected at all times and all data has been anonymised or aggregated for the purposes of analysis. Raw data (checklist data and audio recording) and consent forms have been securely stored as

an additional safeguard to the anonymity and confidentiality of those involved in the study (BPS, 2004). Transcription and analysis of focus group data involved removal of any names or details that could identify individuals or places, as was the analysis of questionnaire raw data.

Duty of care

"It is the duty of the researcher to ameliorate any adverse effects of their research participants may experience" (BPS, 2004; 3.9).

The researcher provided all participants and stakeholders with contact details before the study began to allow for questions to be raised and addressed directly. In addition, careful monitoring of participants' well-being was made throughout the research via regular email contact. This was felt to be the most appropriate method due to the geographical location of the participants.

Pupil participants selected in this study were identified by their individual setting as having varying social, emotional or behavioural difficulties as such they were considered vulnerable and potentially at risk. In research it is important for vulnerable populations to be identified early so that protocols for risk management are put in place (BPS, 2010). Should any participant or stakeholder have had concerns regarding individual children then the researcher advised that contact was made with relevant parent/carer and professionals in line with the stakeholder's typical procedures. The researcher informed participants that should they or the pupils feel distressed or embarrassed during completion of checklists or during the intervention(s) they were to stop immediately. Equally if TAs felt they or pupils required follow up support due to any stress caused they should seek support via the typical pastoral procedures within their setting.

The researcher used a script (appendix 5) at the outset of the focus group giving information pertaining to the purpose and processes, such as recording

the discussions, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, the rights of the participants not to contribute and the participants' right to withdraw.

The results and findings of this mixed methods study are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the qualitative and quantitative data gathered during the current study. Firstly, exploratory quantitative data concerning the impact of the ELSA training course on pupil's emotional well-being will be presented. This will consist of quantitative analysis of pupil and TA responses to the emotional literacy checklist (Faupel, 2003) and TA responses to the SDQ (Goodman, 1997).

The second part of this chapter will consist of a thematic analysis of the qualitative transcript data from the focus group, followed by a further thematic analysis of a follow-up survey with the same group. The qualitative data considers both the perceptions of recently trained ELSAs regarding their role in supporting the development of pupils' emotional-well-being and also what influenced TAs' implementation of ELSA interventions. The findings from both qualitative and quantitative analyses are then triangulated, strengthening any assumptions that can be made (Creswell, 2003).

4.2. Quantitative data and analysis

Table 4.1 illustrates the outcome measures and their subscales for each

Measure	Respondent		Desired direction of change
	Teacher (completed by TA)	Pupil	
Emotional Literacy Checklist – ELC (Faupel, 2003)	Self-awareness	n/a	Increase in scores from pre-post test
	Self-regulation	n/a	
	Motivation	n/a	
	Empathy	n/a	
	Social skills	n/a	
	Total emotional literacy score	Total emotional literacy score	
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – SDQ (Goodman, 1997)	Emotional symptoms	n/a	Decrease in scores from pre-post test
	Conduct problems	n/a	
	Hyperactivity	n/a	
	Peer problems	n/a	
	Pro-social behaviour	n/a	Increase in scores from pre-post test
	Total difficulties (without pro-social behaviour)	n/a	Decrease in scores from pre-post test

informant used in this study.

Table 4.1: The subscales, informants and desired direction of change for each measure used in this study.

This section intends to consider the following research question testing the experimental hypotheses:

1. Does the ELSA project have a measurable impact on pupil and TA perceptions of emotional well-being?

Experimental Hypotheses:

- TA perceptions of pupil emotional literacy (as measured by the ELC Teacher checklist) will increase from pre to post-test

- TA perceptions of pupil strengths and difficulties (as measured by the SDQ) will decrease from pre to post-test. However, TA perceptions of pro-social behaviour will increase from pre to post-test.

- Pupil's self perceptions of their emotional literacy (as measured by the ELC pupil checklist) will increase from pre to post-test.

However, in order to do so it is important to undertake preliminary analyses of the data using descriptive statistics. This is to check if any of the variables are in violation of the assumptions underlying the various statistical techniques that might be used to address these research questions (Pallant, 2010).

4.2.1. Descriptive statistics

Distribution of the data

It is important to establish whether the data is normally distributed as this determines which inferential tests can be used. A non-significant result on the Shapiro-Wilk test (>0.05) indicates normality (Pallant, 2010). The Shapiro-Wilk test is used to determine normality over the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test as it is considered to be a more appropriate test with small sample sizes (Steinskog, Tjostheim & Kvamsto, 2007).

Whilst the Shapiro-Wilk test is used to determine normality of the data, the skewness of the distribution is also measured (presented in Table 4.2 below). A skewness value of 0 indicates that the distribution is not skewed, whereas positive values indicate a positively skewed distribution at the low end of a bell curve and negative values indicate a negatively skewed distribution at the high end (Dancey & Reidy, 2007). It is argued that skewness values above 1 or below -1 indicate that the data is not normally distributed enough to meet the assumptions of parametric tests (Dancey & Reidy, 2007).

Tests of Normality						
	Group	Shapiro-Wilk			Skewness	
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Std. Error
TA Emotional Literacy Checklist Overall score pre-test	Experimental Group	**.723**	**5**	**.016**	**-2.031**	**.913**
	Control Group	.943	5	.685	**-1.033**	**.913**
TA Emotional Literacy Checklist Self-awareness pre-test	Experimental Group	.981	5	.940	-.543	.913
	Control Group	.914	5	.492	**-1.118**	**.913**
TA Emotional Literacy Checklist Self-regulation pre-test	Experimental Group	.876	5	.292	.009	.913
	Control Group	.931	5	.601	-.665	.913
TA Emotional Literacy Checklist Motivation pre-test	Experimental Group	.962	5	.823	-.307	.913
	Control Group	.984	5	.955	-.502	.913
TA Emotional Literacy Checklist Empathy pre-test	Experimental Group	.788	5	.065	**-1.838**	**.913**
	Control Group	.867	5	.254	**-1.549**	**.913**
TA Emotional Literacy Checklist Social skills pre-test	Experimental Group	.889	5	.350	**-1.245**	**.913**
	Control Group	**.684**	**5**	**.006**	.609	.913
Pupil Emotional Literacy Checklist Overall score pre-test	Experimental Group	.932	5	.609	.623	.913
	Control Group	.834	5	.149	**1.594**	**.913**
TA SDQ Total difficulties pre-test	Experimental Group	.855	5	.210	.459	.913
	Control Group	**.762**	**5**	**.038**	-.828	.913
TA SDQ Emotional symptoms pre-test	Experimental Group	.897	5	.391	-.310	.913
	Control Group	.902	5	.421	-.541	.913
TA SDQ Conduct problems pre-test	Experimental Group	.979	5	.928	.590	.913
	Control Group	**.684**	**5**	**.006**	.609	.913
TA SDQ Hyperactivity pre-test	Experimental Group	.833	5	.146	**1.361**	**.913**
	Control Group	**.776**	**5**	**.050**	1.816	**.913**
TA SDQ Peer problems pre-test	Experimental Group	.782	5	.057	.441	.913
	Control Group	.836	5	.154	.581	.913
TA SDQ Prosocial behaviours pre-test	Experimental Group	.958	5	.794	.299	.913
	Control Group	.908	5	.453	**1.145**	**.913**

Table 4.2: Tests of distribution of the data across groups for each variable with non-normal results highlighted in bold.

Measures of central tendency

Typically in psychological research, the mean is the most commonly used measure of central tendency (Dancey & Reidy, 2007). However due to the findings regarding the distribution of the data presented in table 4.2 the median, range and standard deviations for each variable are given to show the spread of the data (table 4.3). The median is often stated in such cases as it can be less influenced by extreme scores within research involving a small sample (Dancey & Reidy, 2007).

Measures of central tendency and variability					
	Group	**Mean**	**Median**	**Std. Dev.**	**Range**
TA Emotional Literacy Checklist Overall score pre-test	Experimental Group	44.2	48	13.217	32
	Control Group	62.4	64	9.209	24
TA Emotional Literacy Checklist Self-awareness pre-test	Experimental Group	8.4	9	3.05	8
	Control Group	12.4	13	1.517	4
TA Emotional Literacy Checklist Self-regulation pre-test	Experimental Group	8.2	8	2.775	6
	Control Group	12.4	13	2.881	8
TA Emotional Literacy Checklist Motivation pre-test	Experimental Group	7.8	8	2.864	7
	Control Group	10.8	11	2.566	7
TA Emotional Literacy Checklist Empathy pre-test	Experimental Group	9.4	10	3.13	8
	Control Group	13.2	14	3.114	8
TA Emotional Literacy Checklist Social skills pre-test	Experimental Group	10.4	12	4.037	10
	Control Group	13.6	12	2.191	4
Pupil Emotional Literacy Checklist Overall score pre-test	Experimental Group	63.6	61	21.995	53
	Control Group	64.6	61	11.014	27
TA SDQ Total difficulties pre-test	Experimental Group	22.6	21	5.128	11
	Control Group	7.6	11	4.775	10
TA SDQ Emotional symptoms pre-test	Experimental Group	6.6	8	2.966	7
	Control Group	1.8	2	1.304	3
TA SDQ Conduct problems pre-test	Experimental Group	4.2	4	1.924	5
	Control Group	.4	.00	.548	1
TA SDQ Hyperactivity pre-test	Experimental Group	8	8	1.225	3
	Control Group	3	2	2.915	7
TA SDQ Peer problems pre-test	Experimental Group	3.8	3	2.049	4
	Control Group	2	1	2.345	5
TA SDQ Pro-social behaviours pre-test	Experimental Group	3.6	4	3.209	8
	Control Group	5	5	1.871	5

Table 4.3: Mean, Median, Standard Deviation and range scores across groups for each variable.

The results of the preliminary analyses show that much of the data is not normally distributed with some scores being positively or negatively skewed higher than the 1 or -1 value. An argument could be made that these scores aren't surprising as the pupils under study have been identified as having additional needs and may be at the extreme ends of the normal distribution curve. Several of the assumptions that apply to the use of parametric tests have not been met, for example that the scores are obtained from a random sample of the population and that this sample is normally distributed (Pallant, 2010). Furthermore taking into account the very low sample size the author chose to conduct and present only descriptive statistics over inferential statistics as any meaning inferred could only ever be speculative.

Pre – post test TA ELC Overall Scores
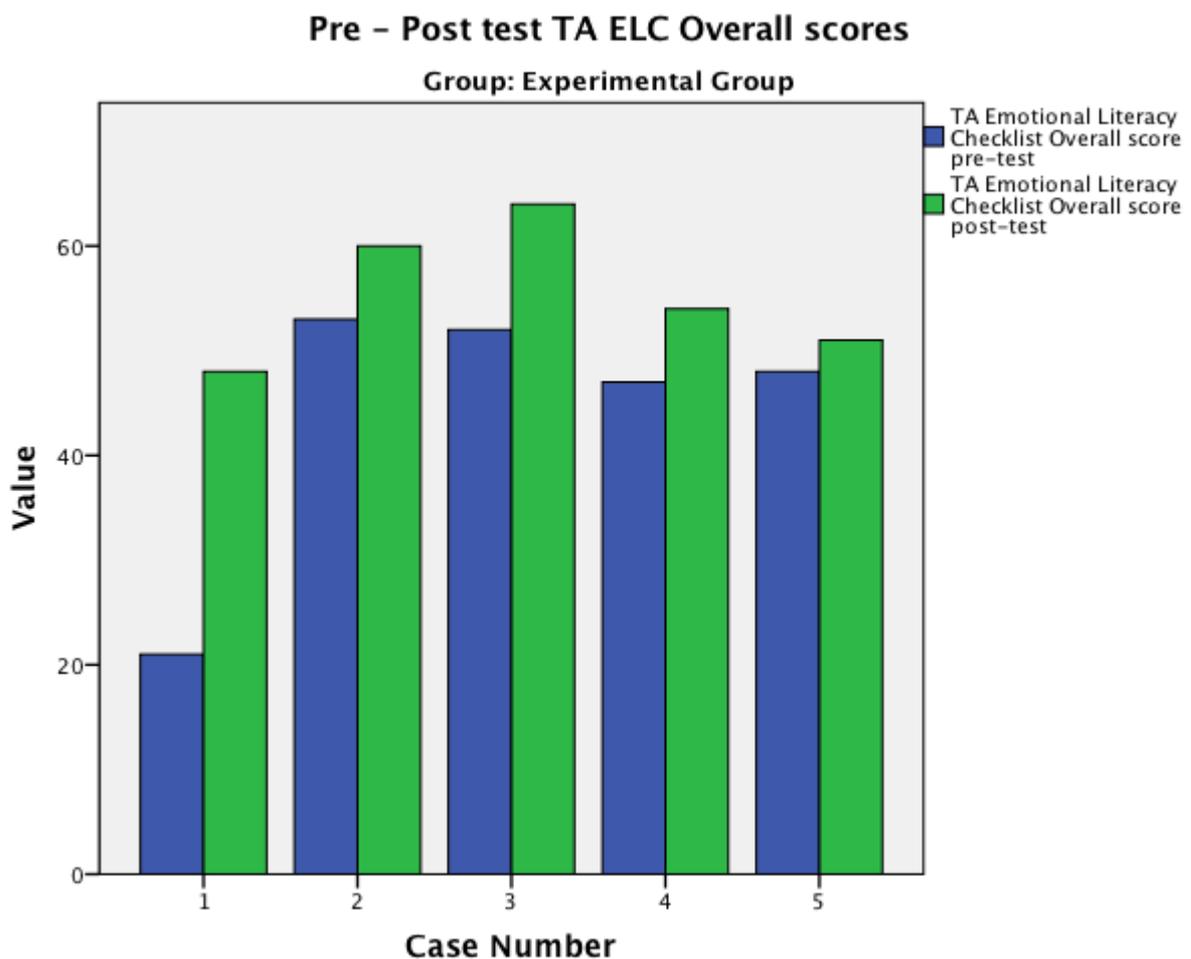
Figure 4.1: Experimental Group Pre to Post-test for TA ELC Overall Scores

Pre – Post test TA ELC Overall scores
Group: Control Group
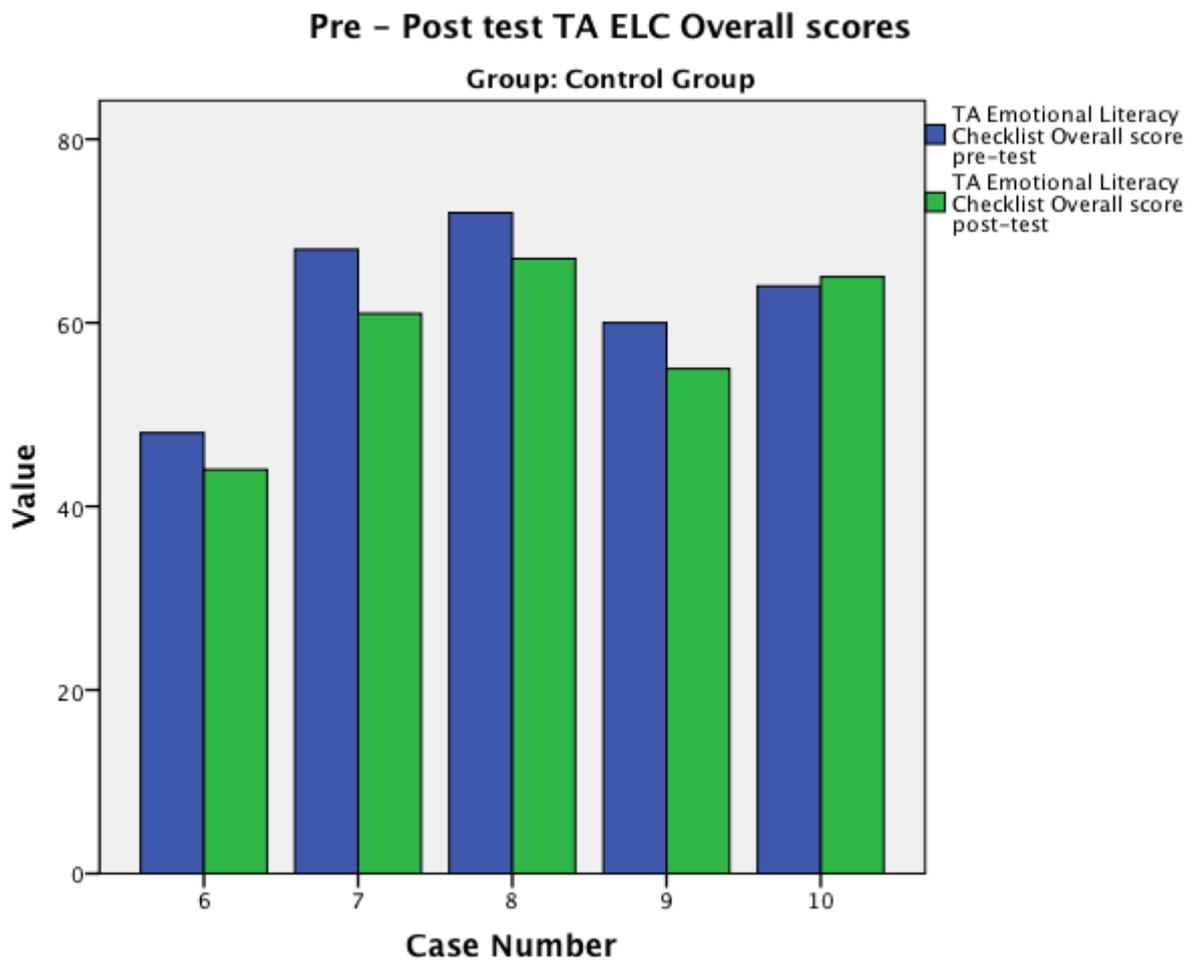
Figure 4.2: Control Group Pre to Post-test for TA ELC Overall Scores

As can be seen in figures 4.1 and 4.2 there were slight improvements in TA perceptions of pupil overall Emotional Literacy from pre to post-test for the experimental group, yet mostly decreases in the TA perceptions of pupil overall Emotional Literacy from pre to post-test for the control group.

