**Conference on Teaching Assistant in Inclusive Education Research and Practice**

**Ministry of Education Zagreb**

**Keynote speaker paper**

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Inclusive education policies have led to a worldwide increase in the number of teaching assistants (TAs) working in mainstream schools. TAs have a large amount of responsibility for supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