Pre - post test Pupil ELC Overall Scores

Pre – Post test Pupil ELC Overall scores
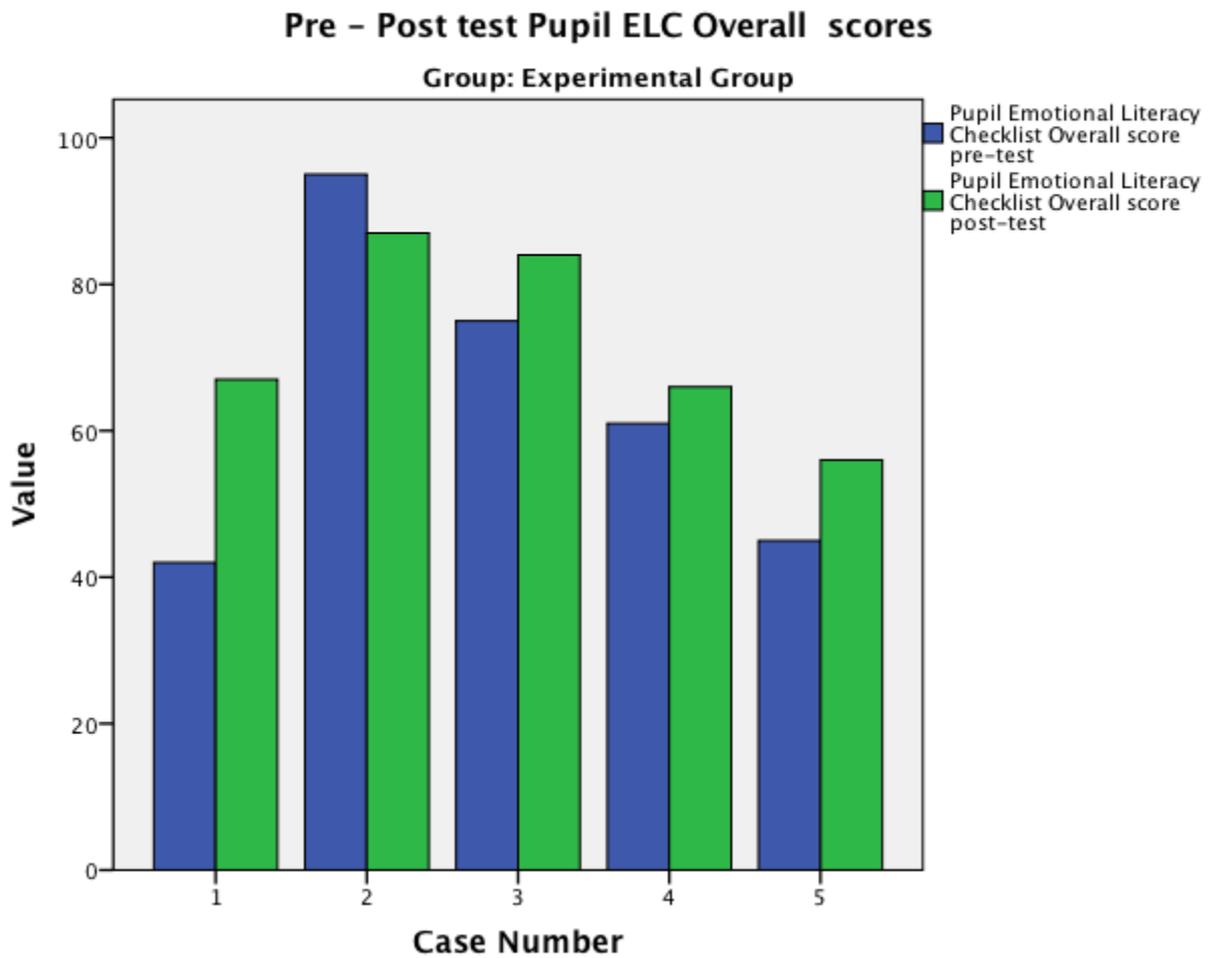
Figure 4.3: Experimental Group Pre to Post-test for Pupil ELC Overall Scores
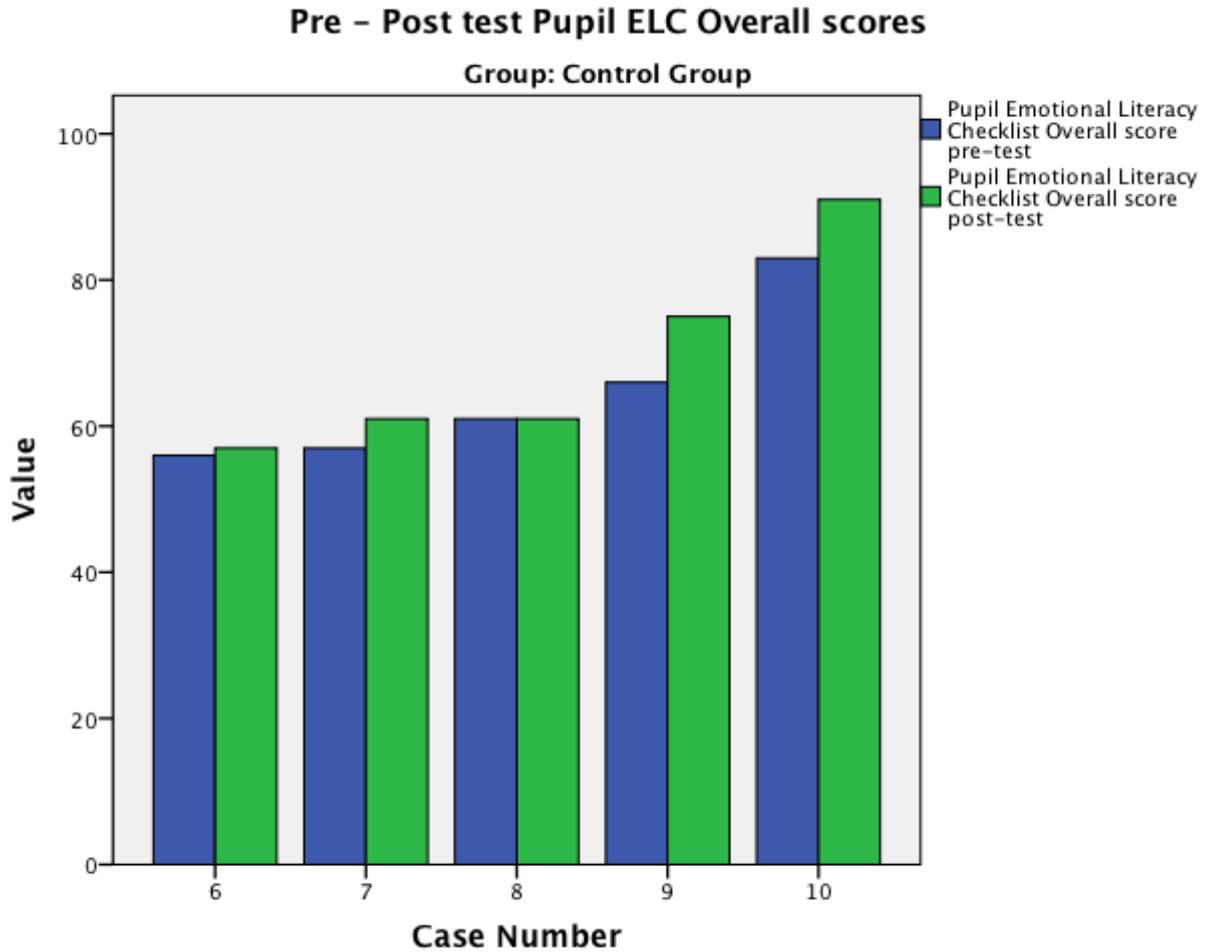
Figure 4.4: Control Group Pre to Post-test for Pupil ELC Overall Scores

Figure 4.3 shows the majority of pupils in the experimental group made an increase in their self-perceptions of Emotional Literacy, with only one pupil actually showing a decrease in scores at post-test. Figure 4.4 also shows that pupils in the control group made slight increases in their self-perceptions of Emotional Literacy from pre to post – test, with only one pupil showing no increase at post-test.

Pre – post test TA SDQ Total Difficulties scores
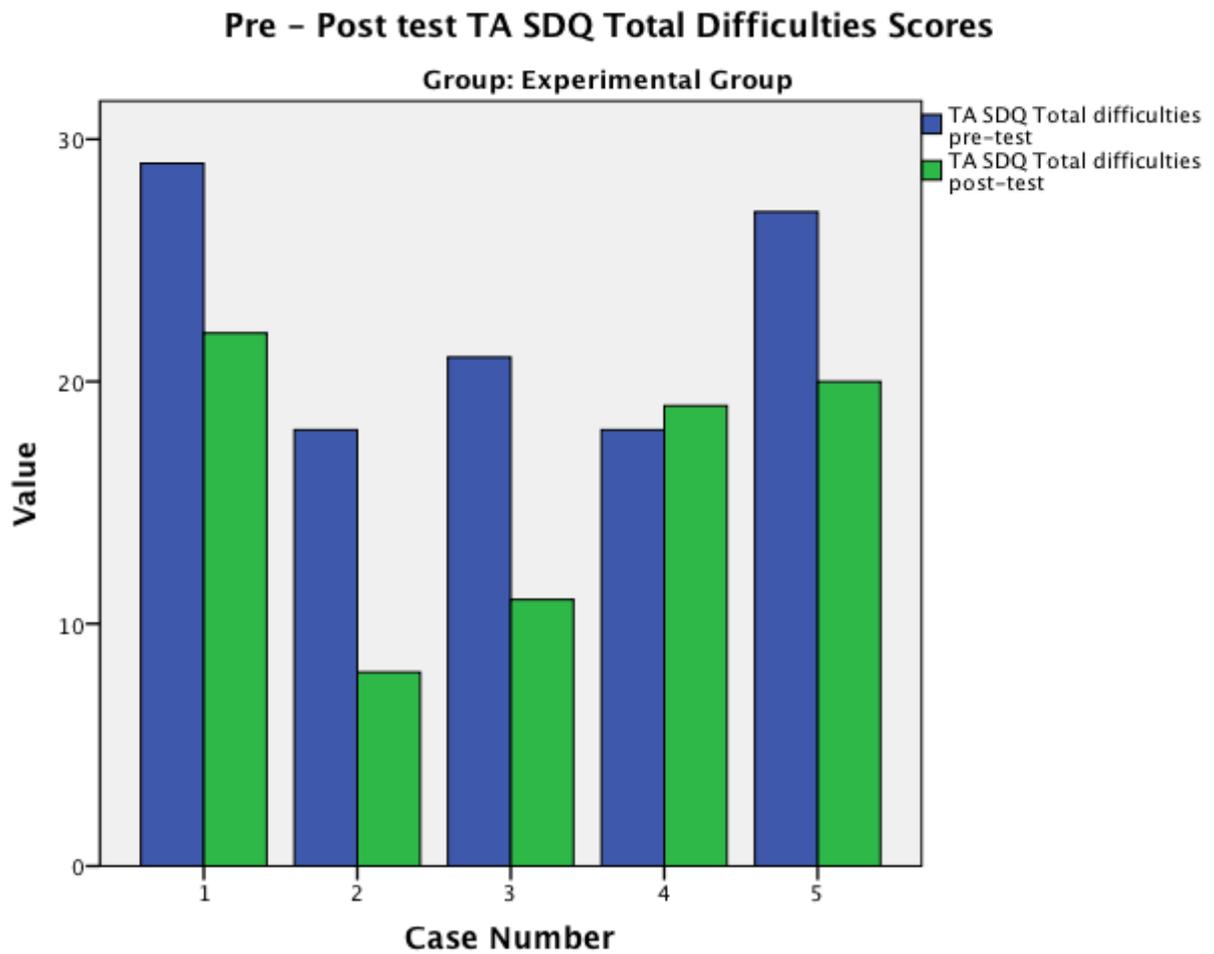
Figure 4.5: Experimental Group Pre to Post-test for TA SDQ Total Difficulties Scores

Pre – Post test TA SDQ Total Difficulties Scores

Group: Control Group
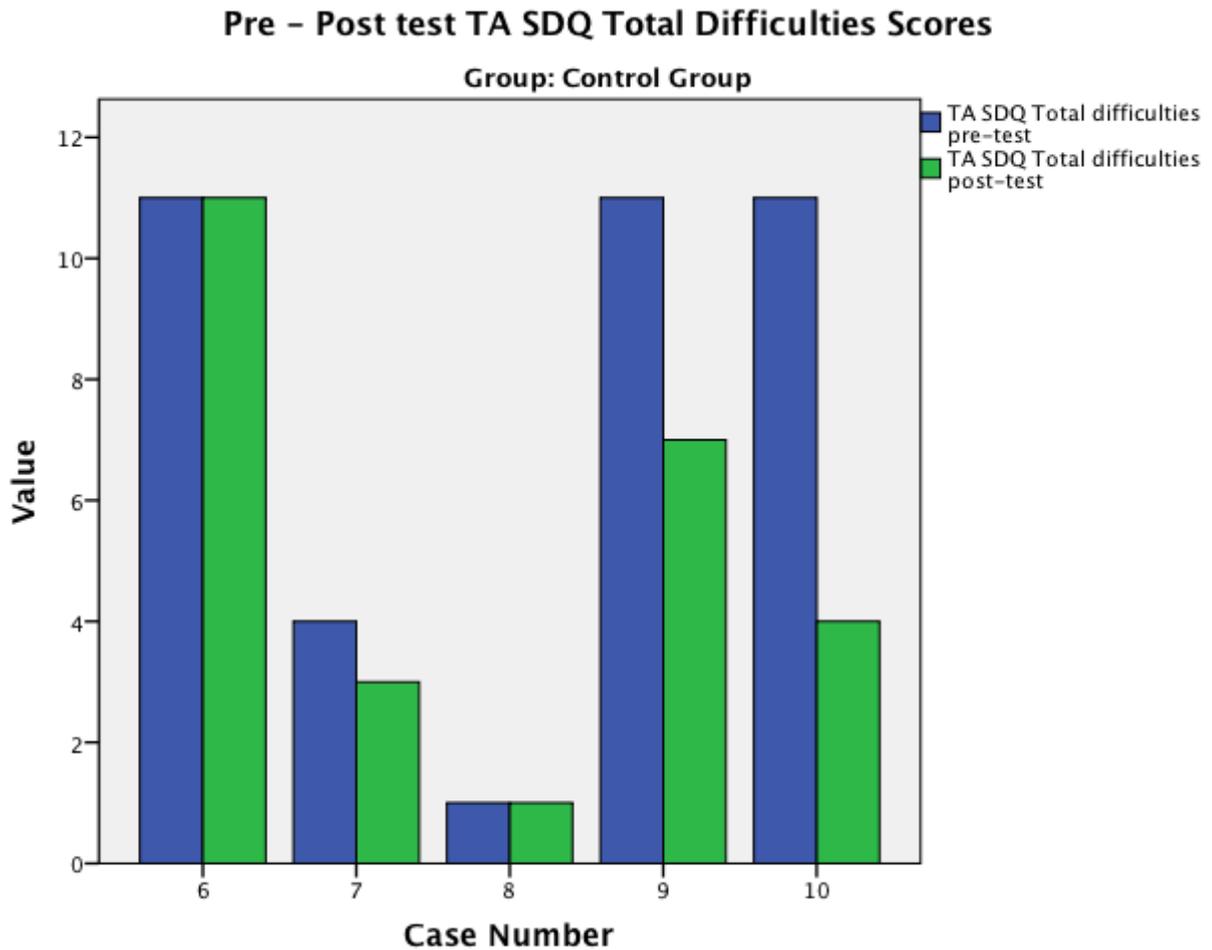
Figure 4.6: Control Group Pre to Post-test for TA SDQ Total Difficulties Scores

Figure 4.5 shows that all but 1 TA perceived pupils total difficulties to be much lower at post-test, a change in the desired direction. Figure 4.6 shows that whilst only three of the TA's perceived total difficulties scores changed in the desired direction at post-test, whilst two remained unchanged, overall these pupils were perceived to be lower in their total difficulty ratings at pre-test than the experimental group.

Further examination of the data using the median scores shows that there were some changes in the desired direction for the experimental group, compared with the control group median scores made little or no change in the desired direction (see table 4.?).

Dependant Variable	Median score			
	Experimental group		Control Group	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
TA ELC Overall score	48	54	64	61
TA ELC Self-awareness	9	11	13	12
TA ELC Self-regulation	8	10	13	13
TA ELC Motivation	8	10	11	11
TA ELC Empathy	10	10	14	13
TA ELC Social Skills	12	14	12	13
Pupil ELC Overall score	61	67	61	61
TA SDQ Total difficulties	21	19	11	4
TA SDQ Emotional symptoms	8	4	2	0
TA SDQ Conduct problems	4	2	0	0
TA SDQ Hyperactivity	8	6	2	2
TA SDQ Peer problems	3	3	1	1
TA SDQ Pro-social behaviours	4	5	5	5

Table 4.4: Dependent variable median scores, pre and post-test, for experimental and control groups.

4.2.2. Summary

The descriptive analyses presented above have produced several important findings with regard to differences in raw and median scores from pre-test to post-test for both experimental and control groups (table 4.4).

Firstly, there were changes made in the desired direction for the experimental group on the TA ELC overall score (pre to post-test). This is interesting when compared with the changes made in the opposite direction for the control group pre and post-test scores on the TA ELC overall score. These scores

are also reflected in the median scores from pre-test to post-test on the five subscale dependant variables for both groups, with only the experimental group showing changes in the desired direction.

Secondly, changes made by pupils' in both groups were made in the desired direction as shown in figures 4.3 and 4.4. This is interesting when you compare the TA perceptions with the pupil self-perceptions, as it appears that the pupils rated their own emotional literacy slightly higher at post-test, whereas the TA perceived there to be a reduction in pupil emotional literacy scores.

It was perhaps unsurprising that the experimental group TA SDQ scores were higher at pre-test due to the way pupils were selected to receive ELSA support. However the median scores presented in table 4.4 might be misleading. As figure 4.5 and 4.6 indicate, all but one of the experimental group scores changed in the desired direction from pre to post-test. When compared with the changes made in the control group, only two pupils were perceived to have made a dramatic change in the desired direction and two further pupils perceived to have made no change at all.

Interpretation of the presented findings from these analyses is limited due to the small sample sizes and the assumptions that can be made about data. As mentioned earlier the assumptions for the use of parametric or non-parametric inferential tests were not met. It is, therefore, not possible to determine whether the changes observed represent statistically significant differences between pre and post-test scores across groups. In summary, due to the limitations discussed above, it is not possible draw any reliable inferences about the impact of the ELSA training on pupil emotional literacy scores and behavioural strengths and difficulties. The changes and impact observed must therefore be treated cautiously and any interpretations offered should remain hypothetical.

4.3. Qualitative data Coding and Analysis

The data coding and analysis in this section considers the following research question:

- How does the ELSA project impact on TAs perceptions of the emotional well-being of pupils, their role and training in supporting the development of pupil emotional well-being?

Qualitative data gathered during the focus group and subsequent surveys sent out to participants in the experimental group were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely used method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns, or themes, within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As such the researcher is able to organize and describe their data in rich detail. The focus group data was recorded using a digital recording device and transcribed verbatim including utterances such as 'er's pauses, interviewer encouragement and questions (see data disc appendix 1). As the data collected from the survey was written there was no need to transcribe. The author conducted a thematic analysis of both data sets using Braun & Clarke's (2006) model, the stages of which were as follows:

1. *Familiarization of the data*

Transcriptions were checked against the digital recording to ensure that no parts were missing. The author immersed himself within the data by reading and re-reading the printed transcriptions and survey data. Whilst reading, notes were made of any initial ideas or areas of interest from within the data (see data disc appendices 3 and 4).

2. *Generating initial codes*

Once the author was familiar with the data sets, a process of generating initial codes began. Codes refer to features of the data that appear most interesting to the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes identified by the author were written onto post-it notes next to the relevant segment of data. For the focus group transcription these were then placed onto the word-processed document using the Comments tool to help with further stages of the analysis (see data disc appendices 2 and 5). The codes were then organized together

into meaningful groups. This was a cyclical process and involved going back to the raw data to check the validity of the identified codes.

3. *Searching for themes*

Braun & Clarke (2006) define a theme as;

> *"something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of* patterned *response or meaning within the data set."* (p.82).

Once all codes had been organized together, each group was labeled ready for stage 3 in the analysis. This stage refocused the analysis at the broader level of themes rather than individual codes. A visual representation, or thematic map, helped to sort the groups of codes under initial overarching themes and possible subthemes (see data disc appendices 6 and 7). At this stage overarching themes and subthemes were preliminary and not yet fully defined.

4. *Reviewing the themes*

This phase involved checking if the candidate themes work in relation to the coded extracts and entire data set. This two-phase process ensures that where there is not enough data to support a theme or if the data within a theme is too diverse, the theme can be refined and adapted as such. Without clear guidelines on when to stop, there is the potential for the process of coding data and generating themes to continue indefinitely. Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that when refinements and fine-tuning do not add anything substantial to the analysis the researcher may decide to stop. This process involved revisiting the thematic map and re-reading the data to ensure the different themes fit together and represented the overall data.

5. *Defining and naming themes*

This final process involved refining the specifics of each theme by generating clear definitions and names. The aim therefore is to provide a clear description of what each theme represents illustrated by extracts from the data sets and a narrative as to the relevance of the theme. Two individual thematic analyses were carried out on two different data sets. Taken from the

same sample at two different time points, the purpose is to explore the extent to which participants views developed depending on their experiences encountered in their role directly after training and at 6 month follow up. In addition this method would provide the local authority (sponsors of this research study) the views of ELSA trained TAs at different time points, potentially informing future delivery of the ELSA project. As such they have are presented separately.

6. Member checks

It was not possible to present the participants with the themes generated due to pragmatic difficulties such as geographic locations of ELSAs and time available to the researcher. The author did however present the thematic maps to a University tutor experienced in using the approach to check the quality of the themes and subthemes. Further reliability checks involved presenting both thematic maps to another trainee conducting thematic analyses. This involved a matching process whereby the trainee was asked to match individual codes to the overarching themes and subthemes. The trainee was able to correctly match 73 of 96 focus group data codes (76%; data disc appendices 8) to the corresponding themes / subthemes and 37 of 51 questionnaire data codes (73%; data disc appendices 9). Subsequent discussion with the trainee sought to account for the 24% and 27% unmatched codes. These discrepancies were due to the lack of context during the matching exercise (trainee was without the raw data) and that the trainee was only presented with the final thematic maps and was unaware of prior revisions to themes and subthemes. Joffe (2011) describes a method of checking the reliability of a coding frame by calculating correspondence between applications of codes to at least 20% of the data by two independent researchers. In Joffe's (2011) study a concordance between researchers above 75% is regarded as demonstrating reliability of the coding frame used. In this study the inter-rater concordance using a similar method was 76% for the focus group code matching and 73% for the questionnaire code matching exercise. It is argued therefore that the codes and themes presented in this study are considered as reliable according to the criteria described.

4.3.1 Thematic Analysis of Focus Group Data
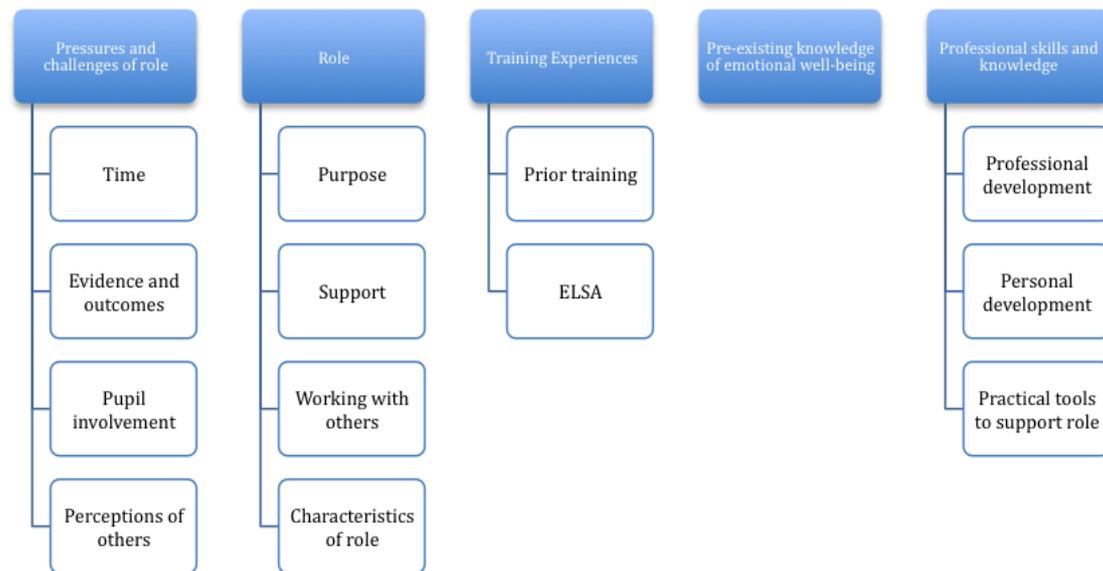
Figure 4.7: Themes and subthemes identified during a thematic analysis of participant focus group data.

Analysis of participant focus group data generated several themes in relation to how ELSA trained TAs perceive their role and training in developing pupil emotional well-being (see figure 4.7). These include pressures and challenges of role, Role itself, training experiences, personal beliefs and knowledge of self, and professional skills and knowledge. Within these broad themes, with the exception of personal beliefs and knowledge of self, several subthemes were identified during the coding process that contributed to the overarching theme label and definition.

Pressures and challenges of role

Participants discussed various pressures and challenges of their role when commenting on their perception of their role and training in developing pupil emotional well-being. These comments were coded into the following subthemes:

- Time
- Evidence and outcomes
- Pupil involvement

- Perceptions of others

Time

The challenge and pressure of 'time' on the TA role is demonstrated by the contradictions and tensions elicited from a number of participants. For example, some commented on the need for more time to provide targeted support for pupils to develop their emotional well-being as being one challenge to their role:

> *"Its time factors as well isn't it, time always plays a big thing on the job, you're very conscious of the time that you've got. You don't want to spend all that time planning when you could be doing." (participant 4)*

There was also a feeling that the needs of the pupils with whom they work meant that time was an ever present challenge and pressure:

> *"It can take a long time for them to change as well, sometimes you have them for 6 weeks and you can't change what they've been taught for years and years at home in a 6 week period" (participant 1)*

Whereas, one participant felt that there was also a challenge that too much time spent supporting a pupil may be detrimental to their development:

> *"I think there is a danger that you can spend too much time with a child and they become dependent on you and that they haven't got their own skills…" (participant 6)*

It appears form these comments that TAs' view their role as addressing issues that have been influenced by 'the home'. The challenge, however, with regard to their deployment appears to be with time, such as how much time they can give or are allowed to give to meet the often complex needs of pupils they typically work with.

Evidence and outcomes

Additional pressures and challenges were highlighted in relation to the need for participants to provide evidence of impact and outcome data, often for very complex needs:

> *"Then you get Ofsted wanting you … know numbers on the doors, scores on the doors and you can't produce it because its not the sort of work that produces scores necessarily so that I've found quite difficult." (participant 6)*

Further to this, evidence of impact is reportedly seen anecdotally in their role:

> *"I think the evidence is when a teacher comes to you and says well actually he's like a different child now" (participant 7)*

> *"I'm not very good at paperwork you know what feels right and you just do it and someone else goes 'evidence, you know, what have you done' and you think well I don't know but he's quite happy…" (participant 6)*

What the TAs appear to be acknowledging is that emotional well-being as a construct is immeasurable, at least in a way that is represented by facts and figures. What the participants seem to be indicating is that slight changes in an individual pupil can be evidenced by the changes in the perceptions of other teachers.

Pupil involvement

Interestingly some participants felt that the pupil involvement also presented its own challenge, particularly in relation to a pupil's recognition of the need to change and the influence of peer perceptions and relationships on their sense of self:

> *"But as well, older kids I don't know about your littleys, but with older kids, if that kid or that child, that little person doesn't want to change it*

doesn't matter how many of you in the team there is, but you won't change them will you. It depends how they are as a person, I find. You can try but it depends what sort of personality they've got…" (participant 2)

"It comes down to ability as well and how well they do and how well they seem to be doing by their peer groups for self esteem and confidence…" (participant 6)

"yeah cos that goes one way or another doesn't it that, cos you can have, like children that aren't very able and they've got really low self esteem and everything and they don't fit in with popular group like you just said but then there's the really clever kids that they don't fit in with any group either do they, you know what I mean, because the popular ones don't want these, its not cool to be clever when you're at a certain age." (participant 2)

These comments indicate the TAs understanding of the need to acknowledge pupil views when planning and implementing targeted support and 'working with' as opposed to 'doing things to' children and young people they work with. The challenge therefore lies in how the TA works with the young person to help raise their awareness of any potential issues and support them through a process that may lead to change.

Perceptions of others

Several of the participants felt that how others perceived their role and training added additional pressure and challenge to their role. Some reported unrealistic expectations and a lack of support from others:

"I think also hard when people think that you're the specialist in that area, 'so I'll be able to come to you and you'll fix that child and I don't need to worry about that child anymore', and you can't take that on your shoulders can you, you need to be able to share that with other

people and you need to be able to think and work as a team and 'we can do it together' not just taking it all on myself because I can't do this" (participant 4)

These unrealistic expectations were also discussed in relation to the ELSA training and the perceptions others had once participants returned to their settings:

"...you go back to school and you're supposed to be the font of all knowledge, but really we've just touched on, lightly, on a lot of things haven't we…" (participant 4)

"I don't think our colleagues appreciate that as well as we'd want, I think they think 'so you're the specialist person in that' but we have only touched on it in little bits." (participant 1)

Links were also found between the perceptions of others and the subtheme of time commitments for example:

"...sometime they're not prepared to give you the time to, to do the work that's necessary, they just wanting a 'take 'em off and have a chat with 'em for 10 minutes and we'll come back and it'll all be fine'. It's not, but you're disrupting them if you're taking that child out all the time…" (participant 8)

It appears from these comments that TAs feel that their colleagues place the responsibility of supporting pupils' emotional well-being as solely with the TA. However, the TAs' appear to acknowledge that the development of pupil emotional well-being is the responsibility of all. Yet the additional pressures of 'time', for 'evidence and outcomes' and 'pupil involvement' suggest that the expectations that TAs colleagues are perceived to have could be considered to be unrealistic.

Role

Participants discussed various aspects of their role in relation to developing pupil emotional well-being. These comments were coded into the following subthemes:

- Purpose
- Support
- Working with others
- Characteristics of role

Purpose
Several participants provided varying perspectives as to the purposes of their role. Some described their role as developing and expanding pupil skills:

"We give them the tools to develop their social skills" (participant 1)

"They're not getting the social skills to develop friendships…No……to develop relationships with their peers and with other adults they just don't know what to do, to learn, they don't know how to develop as an individual. It stifles them" (participant 4)

Others felt it was to support the development of pupil resilience:

"Build their resilience so they can deal with problems themselves rather than always looking at an adult" (participant 1)

"I'm quite aware that with the children that I work with in year six that's what they're going up to, so I do try really hard to give them that independence in year six to try it for themselves, to try to fail, you know try failing and cope with failing sometimes." (participant 6)

One participant commented that their role was to ultimately support pupils' access to learning:

"…you're looking after their emotional welfare. And if they know that's all in place then they begin to flourish in the school and I think that having the foundations of feeling safe then allows them to, to learn academically which is of course, you know, the whole school, the whole school learning" (participant 7)

These comments demonstrate not only the TAs understanding of what contributes to emotional well-being but also how it is nurtured and the importance of their role in the context of the school. These comments acknowledge that not all pupils are ready to learn or capable of doing so automatically. The perceived view that their purpose is to provide support for pupils so they are able to learn and achieve may demonstrate the TAs awareness of Maslow's hierarchy (1968) and how an individual has several needs that should be satisfied to achieve self-actualisation.

Support

The subtheme support was originally aligned under pressures and challenges of role. However the groups of codes did not fit within this overarching theme and was re-aligned under role. Key to this subtheme were discussions amongst participants regarding the value of peer support, networking opportunities and the value of sharing practice, for example:

"…we've all been able to have our own little bits, and we've all, you know this is what I was saying you know 'oh god yeah I never thought of that that looks really good that's a good idea'. You can bounce your ideas off each other can't you" (participant 2)

"I think it would be nice if we could all meet, we were saying this weren't we it would be nice if all us lot could stay in touch but have like a couple of hours every term time or whatever just to discuss like we did today, like a solution circle. I think that would be really good" (participant 2)

> *"Because half the stuff that we've all talked about I've thought 'ah yeah that's a really good idea' but you probably wouldn't have thought about it yourself, you know, if you've not done it before you've got to start somewhere haven't you" (participant 2)*

Whilst these comments highlight the value TAs placed on the peer support they received during the ELSA training, it may also suggest a perceived lack of support in the settings in which they routinely work. This would reflect and be supported by the comments presented in the subtheme 'perceptions of others'.

Working with others

This subtheme was originally divided into two subthemes, pupil participation and parent participation. However rather than commenting on two separate aspects of their role, the data appeared to be saying something about the participants' role working with others in general. Therefore the two subthemes were merged under a different heading.

Whilst participants had already commented on the purpose of their role in relation to supporting the development of pupil emotional well-being, discussion also accounted for how the TAs themselves supported both pupils and parents.

Having a key worker to support pupils to raise their awareness of skills and successes, for example:

> *"Play on the child's strengths, build their strengths in erm, and you know highlight their strengths so they're on a high rather than focusing on their weaknesses all the time which tends to be academically. But they could be good at sports or could be good at art which is a good avenue for them to express themselves and tend to focus on those areas and then work on the weaker area afterwards" (participant 4)*

"We sort of, have key workers for our children so that they know there is one adult that they can go to with concerns and they build up that relationship so that at least they know there's one person there that they can talk to and won't be judged, you know and it's that confidence for them, it's their safety net." (participant 4).

Participants also commented on their engagement with parents, the influence of positive parent-child relationships and how their role may also involve working with the parents or family to enhance their skills:

*"I think it's every parent with no parenting skills, to start with. Yeah (collective agreement)…Because if they don't experience it like **** said at home, like…They're not getting the social skills to develop friendships…"* (participant 2)

"And also possibly doing around the family because, you know, its not necessarily just at school where the problems are." (participant 6)

It appears that the TAs', as well as acknowledging the support role they have for pupils, have an awareness of the need for their support to reach out and be available to the parents and the home context. Comments made by TAs have already demonstrated an understanding as to what emotional well-being is and how it develops, these comments seem to acknowledge that the support they can provide as secondary to the need to support positive parent – child relationships.

Characteristics of role

This subtheme combined data coded to reflect differences between participants' roles and varied views about the practical aspects of their roles. Commenting on the role differences across age ranges, participants discussed characteristics of their practice in order to account for these differences:

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"…when they come up to high school they meet so many different individuals that in primary they're sort of wrapped up in cotton wool, so you know, they have a TA in the class and they have a teacher and they probably stay in that class for every lesson" (participant 4)

"I'm quite aware that with the children that I work with in year six that's what they're going up to, so I do try really hard to give them that independence in year six to try it for themselves" (participant 6)

Discussion also focused on characteristics related to their practice, such as the importance of early intervention:

"It's easier in Primary than it is in Secondary I think, I mean they tend to know if the problem hasn't changed by the time they get to year 6 then its going to be really hard to change it but if you get it in year 3 then you can actually make a difference" (participant 6)

And valuing the flexibility of their practice:

"I think it makes you a bit more creative doesn't it, I think this has made you know, you've tried to think of doing things more creatively…" (participant 4)

These comments suggest that the type of targeted support TAs implement for an individual is not in reaction to an identified need. By means of early intervention the support TAs provided for pupils appears to be be planned and implemented with the awareness of how the environmental and context influences the development of emotional well-being of a child or young person.

<u>Training experiences</u>
During the focus group participants discussed their views on their training experiences. These comments considered not only their views on the recently completed ELSA training, its content, the benefits and additional training

needs, but also their views on prior training experiences they had encountered in their role. These comments were coded into the following subthemes:

- Prior training
- ELSA

Prior training

Whilst discussing previous training, participants commented on the value placed on this by others in their settings and made comparisons with how the ELSA training was delivered in terms of follow up support.

> *"We've been to learning mentor training together, quite a long time ago. So some of that ties in with what we have done but we didn't have any follow up or support with that at all did we."* (participant 6)

> *"No. That was like right you're learning mentors in school off you go and I'll send anybody I've got a problem with to you guys and that's really what it was like."* (participant 4)

ELSA

In addition there were comments made regarding the benefits of the ELSA training, its structure and its content:

> *"I think for me, because we've had it in like chapters, its been really useful for me, so specifically so it's targeting the child you're working with, putting them into the anger management one, the social communication, I know you've got edges of the other ones around but for me that's been quite useful"* (participant 6)

Participants also shared their views regarding additional needs following the ELSA training, in regards to the need for additional training and more time to reflect on and enhance new knowledge:

"I would have certainly liked to have spent time on every one of the subjects and done some more practical work on what we were talking about possibly. And of course there's been 10 weeks it could do to be perhaps over a longer period and spend more time on each erm session. I got a lot out of it but I think we could have gone a bit deeper into it all." (participant 1)

It would appear that TAs hold most value in training that has a direct, explicit meaning for them as practitioners. Although prior training may have had benefit for them and the pupils they support, it seems as if they particularly valued the clear content, aims or practical guidance embedded in the ELSA training.

Pre-existing knowledge of emotional well-being

This theme was generated from coded data that reflected the participants existing, personal beliefs and knowledge about the concept of emotional well-being and how it develops. This theme therefore encompasses the personal, pre-existing views of the participants. For example, how emotional well-being is developed:

"Well they learn it from a baby don't they, it's usually from the mother, from the parents, from eye contact. Its cuddles, I don't know, it's mums voice…" (participant 2)

The factors that may influence its development:

"Communication skills, if a child is lacking in communication skills they cant interact with their peers and erm that could presumably cause…" (participant 6)

"And there's things like if there's been an illness in the family and there's gaps. Or abandonment, if they're looked after children, abuse" (participant 7)

But also realistic expectations about what impact they can have on pupils' emotional well-being:

> *"I think its also learning that you can't fix everything, you know you cant grab and wave a magic wand for things to go fantastically well to focusing on a specific thing that you can make a difference with."* (participant 6)

And their ability to have a holistic understanding of a pupils' needs:

> *"I think we get to see the bigger picture as well, teachers just see this disruptive child who's, you know, causing problems in the class, whereas we see that there are wider issues. There's a reason why they are behaving in that way"* (participant 7)

The data and comments that contributed to the development of this theme demonstrate the depth of TAs pre-existing knowledge and understanding of emotional well-being. The TAs' appear to acknowledge that emotional well-being isn't a discreet within-child construct that develops in a linear fashion. But rather they appear to perceive it as a construct that is influenced from as early as birth. They further see its development being nurtured via many interacting factors, such as the emotional and social environment. It seems this knowledge and understanding is what differentiates ELSA TAs form their colleagues when it comes to understanding and responding to complex needs of pupils.

Professional skills and knowledge

This theme emerged from comments in the data coded to reflect what the participants valued the most following the ELSA training in terms of their development. These comments were coded into the following subthemes:

- Professional development
- Personal development
- Practical tools to support role

Professional development

This subtheme was a merger of two preliminary subthemes that took account of participant comments about gaining new knowledge from the ELSA training and their existing skills and knowledge being enhanced. After reflection it appeared that these groups of codes become more coherent when grouped together under a single subtheme. What emerged were comments from participants that indicated that whilst new knowledge was indeed valued, it also enhanced their existing skills, knowledge and practices. For example, one participant talked about an increased awareness of vulnerabilities of some pupils following the ELSA training:

> *"Don't you think as well though that it opens your eyes to how many kids out there, there are with problems and that you could work sort of 24 hours a day with the kids and just in your school and you still, you know, you're just hitting the ones that are causing the trouble and that, are disrupting school but there's plenty of them that toddle along and they just sort of carry on, they're not particularly any trouble to anybody but they have a need as well and if there's just one of you, you can't."* (participant 8)

Some participants commented on new knowledge enhancing existing skills and knowledge:

> *"I think it's sort of embedded some of the skills that we already had and reconfirmed what we already know."* (participant 4)

> *"I think a range of issues, I sort of focused on me working in nurture groups which is sort of what I am doing now but also anger management and low self-esteem they all contribute to the children who are there in the nurture group and I've not really focused on that so yeah broadening your knowledge of what could be their issue, because its not always explicit, it could be that you're more aware of*

where they be ostracized by their friends so yeah more knowledge."
(participant 5)

One participant presented the view that much of what their work is often instinctive and the ELSA training has validated what they already do:

"And sometimes some of the things you're doing anyway are from instinct and its just the case of being able to seeing it and hearing about it and thinking well yeah what I'm doing is right…" (participant 8)

Personal development

As well as commenting on their professional development the participants also commented on their personal development following the ELSA training. These included comments regarding increased awareness of one's own limitations:

"Don't you think as well though that it opens your eyes to how many kids out there, there are with problems and that you could work sort of 24 hours a day with the kids and just in your school and you still, you know, you just hitting the ones that are causing the trouble" (participant 8)

"I'm not very good at paperwork you know what feels right and you just do it and someone else goes 'evidence, you know, what have you done' and you think well I don't know but he's quite happy, that's the bit I have found quite difficult so I need to be a bit more sort of controlled about the paperwork, but I still don't find it easy." (participant 6)

And comments about increased confidence in their role.

"It's given me more confidence with regard to planning." (Participant 3)

"It's given me confidence anyway to think ah well I'll have look at this…" (participant 2)

Practical tools to support role

Finally participants also commented on the value of having practical resources, tools and strategies to enhance their practice regarding assessment and intervention following the ELSA training:

> *"I think just having a range of resources and tools to use now, it's like yeah I'll give that a go and like you say you might not always have the answer and might not always be successful but at least we've got ideas now to use." (participant 7)*

> *"I think the assessment tools have been good because you can do the referral, you can find out what their primary need and what area you're going to focus on first, if its two or three problem areas they've got you can focus on that area first and then…" (participant 4)*

> *"It's given us a lot more tools to use and try, in different situations with different children." (participant 7)*

The comments that are presented across these three subthemes appear to show what it is TAs value most about the ELSA training and why. For example, whilst new knowledge had value, the training also appeared to affirm their current practices and give them confidence to appropriately plan and implement targeted interventions. The training may therefore be viewed as providing deeper meaning and supporting not only the professional but personal development of TAs compared with prior training experiences.

4.3.2. Thematic Analysis of Questionnaire Data
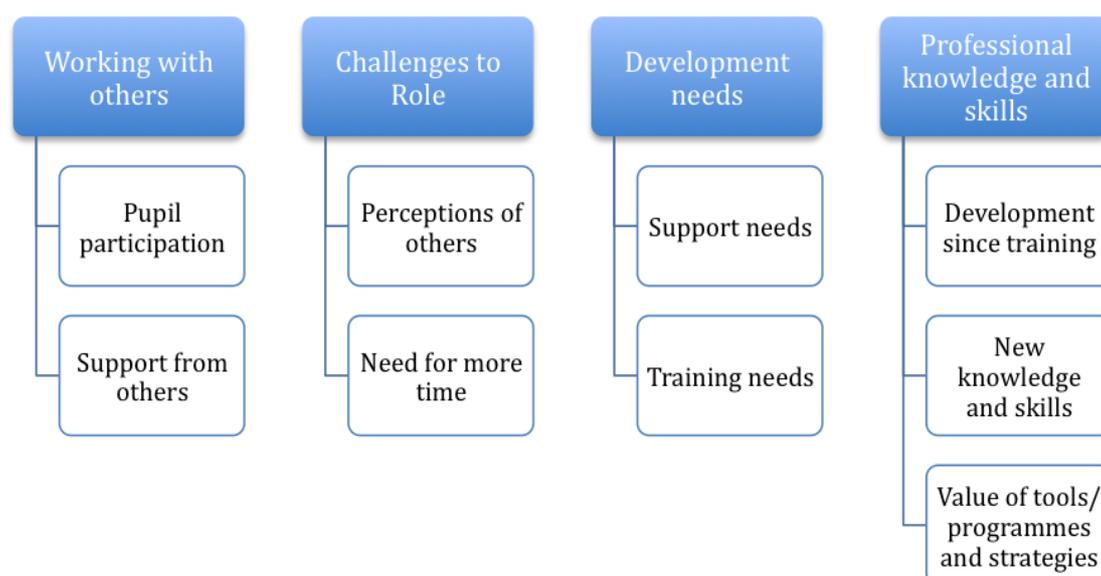
Figure 4.8: Themes and subthemes identified during a thematic analysis of participant questionnaire data.

Return rate of follow up questionnaire was 35% (5 of 14 participants). It is argued therefore that this was a valid and reliable method, as the return rate was above 30% suggested by Gilham (2007). Analysis of follow up participant questionnaire data generated several themes in relation to how they perceive their role and training in developing pupil emotional well-being 6 months after ELSA training (see figure 4.8). These include working with others, challenges to the role, development needs and professional knowledge and skills. Within these broad themes several subthemes were identified during the coding process that contributed to the overarching theme label and definition.

Whilst a separate thematic analysis was undertaken for this data set the author recognizes that the codes and themes that emerged from analysis of the focus group data may have influenced the emergence of codes and themes identified in this analysis.

Working with others

Participants commented on the increased frequency of support from pupils, colleagues and parents, and the benefit this had to their role in supporting pupil emotional well-being. These comments were coded and grouped under two subthemes:

- Pupil participation
- Support from others

Pupil participation

Some participants felt that through group interventions, individual pupils were able to enjoy themselves more and made more progress when their peers were involved:

"The children enjoyed the activities especially in the group work" *(participant 1)*

"Friendship/social skills sessions have had an impact on the child in case and he is much happier at school. (We played games with different children in order to open up avenues to play)" (participant 2)

Support from others

The coded data was originally grouped to account for both parent participation and support from others. However on further reflection both initial subthemes seemed to reflect comments about support from others that included parents, colleagues and other professionals. For example, some participants felt that as a result of their training they were able to have more time to communicate with parents to discuss the needs of their child more effectively:

"Discussion with parent regarding therapeutic story" (participant 3)

When asked what supported their work with the pupil, one participant stated:

"Support of head teacher, parent and class teacher" (participant 1)

"Building a working / trusting relationship with TD and his family, freedom to follow the support route that felt right" (participant 4).

Comments from this theme and subtheme appear to suggest a potential shift in TAs perceptions with regard to pupil participation and support from colleagues. Whilst comments from the focus group data suggested that pupil participation was a potential challenge to their role, the comments presented here suggest that pupil participation added value to the support they provided. The same shift may be seen in the TA perceptions of parent and colleague support and involvement. The possible reason for this shift in perception could be linked to the personal and professional development gained from the ELSA training being embedded into and influencing their practice.

<u>Challenges to role</u>

Participants commented on various challenges they encountered in their role since completing the ELSA training. These comments were coded and organized into two subthemes:

- Perceptions of others
- Need for more time

Perceptions of others

Comments that referred to the perceptions of others included that due to a perceived lack of communication there was a need for information regarding the ELSA training to be made available to others in their settings:

"I would like to have seen more information given to the staff within my school regarding the importance of the ELSA" (participant 5)

However, there was a contrasting view as one participant felt that other people's awareness of their role supported rather than challenged their role:

> *"…teachers and parents are able to approach me and raise concerns, worries about their children, seek advice and enable me to be aware of individuals who may need support." (participant 1)*

Participants also commented on the contrasting perceptions of others (colleagues and teaching staff) regarding the support needs of pupils:

> *"The understanding amongst teaching staff that an emotional barrier to learning is just that and needs lowering before a child will truly make progress with the curriculum. Difference between teaching and pastoral support." (participant 4)*

Whilst the previous subthemes appear to reflect a positive shift in TA perceptions regarding working with others, challenges to their role remain. Although contradictory views are presented regarding TA perceptions of colleagues, this may be highlighting a lack of availability of information about ELSA and more generally about how to support emotional well-being. The implication being that the knowledge and understanding that is provided to TAs by ELSA training should perhaps be more widely distributed to others.

Need for more time

Participants commented that a challenge to their role was a need for more time to work with directly with pupils:

> *"Having more time to spend with the children would've been beneficial." (participant 1)*

When asked what would help participants to support pupils even better, one participant stated:

"More time." (participant 3)

One participant commented on the limitations for supporting the emotional well-being of individuals or groups of pupils due to their deployment in other areas:

"Having more time to work with individuals or groups. Presently only able to be free in the afternoons."

It would appear that despite acknowledging the professional and personal development TAs received following ELSA training, the complex systems of the school and the time available still act as a significant barrier to their role. Whether this reflects the awareness of school leaders regarding the importance of the development of emotional well-being and TA deployment or simply the complexity and restrictions of the organization is unclear.

Development needs

Participants made several comments in relation to what they felt were their continuing development needs following the ELSA training. These comments were coded and grouped under two subthemes:

- Support needs
- Training needs

Support needs

In terms of support needs participants felt that they needed further support from their peers. When asked what would help participants to support the emotional well-being of pupils better one stated:

"A network of support" (Participant 4)

Another participant felt that this could be extended to include support form other professionals such as EPs in order to share ideas and receive additional training:

"Future meetings with the other ELSAs and educational psychologists would be very helpful. To share ideas and possibly have some more training." (participant 5)

The need for additional support between professionals and colleagues was also referenced in regard to supporting the needs of pupils:

"The school taking more of a role and continuing work in between the weekly sessions." (participant 5)

Training needs

Training needs of participants had been referred to already in relation to the additional support needs (see above). However a number of other participants had stated further training as being desirable to help them support the emotional well-being of pupils:

"Further training is always welcome" (participant 2)

But often with regard to specific areas or topics relevant to their supporting role:

"Further training, especially on attachment, we have several LAC (looked after children) *and have been offered training from social services which will be very helpful for all staff" (participant 1)*

"Training around CP (child protection) *issues / bereavement / family breakdown / anxiety." (participant 4)*

It would appear that the views of participants have remained much the same since the initial focus group in terms of their perceived need for a support network with other ELSAs. Interestingly participants' views of their support needs expanded to include support from EPs. This is perhaps unsurprising as EPs often work closely with TAs as part of their practice, TAs may be reflecting on an increase in contact time with EPs following their training and the fact that they are recognised as having additional knowledge and skills in their setting. In addition, reference to colleagues taking on more of a supporting role in the work TAs are doing was made. These views suggest that TAs recognize the need for a holistic approach to effectively meet the needs of pupils, and suggest that they perceive support for emotional well-being as being the responsibility of all adults in a school.

Professional skills and knowledge

As well as comments regarding their development needs participants also made reference to their development in terms of their existing and new professional skills and knowledge. These comments were coded and grouped into three subthemes:

- Development since training
- New knowledge and skills
- Value of tools, programmes and strategies

Development since training

Originally labeled as deployment and flexibility of practice, this subtheme was renamed as participants' comments made reference to which aspects of their role they had noticed had changed, for example, the flexibility of their practice:

> *"My sessions vary week to week depending on the needs of the child. I have set up small group sessions to aid friendship / social skills. 1:1 sessions on anger management and anxiety." (participant 2)*

The flexibility to support all pupils whom they encounter:

"Freedom to follow the support route that felt right." (participant 4)

"I can use skills whenever working with children in class even if not asked to work 1:1 with that child" (participant 3)

And increased confidence in their abilities following the ELSA training:

"The work I did on the ELSA course, it gave me confidence and an access to resources." (participant 2)

New knowledge and skills

As well as referencing the changes in terms of their deployment or personal development, participants also commented on the new knowledge gained from the ELSA training and how this enhanced their existing knowledge and skills:

"Reinforced that some of the things I was doing already were the right things to do." (participant 4)

How their knowledge and skills have benefitted the others, skilling up colleagues by sharing new knowledge and skills:

"We have now given a second person some learning mentor hours to follow ELSA support. That person is currently applying for the next course." (participant 4)

The benefit for their setting and the support they can provide:

"It has given some kudos to the different kinds of support our school can give." (participant 4)

Value of tools, programmes and strategies

Participants also made reference to several resources and tools they have used that have enhanced their role and the value of having these made available to them during the ELSA training:

> *"The work I did on the ELSA course, it gave me confidence and an access to resources." (participant 2)*

> *"The use of structured programmes i.e. Social Skills 1 + 2, volcano in my tummy." (participant 1)*

> *"Having a bank of information and resources from the ELSA course, also being able to run the sessions on a weekly basis." (participant 5)*

It would appear that TAs view the new knowledge and skills gained from ELSA training as benefitting all pupils, not just those identified as requiring targeted support. This suggests that setting leaders should be made aware of the potential additional benefits to the wider population of the school so that ELSA training may have as much value for the school as it appears to have for the TAs themselves.

4.4. Summary of Results

Quantitative data was collected to address the following research question:

> Does the ELSA project have a measurable impact on pupil and TA perceptions of emotional well-being?

Visual and descriptive analysis of the quantitative data suggests that whilst TAs within the experimental group perceived a change in the desired direction in pupils overall emotional literacy from pre to post-test, the control group TA actually perceived a reduction in the majority of pupils overall emotional literacy scores. However this was not reflected in the pupil self-perceptions of emotional literacy as participants in both groups made gains in their overall ELC scores.

Visual and descriptive analysis of the TA SDQ Total Difficulties scores of both groups suggests that there were perceived changes in the desired direction for the majority of pupil participants.

The perceived changes made in the experimental group scores appear to have been greater than those observed in the control group. This is unsurprising as pupils in the experimental group were identified as requiring additional ELSA based support and may have had greater difficulties in these areas.

Qualitative data was gathered to address the following research question:

How does the ELSA project impact TAs perceptions of the emotional well-being of pupils, their role and training in supporting the development of pupil emotional well-being?

Separate thematic analyses on participant focus group and survey data generated several themes that provide information about how recently trained ELSAs perceive their role and training in supporting the development of pupil emotional well-being. During the focus group participants discussed several of the challenges they faced in regards to their role and the support they provide pupils with complex needs. Knowledge and understanding of their role, including its purpose and characteristics and how they work with others to support pupils was also a theme generated from the discussion. Participants also commented on their training experiences revealing feelings that prior experiences were not valued as much the ELSA training received. Participants also reflected on their own personal views regarding the concept of emotional well-being and its development, making reference to how this underpins their role. And finally participants discussed their professional skills and knowledge development following the ELSA training, particularly how these support their role.

A subsequent thematic analysis of a follow up survey sent to the same participants generated interesting themes regarding how they perceived their role and training in supporting pupil emotional well-being months on. Working with others, encompassing pupil participation and support from others revealed how participants felt supported in their role. Challenges to their role were also identified by participants particularly in relation to the perceptions of others and the need for more time to engage with pupils. Participants also indicated several development needs particularly the need for additional training in certain areas related to their role, but also the need for peer support. Finally professional knowledge and skills were also identified as a theme based upon participants responses regarding their perceived development since the ELSA training, the application of new knowledge and skills and the value of having resources and tools to support their role in developing pupil emotional well-being.

These findings, analyses and the links between them will be discussed in relation to the literature presented earlier and the implications for educational psychologists will be considered in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to answer the research questions and provide a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature reviewed in chapters 2 and 3. Where the results have yielded unexpected or interesting findings these shall be discussed. The strengths and limitations of this study will be presented as well as any implications these may have on the conclusions drawn. The author will also critically reflect on the methodology and give consideration to alternative methods and questions that may inform further research in the field. Finally, implications for professional practice will be considered which may be able to assist the future implementation of ELSA.

5.2. Research findings

Through modular input the ELSA project aims to provide TAs with background psychological theory and practical guidance to meet the emotional needs of pupils in the context of a school (Burton, 2008). The findings presented in this study are of an exploratory mixed methods evaluation of an ELSA project delivered to a cohort of TAs in a district of a large county council. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used to explore, firstly if the ELSA project had a measurable impact on pupil emotional well-being and secondly participants' perceptions regarding their role and training in support of pupil emotional well-being. The research questions will be addressed in the following sections, followed by a discussion of their implications and links to the literature presented in chapters 2 and 3.

5.2.1. Research question 1

Does the ELSA project have a measurable impact on pupil and TA perceptions of emotional well-being?

In the context of this study emotional well-being was measured using a combination of the ELC (pupil and teacher checklists; Faupel, 2003) and the SDQ (teacher checklist; Goodman, 1997). The decision to analyze and present descriptive statistics for the pre and post-test quantitative data was made due to the low sample size and resulting implication this then had on the nature of statistical analyses that could be made. Therefore the quantitative data in this study must be considered exploratory.

Pre-test to post-test changes observed in the experimental group were in the desired direction. These were for TA ELC overall score and SDQ Total Difficulties. This suggests that TAs perceptions of pupils' emotional literacy and behavioural adjustment increased, an improvement, following implementation of ELSA based programmes. Interestingly pre-test to post-test changes observed in the control group showed a reduction in the TAs perception of pupil emotional literacy scores. The only positive score difference from pre-test to post-test was found in the TA SDQ Total difficulties. These findings suggest that control group TAs perceptions of pupils' emotional literacy had reduced or remained the same following a period of intervention, whilst perceptions of behavioural adjustment (TA SDQ Total difficulties) appeared to have improved. However these differences in scores from pre to post-test were small. Because of limitations with the small sample size several assumptions of the data were not met (normality of the data) meaning that statistical comparisons could not be made between groups, such as would be used by an analysis of variance (ANOVA) used in parametric tests. The limitations created by the small sample size will be discussed further in section 5.3.

Although inferential analyses could not be conducted on the quantitative data the findings share some similarities with previous ELSA evaluations that have

used pre and post-test quantitative measures. Mann & Russell's (2011) evaluation used pre and post-test ELC data from 30 ELSAs on 170 children and found only teacher rated ELC data to have made statistically significant difference at post-test. Suggesting that only the teachers were able to identify a measurable improvement in pupils' emotional literacy. However the lack of control group for comparison limits the extent to which claims can be made regarding the impact of ELSA in their study. Furthermore, Murray's (2010) evaluation suggests that ELSAs had a significant impact on pupils' emotional literacy scores (as measured by the ELC – teacher) compared to no significant improvements made by the comparison groups. However this study, like the present study, had a very low sample size and unmatched groups therefore limiting the extent to which these findings confidently demonstrate an impact or can be generalised to other contexts. Moreover, Burton, Osborne and Norgate's (2010) study utilized a quasi-experimental design, matching participants across groups strengthening the generalisability of their findings. Their results indicated that all but two of the dependant variables (SDQ – emotional symptoms and SDQ – pro-social behaviour) made significant improvements at post-test, whereas the control group remained stable. This study attempted to build on the findings of Burton, Osborne and Norgate's (2010) research by having an experimental and control group. However due to the constraints of conducting research in applied settings it was not possible to recruit a sample of sufficient size to allow comparison. Although improvements were made on the TA experimental group dependant variables, it was not possible to compare these with the control group. As such it may not possible to confidently accept the experimental hypothesis that ELSA had an impact on TA perceptions on the emotional well-being of pupils.

The discussion will now turn to the findings from the pupil data. A small change was recorded in the desired direction suggesting pupils perceived an improvement in their overall emotional literacy score following an ELSA based intervention, Similarly, changes were recorded for all but one of the control group pupil's ELC data from pre to post-test. These findings are interesting

particularly in the case of the comparison group, as although several of the TA ELC scores reduced from pre to post-test, the pupil ELC overall scores improved or remained unchanged. It might have been expected that pupil scores would increase or decline in much the same way the TA scores did. Similarities can be found again in earlier ELSA evaluations. For example, whilst Mann & Russell's (2011) study also demonstrated improvements in pupil self reports, but these differences were not statistically significant too. Whereas, Burton, Osborne & Norgate (2010) reported no significant changes on pupil rated ELC at post-test for either group. It may be that the changes, or lack there of, found in the present and previous studies may be as a result of pupils rating themselves highly on things they perceived as positive at pre-test. Alternatively pupils may, as a result of the ELSA based intervention lacked the awareness of their difficulties at the beginning but became more realistic about their difficulties at post-test. Whatever the reason, due to the limitations in the sample size and lack of comparative analyses it is not be possible to accept the experimental hypothesis that ELSA has significant impact on pupil's self-perceptions (as measured by the ELC) of emotional well-being.

Despite differences being found in experimental group scores from pre to post-test, it is not possible to make comparisons across groups due to limitations of the data. The findings indicate that there have been positive effects in the experimental group on pre to post-test scores, whereas the control group appear to have a reduction pupil emotional well-being, at least from the perspective of the TA informants. There are several possible interpretations of this finding. For example, TAs may have based their responses on what is evident in school, whereas pupils may have based their responses on both the school and home contexts. Additionally, the interventions and programmes delivered by TAs may only have an impact within the school context and may not generalize to other contexts such as the home. Furthermore, there is a possibility that the TAs themselves may have been more aware of what the ELSA based programmes were designed to achieve. Time may also have been an issue. Although speculative, pupils

may have needed longer to become aware of, and recognize, a change in their behaviours. Of course this is speculative and does not confirm the efficacy of ELSA, further research would be needed to determine the effectiveness of ELSA.

In the context of this research, emotional well-being is viewed as an overarching construct that refers not only to the social and emotional competencies that contribute to one's emotional literacy, but also the psychological and social well-being discussed by Adi et al (2007). However, as discussed in chapter 2, these constructs have long been subject to scrutiny for their complexity and the interchangeability amongst commentators (Weare & Gray, 2002). The evolution of emotional literacy in the UK context appears to have evolved from being considered as a subset of personal and social intelligence (Gardner, 1983) to a less fixed abilities based model, such as Goleman's (1998) mixed model of emotional competences. Commentators have criticized the broad nature of these models, claiming that they have little conceptual meaning and that an accurate scientific construct is unobtainable (Zeidner, Roberts & Matthews, 2004). The issues highlighted by Wigelsworth, Humphrey, Kalambouka & Lendrum (2010) may have particular relevance to this study, in that the conceptual differences make it difficult for researchers to measure and assess such constructs. Although this study utilized measures that are commonly used in evaluative research (SDQ – Goodman, 1997 & ELC – Faupel, 2003), the constructs they have been designed to measure may still be considered as broad, highlighting the question of their predictive validity (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000 & Weare, 2004). Despite this, the development of pupils' social, emotional skills and behaviour are considered critical to the development of a healthy school (DfES, 2004) and these measures are often used in educational and mental health research.

The results of this study may also reflect a difficulty in the assessment of the intervention. ELSA provides psychological theory and practical strategies to support the emotional well-being of pupils via TA led interventions, the issue highlighted here is that a variety of specific programmes are considered in the modular input of ELSA (see table 3.2). Prior research, illustrated in the

systematic review (Chapter 2) demonstrates the effectiveness of individual programmes to support the specific social, emotional and behavioural skills of pupils, such as 'Circle of friends' and SEAL, for example. Frederickson, Warren & Turner (2005) evaluated a 'Circle of Friends' (Gray, 1997) intervention against the intended benefit of target pupil's social inclusion and found there to be little direct impact. Similarly, Kalambouka et al. (2010) evaluating a SEAL based intervention against the social and emotional skills (measured by the ELC) and behavioural adjustment (measured by the SDQ) found no statistically significant findings to demonstrate the efficacy of the approach. However, experimental group staff self-reports suggested the intervention had a positive impact, albeit with a small effect size, on the social emotional skills of pupils selected for extra support, specifically a reduction in behavioural difficulties. In the context of this study, it may be that the individual programmes / interventions used with pupils in both groups may have varying benefits and the measures used to evaluate their impact may not be sensitive enough to identify any changes made. It is therefore not be possible to confidently conclude whether ELSA had a measurable impact on pupil emotional well-being or not in this research.

5.2.2. Research question 2

This section will consider qualitative data gathered via a focus group conducted with recently trained ELSAs and follow-up survey data of the same sample after 6 months, to answer the research question:

> *How does the ELSA project impact on TAs perceptions of the emotional well-being of pupils, and their role and training in supporting the development of pupil emotional well-being?*

The decision to gather qualitative data from the same sample at two time points was to allow for a comparison of themes identified from separate thematic analyses. This, it was hoped, would provide further insight into participants' perceptions following training and after a period of time in role, whereby any new knowledge and skills acquired could have been

implemented. Whilst the purpose of this stage of the study is not to investigate a hypothesized change in participants' views, attention is given to any differences or areas of convergence (for full data set see data disc appendix 10).

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 in chapter 4 illustrate the individual thematic maps from focus group and questionnaire data respectively. What follows is a discussion of participants' perceptions regarding their role and training. The discussion identifies points of convergence, contradiction and difference from both analyses and the links with the literature presented in chapter 2. Every effort was made to ensure that points of convergence were not a result of one analysis influencing the other, for example, by adopting the procedure recommended by Braun & Clarke (2006).

Time and Need for more time

A subtheme that emerged from both analyses was in regard to the need for more time. Participants discussed the challenges faced in their day-to-day role such as being restricted by time particularly when there is an expectation and pressure to provide immediate support for pupils' rather than using time to plan effectively to meet the often complex needs of pupils they typically work with.

> *"Its time factors as well isn't it, time always plays a big thing on the job, your very conscious of the time that you've got you don't want to spend all that time planning when you could be doing." (participant 4, focus group)*

This feeling was also present at follow-up, with some participants still expressing the need for more time to work with pupils as their deployment had not changed following completion of the ELSA training. Literature presented in chapter 2 illustrates that the role of TAs is both broad as well as complex, with TAs perceiving their role as predominantly being to offer general support for all pupils and support for specific groups, such as those with SEN less so

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(Russell et al, 2005). Additionally research had suggested that schools felt the most successful interventions TAs were used for involved 1:1 and small group support for pupils with SEBD (Groom & Rose, 2005). The literature highlights the complex issues faced by settings when providing support for pupils identified as vulnerable or having SEN. Participants' views in the present study may reflect the challenges faced by TAs who are often expected to work at the pupil, teacher, curriculum and school level (DfES, 2000). Findings from a previous survey of recently trained ELSAs also identified the need for more time, not only to deliver but also to plan ELSA based sessions (Bravery & Harris, 2009).

Pupil involvement and pupil participation

Interestingly, a similar subtheme label of 'pupil involvement' and 'pupil participation' emerging from both sets of data highlighted a contradiction amongst some participants' views. For example, during the focus group participants discussed the challenges faced when working with pupils such as acknowledging pupils views, developing pupil's recognition of the need to change, and the influence of peers on the pupil's perceived sense of self. Whereas the questionnaire data suggests that participants' views reflected a more positive view that target pupils were able to make progress when involving peers in the support work.

This apparent contradiction may reflect the complex and broad spectrum of the TA role, ranging from 'general dogsbody' to 'specialist', identified by Balshaw & Farrell (2002) and Kerry (2005, p377). With such a broad spectrum of potential duties commentators suggest the role of the TA may require a higher level of preparedness with regard to expectations made when working at the pupil level (Webster et al, 2010). In terms of pupil involvement ELSAs may need greater preparedness regarding how to manage the various challenges and positive aspects they encounter in their role.

Perceptions of others

Another convergent theme was to be found in the 'perceptions of others' from both focus group and questionnaire data analysis. Both of these subthemes appear to reflect a challenge expressed by ELSAs regarding the unrealistic expectations for their role or pupil outcomes and a lack of support from colleagues or more senior leaders. For example:

> *"I think also [it's] hard when people think that you're the specialist in that area, 'so I'll be able to come to you and you'll fix that child and I don't need to worry about that child anymore', and you can't take that on your shoulders can you. You need to be able to share that with other people and you need to be able to think and work as a team and 'we can do it together' not just taking it all on myself because I can't do this" (participant 4 – focus group)*

This contrasts with the findings of previous studies regarding the impact of TA support for pupils with SEBD. Groom & Rose (2005) gathered responses from line managers and found there to be several criteria by which they determine the effectiveness of TA deployment in relation to support for pupils with SEBD. These criteria included pupils meeting targets, reduced periods of exclusion and the amount of 1:1 support needed (Groom & Rose, 2005).

In contrast, one participant's response illustrates that others' awareness of their role supported rather than challenged it:

> *"…teachers and parents are able to approach me and raise concerns, worries about their children, seek advice and enable me to be aware of individuals who may need support." (participant 1- questionnaire data)*

Comments such as these reflect similar findings from an ELSA evaluation by Bravery & Harris (2009) who found that one of the key features that would enhance the likelihood of effective ELSA work was recognition and understanding of their role by staff, parents and the children, this is consistent with an implication highlighted from analysis of the questionnaire data in this study (see Chapter 4, page 127-8).

Support and Support needs

These subthemes reflect convergent ideas regarding the support needs of TAs highlighted by participants at both time points. During the focus group participants' comments seemed to reflect the need for closer peer support following the ELSA training, giving them opportunity to network and share good practice. This was perhaps an indication that TAs' recognize that support for pupil and their own emotional well-being was the responsibility of all adults in a school. Although not dissimilar, comments from the questionnaire data enhanced these ideas by including the need for support from other colleagues and professionals, such as the EP. These themes add to findings illustrated by Bravery & Harris (2009) who suggested that recently trained ELSA viewed access to external support from professionals, such as EPs or specialist advisory teachers, as enhancing the likelihood of effective ELSA work. Findings from this evaluation also suggested the value found in attendance at ELSA regional network meetings that are held each term (Bravery & Harris, 2009), although no such regional network exists in the local authority in which this study took place, the comments made by the participants seem to suggest a need for some form of networking opportunities within this context.

Working with others

The emergence of this theme at both time points reflects the discussions and comments made by participants in relation to their role when working with others, such as parents/carers and pupils. During the focus group participants discussed how the TAs supported pupils and their parents by facilitating positive parent child-relationships and how this was a key factor in developing pupil emotional well-being. As such, 'working with others' emerged as a subtheme within the wider theme of 'Role'. Whereas, TA responses in the questionnaire led to the generation of an overarching theme of 'working with others', which encapsulated both pupil participation and support from others.

The themes and subthemes of 'support', 'support needs' and 'working with others' illustrate the TAs' perception that the development of pupil emotional well-being involves the collaboration, communication and support of all adults in and out of school.

Whilst there have been no other ELSA evaluations that have explored the ELSAs perceptions or the views of parents and/or pupils directly. Bravery & Harris (2009) cite individual quotes from head teachers, made by parents as a result of the ELSA support their child received, that suggested a positive impact on pupil emotional well-being, academic achievement, behaviour and attendance. The themes 'Working with others' in this study offers new insight into how ELSAs themselves perceive the increased frequency of working with other people in their role and the benefit this may have for pupils.

Training experiences and Training needs

These themes reflect a convergence of ELSAs' views about the explicit value the ELSA training had for them as practitioners. TA participants also appeared to hold the view that additional training would be needed, whether this was to fill gaps in their knowledge regarding a particular topic:

> *"Training around CP* (child protection) *issues / bereavement / family breakdown / anxiety." (participant 4 – questionnaire data)*

Or to extend the training they already received:

> *"I would have certainly liked to have spent time on every one of the subjects and done some more practical work on what we were talking about possibly. And of course there's been 10 weeks it could do to be perhaps over a longer period and spend more time on each erm session. I got a lot out of it but I think we could have gone a bit deeper into it all." (participant 1 – focus group)*

Training needs, such as those described by participants above, reflect the supplementary findings of Bravery & Harris's (2009) evaluation, specifically the need for further training on particular topic areas. Whilst the literature recognizes the need for effective training of TAs to contribute to career progression (Groom, 2006), case study findings suggested that often school leaders felt that formal training was not a priority for their staff or setting (Blatchford et al, 2009). A lack of value placed on formal training by school leaders (Blatchford et al, 2009) may provide a partial explanation of why some participants had a negative view of their training opportunities. Interestingly the literature also highlights the need for TA training to take account of the needs of the school, the pupils and TAs themselves (Moran & Abbott, 2002). In the context of this study, the question may be raised as to whether or not the ELSA training reflected the needs of the setting, pupils or TAs. The modular input may have been adjusted to meet the individual or collective needs of the ELSAs and the settings they represent.

Barriers to effective TA training have been associated with time (releasing TAs) and funding implications (DfE, 2010). However what is considered as central to the success of professional development of TAs is a collaborative school culture built on partnerships, sharing good practice, peer support and mentoring (Groom, 2006). These are factors participants in this study appear to perceive they may have been without, particularly when examining the themes such as 'pressures and challenges of role' and 'support needs' in detail; for example:

> *"I think also hard when people think that you're the specialist in that area, 'so I'll be able to come to you and you'll fix that child and I don't need to worry about that child anymore', and you can't take that on your shoulders can you, you need to be able to share that with other people and you need to be able to think and work as a team and 'we can do it together' not just taking it all on myself because I can't do this"* (focus group participant 4)

Professional skills and knowledge

Professional skill and knowledge emerged as a theme from both focus group and questionnaire data. In both cases participants' reflected what they valued most about the ELSA training was the impact it had on their professional development. For example, it was felt that new knowledge had value but also that the training had affirmed their current practices giving them confidence to plan and implement targeted interventions based on ELSA in the future. The theme appears to reflect outcomes that have been found in other research involving training delivered by EPs (see Hayes et al, 2011). For example, one participant talked about an increased awareness of pupil vulnerabilities following ELSA training, whilst others commented on how new knowledge enhanced their existing knowledge and skills (see section 2.4.5). These are also reflected in comments found in Hayes et al's (2011) study of TA training on Video Interactive Guidance. TAs felt that the approach had a positive impact on their skills and confidence to support challenging pupils.

Bravery & Harris (2009) present participant comments rating the quality of the ELSA training they had received, some of which refer to how the course materials / content has enhanced their practice. In the present study, participants' comments (such as the one below) illustrate this view by suggesting the training they received had a positive impact on their professional development;

> *"…teachers and parents are able to approach me and raise concerns, worries about their children, seek advice and enable me to be aware of individuals who may need support." (participant 1 – survey data)*

Purpose and Pre-existing knowledge of emotional well-being

The themes purpose and pre-existing knowledge reflect participants' views on the concept of emotional well-being and its development. However subtle

differences are to be found in the definition and context of the role from which these themes emerged. For example, some comments reflected differences in participants' perspectives as to the purpose of their role in relation to developing pupil social and emotional skills and resilience.

> *"We give them the tools to develop their social skills" (participant 1 – focus group)*

> *"I'm quite aware that with the children that I work with in year six that's what they're going up to, so I do try really hard to give them that independence in year six to try it for themselves, to try to fail, you know try failing and cope with failing sometimes." (participant 6 – focus group)*

Whereas other comments reflected ELSA's personal beliefs and existing knowledge about the concept of emotional well-being and how it is developed and what factors influence its development:

> *"Well they learn it from a baby don't they, it's usually from the mother, from the parents, from eye contact. Its cuddles, I don't know, its mums voice…" (participant 2 – focus group)*

> *(prompting question: Is there anything else that you think might hinder the development?) "And there's things like if there's been an illness in the family and there's gaps. Or abandonment, if they're looked after children, abuse" (participant 7 – focus group)*

But also how their knowledge base may be different to that of other colleagues in their settings, giving them a different perspective of pupil needs:

> *"I think we get to see the bigger picture as well, teachers just see this disruptive child who's, you know, causing problems in the class,*

whereas we see that there are wider issues. There's a reason why they are behaving in that way" (participant 7 – focus group)

Whilst these themes indicate a deeper knowledge and understanding of emotional well-being and how it is nurtured in participants than in non-ELSA trained colleagues, the differences and similarities amongst participant views may not be unexpected, given that the focus group was conducted following ELSA training. Whilst these comments may suggest the reinforcement of new and existing knowledge in ELSA trained TAs regarding the concept of emotional well-being and its development. It may also reflect a retention of knowledge and understanding gained from other government strategies that stress the importance of developing pupils' emotional well-being, such as ECM (DoH, 2003) and the introduction of SEAL (DfES, 2005). Unsurprising then, that within these themes participants referred to developing the social and emotional skills of pupils, as these skills and competences are central to Goleman's (1995) emotional intelligence domains, which are at the heart of SEAL.

Several themes were also generated during analysis of focus group data that weren't present in the questionnaire data analyses. Whilst these differences do not indicate a change in participants' perceptions, they are of interest in this study as they provide insight into participants' views regarding their role and training in supporting the development of pupil emotional well-being.

Evidence and outcomes

This subtheme was located within the overarching theme of 'challenges to role' and refers explicitly to the perceptions of ELSAs regarding the need for their work to produce evidence and demonstrate impact, on sometimes very complex needs, evidence for which is often provided anecdotally or through changes in the perceptions of others (such as teachers). Research into TA impact demonstrates that 50% of TAs' are employed to support just one pupil with a statement of SEN and this may predominantly be a teaching role

(Russell et al, 2005). In such circumstances the impact of TA support may be more easily evaluated based on learning outcomes. Findings from research into TA deployment and impact suggested that should TA deployment move away from allocation to individual pupils with SEN, there would need to be a focus on their preparedness with regard to expectations and requirements of the school, class teacher and pupil needs (Webster et al, 2010). On the other hand research into TA effectiveness with pupils SEBD proposed several success criteria (see section 2.3.5) by which TA performance with this group of pupils is determined, none of which were directly related to academic outcomes (Groom and Rose, 2005).

Characteristics of role

The 'characteristics of role' subtheme emerged from discussions between participants regarding differences in the variety, breadth and challenge of the TA role when supporting pupils with complex needs. These discussions typically referred to the perceived differences in the support needs of pupils in primary and secondary school. But also the perceived importance placed on early intervention, an awareness of environmental influences and the ability to respond to these flexibly to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. These perceived variances in the participants' roles are reflected in discussions in the literature around the scope of the TA role and future implications for training (Balshaw & Farrell, 2002 & Kerry, 2005). These convergent views may be indicative of an ongoing debate regarding what defines the role of the TA, particularly in regard to supporting pupils with complex needs.

Personal development

The final subtheme refers to the discussions and comments made by participants during the focus group regarding their personal development following the ELSA training. Comments included an increased awareness with regard to their own limitations but also an increased confidence with which to approach their role and apply new skills and knowledge. These findings are reflective of comments made by TAs following ELSA training in Bravery &

Harris's (2009) evaluation, particularly in regard to the TAs perceived need for recognition from colleagues and the development of their own identity within their settings. Similarly, research presented in the literature also suggests that TAs not only valued the training that they received but also recognized the influence it can have on pupils with whom they work (DfE, 2010). One of the outcomes of EP led training of TAs in the use of video interactive guidance was a positive impact on TA confidence to implement new practices as well as increasing their professional knowledge and skills (Hayes, Richardson, Hindle & Grayson, 2011).

In summary various points of convergence and even some points of difference were noted from a comparison of the thematic analyses. These appear to cover several important areas in relation to the research question. Firstly, ELSAs appear to have consistent views in relation to different aspects of their role particularly around their support or training needs, and the challenges and benefits faced when working with others such as teachers, parents/carers or pupils. Secondly participants shared interesting and similar views regarding the personal and professional developments they had made in their role following the ELSA training. This suggests that the ELSA training may have created deeper meaning and understanding, which may have a longer-term value for the participants, at least in the time between the focus group immediately after training and questionnaire some time later. Further longitudinal research would be needed to explore whether these views are sustained over a longer period of time. Furthermore, whilst it may not be possible to ascertain if participants' knowledge and understanding of the concept of emotional well-being had changed over the course or as a result of the ELSA training. The theme and subtheme of 'pre-existing knowledge of emotional well-being' and 'purpose' appears to reflect the ELSA's increased awareness and understanding of what supports the development of pupils' social, emotional competences and behavioural skills. ELSA's understanding and awareness of these constructs appeared to reflect current thinking regarding the development of social, emotional and behavioural competence,

such as those that were encouraged and central to SEAL intiative (DfES, 2005) and Goleman's (1995) emotional competence framework.

Balchin, Randall & Turner (2006) illustrate several objectives and aims of training associated with EP delivery (direct effect, training effect and general effect). In terms of the outcomes and findings from the present study, a case is put forward for the ELSA training having had a positive training effect on TAs, that is developing the skills of staff to sustain a future change The extent to which this study can be said to have had a direct effect on pupils remains uncertain due to the findings discussed in section 5.2 and the methodological limitations of this study (discussed in section 5.3). As for a general effect (whole school development / organizational change), although not definitive, several participants commented on how their ELSA training had a positive impact on their setting and the types of support they can provide:

> *"It has given some kudos to the different kinds of support our school can give." (participant 4 – survey data)*

> *"We have now given a second person some learning mentor hours to follow ELSA support. That person is currently applying for the next course." (participant 4 – survey data)*

5.2.3. Summary

This study employed a mixed methods approach to explore TA perceptions regarding their role, their relationships with others and the emotional well-being of pupils; as well as explore the effectiveness of the ELSA project on pupils' emotional well-being based upon TA and pupil perceptions. One aspect of the study was to gather quantitative data measuring TA and pupil perceptions in order to demonstrate the impact of ELSA training on pupil emotional well-being. Another aspect of the evaluation was an exploration of the views recently trained ELSAs' regarding their role and training in developing pupil emotional well-being. Within a pragmatist epistemology the

research questions are considered more important than any method or underpinning philosophical assumption (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Drawing upon the complementary strengths of different approaches, inferences can be made during a final integration of all analyses to better understand the phenomena under study (Creswell, 2003). The current study has not been able to confidently assert that the ELSA project had a significant impact on the development of pupils' emotional well-being based upon the quantitative analyses. These findings may be partly explained by methodological issues of this study (see section 5.3). However, triangulation with the qualitative data may offer additional insight. For example, as discussed in section 5.3 below several participants were unable to implement ELSA based interventions or programmes with individual pupils following the training due to changes in their deployment. This could reflect the challenges that some participants faced in their role, such as the expectations of others regarding their role in supporting the development of pupils' emotional well-being. It may also reflect additional challenges of not having enough time to effectively target, plan and support the needs of pupils. This may raise important questions regarding how TAs' are deployed to support pupils' social and emotional skills and behavioural needs as well as their academic needs in schools. Further research may, therefore, wish to explore how senior managers and head teachers view ELSAs role, work and deployment.

5.3. Trustworthiness of the research

Mertens (2010) suggests that an appropriate approach to critically analyse a mixed methods study would be to apply the relevant criteria to evaluate the individual quantitative and qualitative methods used. Therefore, issues regarding reliability and validity are discussed in relation to the quantitative data, whilst a subsequent discussion will consider the trustworthiness of the qualitative data.

5.3.1. Reliability and validity of quantitative data

Reliability

Reliability refers to the stability or consistency with which something is measured (Robson, 2002). The following discussion considers the reliability of the instruments used to measure perceived emotional literacy and perceived behavioural adjustment.

Emotional Literacy Checklist (Faupel, 2003)

The ELC is frequently used in research and intervention evaluation. The scales were originally developed by multidisciplinary teams involved in EL projects and initiatives in schools in Southampton, UK. Items were deemed to be adequate and appropriate measures of each of the underlying dimensions of emotional literacy as defined by Goleman (1996). The checklist has established reliability, using Cronbach's Alpha, with the majority of scale scores for the teacher and parent checklist above 0.7, indicative of good levels of reliability (scores range from 0 to 1, the higher the score the more reliable a scale; Faupel, 2003). However only overall emotional literacy score on the pupil checklist was found to be reliable, therefore subscales and cut-offs were not provided for this checklist (Faupel, 2003). Whilst the predictive validity of these measures has been argued for, this does not necessarily ensure reliability within this study. A threat to reliability may be found in the test – retest reliability (repeatability) of the ELC. To limit this threat the researcher gave instructions to participants to ensure that pre and post-test measures were taken 6-8 weeks apart and under the same conditions (Robson, 2002).

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997)

Like the ELC, the SDQ has been extensively used as an evaluation tool within clinical settings and schools, and in research studies that seek to evaluate specific interventions (Goodman, 1997). Additionally previous ELSA evaluations (Burton & Norgate, 2010) have also used this instrument as a measure of behavioural adjustment. The reliability and predictive validity of the SDQ was established via correlation with an alternative questionnaire (Rutter questionnaire – Elander & Rutter, 1996). Parent –teacher correlations

for both measures were found to be equivalent, even slightly favouring the SDQ in its predictive validity at distinguishing between psychiatric and non-psychiatric samples (Goodman, 1997). The dependant variable measured using the SDQ is pupil's behavioural adjustment, as rated by school staff (TA). The decision not to use the child self-rated checklist was because it is not standardised for pupils below the age of 11. However, the predictive validity of the SDQ doesn't necessarily ensure reliability in this study because of the threat to test – retest reliability. Participants were therefore given the same instruction regarding the administration of the SDQ and measures were taken 6-8 weeks apart in an attempt to limit this potential threat.

Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure reliability of measures it is possible the threats identified may have influenced participants' responses.

Validity

Internal validity assumes that the changes made on a dependant variable are due to the effect of an independent variable (Mertens, 2010). Section 3.6.1 refers to possible threats to internal validity (outlined by Robson, 2002 & Mertens, 2010) in this study and the steps taken to reduce these at the planning stage.

Due to practical difficulties in obtaining a wait-list control group matched to the characteristics of the experimental group, the control group in this study was made up of participants from one setting. As such the study may not be considered as having a representative sample. Additionally, it was not possible to control for contextual changes in the settings of either group thus limiting claims that can be made on the data. However as the control group was selected via convenience sampling, the threat of experimental treatment diffusion is reduced, as the researcher was able to seek participants who had no experience of ELSA. This method of sampling also meant it was not possible to utilise a RCT design, considered the 'gold standard' (Robson, 2002; p116) in fixed designs. However the quasi-experimental design used in this study is considered the best alternative due to criticism of RCT's not being practical in real world research (Robson, 2002).

Due to unforeseen circumstances with experimental group participants (TA) deployment after the ELSA training, the number of participants able to implement an ELSA based programme and take pre and post-test measures (TA and pupil) was only 5. This influenced the choice of appropriate statistical tests and analyses that could be performed on the data and also the interpretations that could be made. Despite the maturation of participants' both groups sample sizes were the same (pupils n=5).

Furthermore, the researcher did not control for the specific ELSA based intervention or programmes that were implemented by the experimental group or the programme implemented by the control group. This may also limit the claims that can be made on the data as it becomes more difficult to identify whether changes made on perceptions of pupil emotional well-being are as a result of the training received by the TAs or specific characteristics of the individual programme(s) that were implemented. Additionally a period of 6-8 weeks was established as the time between pre and post-test measure being taken, this may have been too short a time period for any changes in TA or self perceptions of pupil emotional well-being to have been detected and altered significantly. Commentators suggest that programmes aiming to develop social and emotional competence are more effective the longer they are in place with some taking years (Durlak, 1995). Practical issues such as time meant that a longer period between pre and post-test measures was not possible.

External validity, often termed generalisability, refers to the extent to which findings can be generalised to other contexts or populations (Robson, 2002). The threats to the external validity of this aspect of the study are presented in section 3.6.1. All participants in this study attended mainstream primary schools. The specific groups under study were TAs and pupils (identified as having social, emotional and behavioural needs). The intervention under study was the ELSA project delivered by EPs to groups of TAs in different regions of the LA. The intervention is a published intervention and as such is

delivered in a prescribed format, 5 full days of modular input with 3 subsequent supervision sessions. Therefore, it is argued that the findings from this study may be generalisable to other contexts and populations that have implemented the ELSA project in the same way as it has been delivered in this study.

5.3.2. Trustworthiness of qualitative data

Trustworthiness of qualitative research considers the role of the researcher as being part of the research, describing the data in terms of processes and generating meaning from interpretations made on the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). A description of the threats to the trustworthiness of qualitative data in this study is to be found in section 3.6.2. Several steps were taken to limit the effects of these threats. For example, a clear and explicit process was made throughout the data collection and analysis stages by means of an audit trail (see study timeline) and utilising Braun & Clarke's (2006) framework for conducting thematic analyses. The focus group method was piloted in an attempt to verify the practical utility of prompting questions before they were used with the experimental group. The experimental group focus group was also recorded using an audio device, with consent, to limit potential inaccuracies that could be made on transcribing the data. However, it is recognised that focus groups aren't without limitations such as the risk of non-participation of some members possibly due to more dominant voices. This was addressed via the focus group script and the facilitation, used by the researcher, through which participants were informed that all contributions were welcomed and valued.

A second qualitative method used in this study was an open-ended questionnaire, mailed to each of the experimental group TA participants. This method has the benefit being a cost-effective approach, enabling a greater level of discovery regarding participants' views (Gilham, 2007). Although written responses to a questionnaire may limit the scope of these views, this approach was deemed appropriate as a follow-up method due to the

geographical and practical difficulties (TA time) associated with organising another focus group.

It is recognised that the trustworthiness of the qualitative data in this study may also be influenced by the theoretical constructions the researcher brought to the research. This threat was limited by the researcher utilising the framework of Braun & Clarke (2006) to code and analyse all data in both data sets. Further steps were taken to establish the reliability of the codes and themes that emerged from the analysis via inter-observer checks found in section 4.3.

5.3.3. Summary

In this study the rationale and research questions justify the use of a mixed methods design and that the purposes and questions are appropriate to the methods used as the author sought to explore perceptions of the TAs in relation to their role, their relationships and the well-being of pupils. But also to explore if the ELSA training had a measurable impact on these TA perceptions and those of the pupils themselves. Efforts were made to reduce the threats to the internal validity of the quantitative portion of the study, however these threats created by sample size and sampling bias limit the extent to which firm conclusions can be drawn from the findings. Similarly, the criteria defining quality for qualitative research were adhered to; such as undertaking reliability checks on the analyses and utilising a framework to support the process of thematic analysis.

5.4. Implications of the findings

It is not possible to assert with confidence that the ELSA project has had an impact on pupils' emotional well-being based upon the quantitative data in the current study due to the limitations discussed above. Further quantitative research is therefore needed involving a larger sample size, and comparison and control group. However, implications about how recently trained ELSAs perceive their role and training in supporting the development of pupils'

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emotional well-being may be suggested. For example, with regard to TAs, findings suggest that the ELSA training had value for both TAs and in some cases a perceived benefit on the school. This was reflected by comments referring to their professional development and personal development following the ELSA training. In the context of the growing number of TAs being deployed to support pupils' with SEBD (Groom & Rose, 2005) and the recognition in the literature that professional development opportunities for TAs is essential (Groom, 2006), this study suggests that the ELSA project provides a comprehensive and supportive professional development programme that can meet the needs of TAs. Further research is needed to ascertain the direct effects on pupils, TA efficacy and school setting.

Despite comments by ELSA's reflecting the challenge created by the perceptions of others, these findings suggest that TAs appeared to perceive that the ELSA training had a wider impact on schools. One participant commented on the indirect effect their training had on the setting:

> *"It has given some kudos to the different kinds of support our school can give." (participant 4 - questionnaire)*

Commentators suggest that effective training is often supported throughout the setting, underpinned by additional sessions and peer support (Groom, 2006). The findings in this study are consistent with this and appear to suggest that the structure of the ELSA training not only facilitated the acquisition of new skills and knowledge but also provided TAs with effective peer support and supervision (see section 4.3.1.).

Implications for EP practice

The role of the EP has been seen as widening from the more traditional level of working with individual children (Jones & Frederickson, 1990) to working at the organizational and systems level, providing training and developing provision (Curran, Gersch & Wolfendale, 2003). For the latter to be effective there needs to be opportunities for those being trained to engage in

experiential learning supported via scaffolding and coaching (Balchin, Randall & Turner, 2006). Each of these aspects are embedded in the structure of the ELSA training used in this study. This appeared to enable EPs to deliver effective and successful training and support for TAs to use and take back to their settings.

However, future implementation of ELSA by the host EPS may wish to consider the views expressed in this study regarding the support needs of the TAs, perhaps by supporting the establishment of a TA/ELSA peer support network. A need identified by participants (see section 4.3.1). Additionally, time and focus may need to be given to determining the views and needs of the settings releasing TAs to attend the training to ensure that the training as well as supporting the development of TAs' skills and knowledge meets the needs of the school setting in which they work. As these are factors that help to ensure training is most effective (Balchin, Randall & Turner, 2006).

5.5 Implications for Further research

There a number of implications for future research stemming from this study. The findings in relation to the impact of ELSA on pupils' emotional well-being were uncertain. The main explanation for the inconclusive findings may be down to the small sample size and difficulty controlling for potential extraneous variables that may influence pupil's emotional well-being. This suggests that future research should seek a larger and more representative sample and to establish a study involving robust experimental and control group

The host EPS is continuing to implement the ELSA training with groups of TAs across the LA. Therefore more research in the LA context is needed to ascertain the ongoing impact of ELSA training on TA and self-perceptions of pupil emotional well-being. Section 2.5 presented a review of existing ELSA evaluations and found only 2 studies that were able to make confident assertions as to the impact of ELSA on pupils' emotional well-being (Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010 & Murray, 2010). The present research, along with

previous studies attempted to use experimental methodologies to investigate the impact of ELSA with various degrees of success. Consideration needs to be give to how experimental control conditions can be created in these applied real world settings in order to support a fuller and more thorough evaluation of the ELSA programme. As schools are invited to release a TA to attend the ELSA training, it may not be possible for future research to be conducted using more rigorous experimental methodologies, such as RCTs. To build on limitations of the current study future research may wish to replicate the experimental methods used but recruit larger samples from both primary and secondary schools to ensure a representative sample and include more than one setting in the control group. Future research may also wish to seek longitudinal and follow up data in addition to pre and post-test data to investigate if any changes are maintained over time. Additionally in order to investigate ELSA training's effectiveness, research may wish to compare its impact relative to alternative TA training projects seeking to develop similar skills such as?

The constructs of behavioural adjustment and emotional literacy have been criticized within the literature as being too broad and complex to accurately measure and assess (Wigelsworth, Humphrey, Kalambouka & Lendrum, 2010). Future research may wish to focus and investigate the impact of ELSA on just one of these constructs. Further research may also wish to explore the broader impact of improving pupils' emotional well-being, in relation to social inclusion, connectedness to school, reductions in exclusions or academic attainment as this has yet to be explored in available research. Participants in the focus group suggested that the purpose of TA/ELSA role was to support the development of key social emotional skills, competences and resilience. The latter concept has not, as yet, been explored in the available research. It may be advantageous to explore the extent to which pupils' resilience is developed as a result of ELSA based intervention.

The current study explored perceptions of recently trained ELSAs regarding

their role and training in supporting pupils' emotional well-being. Whilst the methods used to explore this research question were deemed appropriate future research may wish to explore these in more detail, in examining the self-efficacy beliefs of ELSAs, for example. Only one existing ELSA evaluation had explored this area (Grahamslaw, 2010), however the findings are unclear as only the abstract was available for review. Findings from the focus group and questionnaire data suggested mixed views with regard to how the ELSAs' perceived their colleagues viewed their role. Future research may wish to explore these perceptions using qualitative methods in an attempt to understand how they may influence implementation of ELSA based programmes. Finally future research, in addition to investigating pupil outcomes, may wish to explore the perceptions of pupils themselves regarding the support they receive, its perceived impact and value to inform the future implementation of ELSA based programmes.

5.6 Researchers reflections

The current study provided the researcher with valuable experience working closely with TAs during their professional development on the ELSA training programme and directly in their settings supporting their knowledge of programme planning and evaluation. The researcher also gained useful experience of undertaking applied research and managing the challenges this presents.

Ensuring that individual and small group interventions supporting the SEBD needs of pupils are appropriately planned and evaluated has been an area of learning for the researcher. This knowledge has been utilised in the researcher's role as a trainee EP working with school staff to support the complex needs of pupils.

As outlined in the methodology and discussion sections, there were a number of factors that influenced the planning, implementation, analysis and evaluation phases of this mixed method study. The original intention was to

use a concurrent triangulation strategy, employing quantitative and qualitative methods, to answer three research questions, which at that point were focused on seeking measurable data to explain the utility of the intervention. However, during the research process the researcher became aware that the intended strategy needed to be adapted and changed due to the challenges faced in securing a sample of sufficient size. The concurrent triangulation strategy required the study to produce enough valid quantitative data and to triangulate this with the qualitative data collected. Due to the complex school system in which the TAs worked their deployment varied, leading to sample attrition and a significantly reduced final sample size.

At the point of data collection it became clear that it would not be possible to draw conclusions and statistical inferences from the quantitative data. Instead the researcher decided to review the research questions in light of these pragmatic challenges and adjust the mixed methods research strategy to have a more exploratory purpose and focus. By enhancing the qualitative methods the researcher was able to explore with greater depth the underlying mechanisms that may have underpinned any changes observed in TA perceptions. Consequently, and perhaps more appropriately, the quantitative data became a more minor part of the study and was used to support the revised exploratory aim of the research.

The pragmatic positioning of this research allowed the researcher the flexibility to revisit the research questions and mixed methods strategy after the data had been collected. Despite this, the researcher is aware of the alternative methods and approaches that could have been taken to enhance the original research design. For example, the researcher was aware of the complex system of the schools in which the TAs worked and that this may have hindered implementation of ELSA based programmes. Furthermore, TA deployment varied amongst the participants', therefore time would have been limited to undertake additional duties such as ELSA based interventions. In future it might be useful to collaborate with the settings releasing TAs for

ELSA training to establish expectations regarding the professional development opportunities for the TAs and the implications this may have for their deployment and support they can provide. These steps may have helped produce sufficient valid quantitative data to answer the original research questions.

The adjustments made to the research strategy required subsequent changes to the methods employed by the researcher at the analysis and evaluation stage. For example, to reduce the emphasis on the quantitative data, the researcher had to revisit the raw data and conduct descriptive analyses only, as the sample size prevented the use inferential statistics, therefore limiting the findings taken from the quantitative data to being purely exploratory. Furthermore, to enhance the qualitative findings the researcher revisited the analyses, in order to identify and explore the latent meaning of each of the themes. An important learning outcome for researcher from their research journey was how to respond flexibly to the pragmatic challenges faced as by an applied researcher. Although real world constraints may have limited the methodological choices available to the researcher, the epistemological position gave them the flexibility to adapt and make changes to aspects of the study at various stages.

The researcher learned a great deal about undertaking applied research, particularly in regard to the qualitative aspect of the study. For example regular communication was essential due to the geographical locations of participants. This became significant when gathering participants' views using a questionnaire. The researcher needed to manage these situations accordingly, for example when questionnaires or quantitative pre and post-test measures were not returned on time. In future the researcher may need to make more effort to communicate directly with participants face to face to ensure a higher response rate.

Given the practical limitations to do with geography and time, the researcher

feels that the methods used to maintain contact ensured participation in the qualitative aspect of the study. Furthermore the researcher has gained valuable experience undertaking the qualitative aspect of this study. The challenge for the researcher throughout was to be mindful of any potential influence they may have gathering the data and in its analysis. The steps taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the qualitative aspect of the study (see section 5.3.2) attempts to limit these influences. It is hoped these experiences will enhance the researchers developing practice as an applied psychologist in their role as a trainee EP.

6. Conclusions

This chapter will summarise the main findings from this study and the unique contribution of this study to research and practice will be discussed.

6.1. Main findings

This study aimed to investigate the impact of the ELSA project on pupils' emotional well-being and explore participants perceptions regarding their role and training. Several research questions were created to address these aims and shall be considered separately.

Research question 1

> *Does the ELSA project have a measurable impact on pupil and TA perceptions of emotional well-being?*

The findings relating to the impact of the ELSA project on TAs perceptions of pupil emotional well-being are inconclusive due to methodological limitations discussed in section 5.3. Statistical analyses revealed changes from pre-test to post-test in the experimental group were in the desired direction. These were for TA ELC overall score and TA SDQ Total Difficulties. Although this suggests that TAs perceptions of pupils emotional literacy and behavioural adjustment improved following implementation of ELSA based programmes caution needs to be used when interpreting these findings due to the sample and methodological limitations reported above which precluded a full statistical analysis between groups.

As with the findings for the TA checklist data, the findings relating to pupil self-perceptions are also inconclusive for the same reasons. Statistical analyses made on the pupil self-rated measures show an increase from pre to post-test in pupil self perceptions in the experimental group and control group,

However, the sample and methodological limitations reported above precluded a full statistical analysis between groups.

Research question 2

How does the ELSA project impact on TAs perceptions of the emotional well-being of pupils, their role and training in supporting the development of pupil emotional well-being?

Thematic analyses of focus group and questionnaire data generated a number of themes relating to ELSAs' perceptions of their role and training. Several points of convergence were identified across both thematic analyses, as well as points of difference. For example points of convergence included the perceived challenges and pressures of their role. Particularly in relation to the perception of others (colleagues) and the need for more time to target, plan and implement effective programmes of support for pupils. Whilst not definitive, these views may help explain the reduction of the experimental group from 14 to only 5 participants being able to implement an ELSA based programme and taking pre and post-test data. It may also reflect a challenge of ensuring implementation of an intervention in applied research. However TAs valued the ELSA training in terms of the development of their professional knowledge and skills. What is not clear is the extent to which TA development was valued by setting leaders or if influenced TA deployment in that setting. Further research would be needed to explore the views of setting leaders.

In addition, participants' views regarding their support and training needs were reflected across both analyses. That is the ELSA training was valued most by those taking part and was viewed as supporting their professional development in terms of knowledge and skills, but also their personal development in areas such as confidence. The principal aim of ELSA is to develop the skills and knowledge of TAs to meet the emotional needs of pupils in a school context (Burton, 2008). The views reflected by participants

in these themes suggest that these aims have been reached. Not only did participants reflect on their professional development in terms of increased knowledge and skills, but also their understanding of the purpose of their role to support the social, emotional and behavioural skills of pupils' in school settings.

Whilst triangulation of the different types of data collected in this study has not been able to confirm the effectiveness of ELSA on pupil outcomes it has highlighted implications and improvements that may be made in future research and practice. In addition, findings from thematic analyses of both focus group and questionnaire data also highlight interesting areas for further research to explore, for example how teachers and school leaders perceive ELSA role, work and deployment, and what contributes to the successful implementation of ELSA based work to support the emotional well-being of pupils' in school settings.

6.2. Unique contribution

The present study has added to existing ELSA research by providing an in depth exploration of the views of ELSAs. Whilst experimental data remains inconclusive as to the impact of ELSA on pupils' emotional well-being, the exploratory findings identified important areas that may help explain and provide further insight into the factors contributing to these inconclusive findings by gathering the perceptions of recently trained ELSAs immediately after training and in role. These findings have also contributed to the development of ideas for future research and practice.

The qualitative methods used in this study enabled the researcher to provide and in depth exploration of participants' views regarding their role and training. A limited number of existing evaluations sought the views of ELSAs, teachers and school leaders (Bravery & Harris, 2009; Murray, 2010). However these methods relied solely on evaluation forms to capture views based upon rating scales and supplementary comments. The present thesis aimed to

triangulate both quantitative and qualitative forms of data in an attempt to both investigate impact but also to explore and understand the perceptions of those involved in the training and implementation of ELSA (Creswell, 2003).

The findings also provide evidence that may guide the host EPS's future use of the ELSA project. For example, several of the themes that emerged from thematic analyses suggested that participants valued the ELSA training but would have liked aspects of the content to reflect the needs of their contexts. Additionally themes regarding the perceptions of others may have implications for how future implementation of the ELSA training is negotiated with setting leaders. For example, allocated time given to implementation of ELSA based programmes is integrated into ELSA trained TA practice but also support networks between ELSAs are set up or supported by link EPs. An explanation of the quantitative findings could be that the programmes implemented by ELSA had varying SEBD outcomes. In this case the instruments used in this study might not have been precise enough to capture any changes made from pre to post-test. It may be that EPs have a role to play in supporting ELSAs to identify the best methods of planning, implementing and evaluating ELSA based programmes and interventions.

Finally a positive contribution has been made to the stakeholders involved in this study. Participants valued not just the professional development but also the personal development as a result of the ELSA project. There is evidence (see section 4.2.2.) of gains made based upon TA (ELSA) measures suggesting that the ELSAs at least perceived there to be a positive change in pupil outcomes. It is hoped that the participants' settings have benefited from the personal and professional development of the participants and this is reflected in their practice. These findings have further made a positive contribution to the host EPS by providing evidence and potential directions for future implementation of ELSA.

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Appendix 1: Study timeline

Table 3.5 illustrates the activities carried out by the researcher in conducting this research project. This takes into account the necessary decisions and changes that had to be made by the researcher during the course of this research study, including intended timescales for the write up of individual chapters of the research thesis.

Time period	Activity – intended	Researcher activity - Intended	Activity and Researcher activity – Actual	Proposed timescale for thesis write up by section
Autumn term 2011	- Cohort 1 complete ELSA training - Cohort 2 identified	- Research proposal submission - Submission for ethical approval - Pilot focus group with cohort 1	Pilot focus group	Plan Literature Review
Spring term – 2012	- Cohort 2 Begin ELSA training - Cohort 2 ELSA training - Cohort 3 identified	- Brief participants and gain consent - Focus group prior to ELSA training - Brief participants and gain consent (cohort 3) - Begin Pre-post test measures (cohort 3)	- Cohort 3 not selected for use as wait-list control group as it was too late to confirm individual TAs and begin necessary data collection - Decision to seek control group schools from colleagues in EPS.	Write literature review
	- Cohort 2 due to complete ELSA training	- Final focus group on completion of ELSA training	- Cohort 2 pre focus group data discarded due to technical error with recording. Decision made to gather only post focus group	

			data requiring change in research question.	
Summer term - 2012	- Cohort 3 begin ELSA training	- Establish period of intervention (cohort 2) - Obtain consent for measures to be taken - Gather pre-post test data from cohort 2	Researcher unable to recruit control group schools from EPS colleagues, decision made to approach researchers own schools to be part of research	Write and submit initial draft of literature review (end of summer term) Plan and gather literature for Methodology section
	- Cohort 3 ELSA training	- Data gathering	Researcher gathering pre and post-test data from cohort 2 ELSA's	
	- Cohort 3 complete ELSA training.	- Debrief participants and stakeholders at end of research study		
Autumn term – 2012	- Data collection from cohort 3 - Analysis of cohort 2 pre-post-test data	Final data gathering and analysis - Write up of study by section	Final data collection from cohort 2 – ongoing Transcribe focus group data from Cohort 2.	Write and submit initial draft of Methodology section
	- End of Autumn term, analysis of completed pre and post-test data from cohort 3		Recruitment of control group schools, including briefing, obtaining consent and data collection Development of questionnaire	
Spring term – 2012	-	Write up study thesis by section	Data analysis from experimental group (cohort 2)	Write up of Results section and Discussion/con

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			and control group data. Analysis of focus group data	clusion section
			Questionnaire mailed to experimental group. Return date 30th January. Questionnaire Data analysis began mid February.	
Summer term - 2012	-	Submit final draft of research thesis	Write research thesis, make final amendments before submission	Make amendments for final submission of Research Thesis

Table 3.5: Study timeline indicating intended and actual researcher activities when they occurred, including a plan for the write up of the study.

Appendix 2. Participant consent form (TA)

An Evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Project

School of Psychology, the University of Nottingham

Investigators:
David Mann (Trainee Educational Psychologist + Researcher)
Nick Durbin (Supervisor)

The participant should complete the whole of this sheet himself/herself. Please cross out as necessary.

Have you read and understood the participant information sheet?

YES   NO

Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study?

YES   NO

Have all the questions been answered satisfactorily?

YES   NO

Have you received enough information about the study?

YES   NO

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:

At any time   YES   NO

Without having to give a reason   YES   NO

Do you agree to take part in the study?

YES   NO

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of participant: Date:

Name (in block capitals):

I have explained the study to the above participant and s/he has agreed to take part.
Signature of researcher: Date:

Appendix 3. Emotional Literacy Checklist 7 – 11 (Pupil)

Emotional Literacy Pupil Checklist

Ages 7 to 11

First name .... Surname ....

Date .... Year group ☐ Boy ◯ Girl ◯

Here are some questions about you. Please try to answer them as honestly as you can. Read each question and then put a tick in one of the boxes. Make sure you do each question.

Here is an example of how to answer the questions. If you do not think you are shy at all, you would tick the box 'not like me at all'.

	Very like me	Quite like me	Only a bit like me	Not like me at all
I am a rather shy person.				✔

Now please answer the rest of the questions.

	Very like me	Quite like me	Only a bit like me	Not like me at all
1 I try to help people when they are unhappy.				
2 I often forget what I should be doing.				
3 I know what things I'm good and bad at.				
4 I often lose my temper.				
5 A lot of people seem to like me.				
6 I get annoyed when other people make mistakes.				
7 I often leave it to the last minute to do my school work.				
8 I can describe how I am feeling most of the time.				
9 I get upset if I do badly at something.				
10 I find it difficult to make new friends.				

Please turn over

	Very like me	Quite like me	Only a bit like me	Not like me at all
11 I know when people are starting to get upset.				
12 I carry on trying even if I find something difficult.				
13 I am easily hurt by what others say about me.				
14 I calm down quickly after I have got upset.				
15 I am usually included in other children's games.				
16 I laugh at other children when they get something wrong.				
17 I make a good effort with most of my school work.				
18 I am good at many things.				
19 I am usually a calm person.				
20 I spend too much time on my own.				
21 I try to help someone who is being bullied.				
22 I find it easy to pay attention in class.				
23 I worry a lot about the things I'm not good at.				
24 I can wait for my turn.				
25 I can make friends again after a row.				

Thank you for filling in this checklist.

Emotional Literacy Checklist 7 – 11 (Teacher)

Emotional Literacy Teacher Checklist

Ages 7 to 11

Pupil's name .... Completed by ....

Date .... Year group ☐ Boy ◯ Girl ◯

Please look at each statement and put a tick in the box that best describes how this pupil generally is. There are no right or wrong answers. Please ensure you answer all the questions.

	Very true	Somewhat true	Not really true	Not at all true
1 Listens to other people's point of view in a discussion or argument.				
2 Gives up easily when faced with something difficult.				
3 Is aware of his/her own strengths and qualities.				
4 Loses temper when loses at a game or in a competition.				
5 Laughs and smiles when it is appropriate to do so.				
6 Is intolerant of people who are different from him/her.				
7 When starts a task or assignment, usually follows it through to completion.				
8 Finds it hard to accept constructive criticism and feedback.				
9 Is liable to sulk if doesn't get his/her own way.				
10 Makes the right kind of eye contact when interacting with others.				
11 Is insensitive to the feelings of others.				
12 Leaves things to the last minute.				
13 Can recognise the early signs of becoming angry.				
14 Remains calm and composed when loses or 'fails' at something.				
15 Is disliked by many of his/her peers.				
16 Is very critical of others' shortcomings.				
17 Does things when they need to be done.				
18 Can name or label his/her feelings.				
19 When things go wrong, immediately denies that it is his/her fault or blames others.				
20 Has a sense of humour and fun that is used appropriately.				

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understanding potential

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Appendix 4. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire - Teacher

<div align="center">

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire   T $^{4-16}$

</div>

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour over the last six months or this school year.

Child's Name ....   Male/Female

Date of Birth...

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
Considerate of other people's feelings	☐	☐	☐
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	☐	☐	☐
Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	☐	☐	☐
Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers	☐	☐	☐
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	☐	☐	☐
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	☐	☐	☐
Many worries, often seems worried	☐	☐	☐
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	☐	☐	☐
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	☐	☐	☐
Has at least one good friend	☐	☐	☐
Often fights with other children or bullies them	☐	☐	☐
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	☐	☐	☐
Generally liked by other children	☐	☐	☐
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	☐	☐	☐
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	☐	☐	☐
Kind to younger children	☐	☐	☐
Often lies or cheats	☐	☐	☐
Picked on or bullied by other children	☐	☐	☐
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)	☐	☐	☐
Thinks things out before acting	☐	☐	☐
Steals from home, school or elsewhere	☐	☐	☐
Gets on better with adults than with other children	☐	☐	☐
Many fears, easily scared	☐	☐	☐
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	☐	☐	☐

Do you have any other comments or concerns?

Appendix 5. Focus group script

Thank you for taking the time to read through the information sheet provided and for agreeing to take part in this research study.

For the next 30 minutes I would like us to conduct a focus group. This is a group discussion whereby each member contributes his or her own feelings and thoughts regarding a selected topic or question. It is a method of gathering the views of individuals in a less formal manner. The intention is that each person is able to contribute something to the discussion but also elaborate on what others have said in a safe and supportive way.

My role is to provide the focus question to the group and ask any additional questions throughout the process. I will also be responsible for time keeping.
I would like to start by suggesting a set of ground rules by which we can all follow. These will be to ensure that each member of the group is allowed to express their own feelings and views in a safe and supportive way. Firstly, anything that is shared during this focus group is to be kept confidential and not to be discussed outside of this context. Secondly, this process is non-judgmental, everyone has the right to speak and have his or her views heard. And thirdly, no one should feel the need to contribute if they do not wish to do so. Are there any others that people in the group feel are important?

In order to record what is discussed I would like to use a tape recorder so that I can transcribe the discussion for analysis at later date, but only if participants consent to me doing so. Before we begin I want to make sure that everyone is aware that what is discussed in the focus group is confidential and will not be discussed outside of the group. I will ensure that individual details are kept strictly confidential maintaining anonymity throughout. Should any information discussed relate to matters of Child Protection and safeguarding I would then have duty to breach this confidentiality clause. I would also like to make it clear that everyone has the right to withdraw from the process at any time without reason.

Does anyone have any questions about what I have outlined?

Are you happy to proceed?

Focus question: In your view what is children and young people's emotional wellbeing?

Additional Prompts:

- What contributes to children and young peoples' emotional wellbeing?
- How do children and young peoples' emotional wellbeing develop?
- What supports the development children and young people of emotional wellbeing?
- What hinders the development of children and young peoples' emotional wellbeing?
- How do you perceive your role in supporting children and young peoples' emotional wellbeing?
- How do you feel you perceptions have changed regarding what you understand as children and young people's emotional well-being?
- How has the ELSA training helped your current development?
- Are there any particular features of the ELSA training, from start to finish, that has helped or contributed to your development?
- Is there any feature of the training that may have hindered your development?
- How do you feel your pre-training experience has helped or hindered your current development?
- How prepared do you feel to take the ELSA training forward in your role? Particular features of ELSA training that have prepared you?
- How do you feel your knowledge and skills have changed following the ELSA training?

Bring Focus group to close after 30 minutes.

Thank you for you participation in this focus group, does anyone have any further questions?

I would now like to explain to you the next stages of this research.

I would like to return to the group at the end of the training to seek your permission for you to complete two checklists regarding a pupil's emotional literacy and behaviour at two different time points. This will also involve obtaining parent/carers consent, as pupils will also be asked to complete the same two checklists. I would also like, with your permission, to return on the last supervision session to undertake a further focus group.

Does anyone have any further questions about what I have explained?

Appendix 6. Questionnaire

North
Yorkshire County Council

David Mann
Trainee Educational Psychologist
Access and Inclusion
Jesmond House
31/33 Victoria Ave
Harrogate
HG1 5QE

An Evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Project
School of Psychology, the University of Nottingham
ELSA Questionnaire

Investigators:
David Mann (Trainee Educational Psychologist + Researcher)
Nick Durbin (Supervisor)

As you know I am conducting an evaluation of the ELSA training for my Doctoral Research. I am interested in the potential impact the training has on children and young people's emotional well-being but also the perceptions of those trained as ELSAs. I would therefore be grateful if you could answer a few questions with regard to your work as an ELSA following training using the questionnaire below. There are no right or wrong answers, and you do not have to answer any question if you choose not to. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity there is no need to include the names or identifying details of pupils, their parents/carers or the setting in which you work.

Please could this questionnaire be returned to the above correspondence by 30th ... wait

Please could this questionnaire be returned to the above correspondence by 30th January 2013.

Name of ELSA:_____(optional)

1. Have you implemented an ELSA based intervention with an individual pupil or group of pupils since completing the training? (Please circle) *Yes/No/Partially*

If *No*, then complete question 8 - 15. If *Yes* or *Partially*, then please continue with questions 2 – 7 and 11 - 15.

2. A) With what year group(s) do/did you implement ELSA based interventions?_____

   B) Gender of pupil(s)?_____

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C) How regularly was the ELSA intervention implemented and for how long?_____ _____

3. What was the primary need of the pupil(s) the ELSA intervention sought to address? (please tick one or more)

Emotional Literacy		Social Communication difficulties	
Self-esteem		Social Skills	
Friendship skills		Anxiety	
Attachment difficulties		Other (please specify)	
Anger Management			

4. Can you give details as to the **work that was done**, and any **outcomes**?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. What worked well?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. What would/could have made it better?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7. What supported your work with this pupil(s)?

_____
_____
_____

_____

_____

8. Do you plan to do any ELSA based work in the future?

   Yes / No / Not sure *(please circle)*

9. Can you outline the reasons you have been unable to implement the approach so far?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. What would support you to implement the approach in the future?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. To what extent is ELSA work valued in your setting? (*Please circle a number*)

1	2	3	4	5
(Not at all)				(Highly valued)

12. What would help make it be even more valued?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. Has your ELSA training helped you to support the emotional well-being of pupil(s) in your setting? *Yes / No / Not Sure (please circle)*

14. How / Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. What else would help you to do your job of supporting the emotional well-being of pupils even better? (Further training (topic?), more support / resources / time etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is there anything you would like to add? _____

_____

_____

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions and reflect on the valuable work you do. If you have any further questions or wish to speak to me regarding anything to do with my research please do so via the details below.

Yours sincerely,

David Mann

David Mann (Trainee Educational Psychologist + Researcher)
Email: david.mann@northyorks.gov.uk
Phone: 07980664547 (NYCC mobile)
Research Supervisor: nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 7. Ethical approval

The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Dear David Mann,

Ethics Committee Review

Thank you for submitting an account of your proposed research 'Evaluating the impact and outcomes of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) project'.

That research has now been reviewed, to the extent that it is described in your submission, we are pleased to tell you it has met with the Committee's approval.

However:

Please note the following comments from our reviewers;

1. Please use headed paper for letters being sent out to parents.

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you or your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Psychological Society and the University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns whatever during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Yours sincerely

Dr Alan Sunderland
Chair, Ethics Committee

Appendix 8. Participant information sheet (experimental group)

David Mann
Department of Educational Psychology
School of Psychology
University Park
The University of Nottingham
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

University of Nottingham

School of Psychology

Information Sheet for Participants

Research Project on the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Project

Researchers: David Mann (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Contact Details:

Email: lpxdm3@nottingham.ac.uk

Phone: 07980664547 (NYCC mobile)

Research Supervisor: nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

This is an invitation to take part in a research study on the impact and outcomes of the ELSA project.
The reason you have been approached is you or one of your colleagues has been enrolled on the ELSA training programme. Before you decide if you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

If you participate you will be asked to take part in a focus group with other support assistants intended to explore your perceptions of Emotional Wellbeing. You would also be asked to complete two

different types of checklists designed to measure a pupil's Emotional Literacy and Behaviour, at two different time points.

The whole procedure will last no longer than the intended duration of the training (including the follow up supervision sessions). The focus groups are intended to last for 30 minutes each and each checklist should take no more than 10 – 15 minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study. All data collected will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only.

If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to ask now. We can also be contacted after your participation at the above address.

Many thanks for your time.
Regards

David Mann
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Information sheet (Control group)

David Mann
Department of Educational
Psychology
School of Psychology
University Park
The University of Nottingham
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

University of Nottingham

School of Psychology

Information Sheet for Participants

Research Project on the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant

(ELSA) Project

Researchers: David Mann (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Contact Details:

Email: lpxdm3@nottingham.ac.uk

Phone: 07980664547 (NYCC mobile)

Research Supervisor: nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

This is an invitation to take part in a research study on the impact and outcomes of the ELSA project.

The reason you have been approached is you or one of your colleagues has been enrolled on the ELSA training programme. Before you decide if you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

If you participate you will be asked to complete two different types of checklists designed to measure a pupil's Emotional Literacy and Behaviour, at two different time points.

The whole procedure will last no longer than the intended duration of the training (including the follow up supervision sessions). Each checklist should take no more than 10 – 15 minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study. All data collected will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only.

If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to ask now. We can also be contacted after your participation at the above address.

Many thanks for your time.
Regards

David Mann
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 9. Parent / carer information sheet

An Evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Project
School of Psychology, the University of Nottingham

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am currently undertaking a two-year work placement in North Yorkshire's Educational Psychology Service as a Trainee Educational Psychologist. When not engaged in placement work for North Yorkshire I am a student at the University of Nottingham. As part of my training and professional development I am undertaking a study involving a training programme delivered to teaching assistants known as the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Project. The work will serve as an evaluation for North Yorkshire Educational Psychology service as well as form part of my final year research project.

I am writing to request consent for your child to be involved in this study that seeks to evaluate the impact and outcomes of the ELSA project.

I will be providing support assistants enrolled on the ELSA training with a number of checklists with which they will be asking your child to complete, with support if necessary. The checklists consist of 25 straightforward questions and should take no longer than 10 – 15 minutes to complete. This checklist is designed to measure an individual's Emotional Literacy and is used in schools and research nationally. This will form part of your child's typical work with their Teaching Assistant. In addition your child's Teaching Assistant will also be asked to complete a similar questionnaire designed to obtain their perceptions of your child's Emotional Literacy. These questionnaires should not cause any distress or anxiety. However if at any time your child appears distressed or unhappy with the procedure it will be discontinued immediately, and they will be able to withdraw at any time.

If you are happy for your child to participate in this study, please sign and return the consent form to the school at the earliest convenience.

If you permit your child to participate you still have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without having to give a reason. That is, even if you sign the consent form and start the study you may withdraw your child at any point and any data will be destroyed.

If you require further information on the study, or its results, please feel free to contact myself, or my supervisor, using the details given below.

Yours sincerely,

David Mann
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Investigators:
David Mann (Trainee Educational Psychologist + Researcher)
Email: david.mann@northyorks.gov.uk
Phone: 07980664547 (NYCC mobile)
Research Supervisor: nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

**An Evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Support
Assistant (ELSA) Project
School of Psychology, the University of
Nottingham**

Investigators:
David Mann (Trainee Educational Psychologist + Researcher)
Nick Durbin (Supervisor)

The parent/carer should complete the whole of this sheet himself/herself on behalf of their child. Please cross out as necessary.

Have you read and understood the participant information sheet?

YES   NO

Do you understand what your child will be asked to do?

YES   NO

Are you aware that you can contact the researcher and/or their supervisor at any time to discuss the participation of your child should your consent be given?

YES   NO

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw your child from the study:

At any time   YES   NO

Without having to give a reason   YES   NO

Do you give consent to allow your child to take part in the study?

YES   NO

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I give consent to allow my child to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw my child at any time."

Signature of parent/carer: Date:

Name (in block capitals):

I have explained the study to the above parent/carer and s/he has agreed to allow their child to take part.

Signature of researcher: Date: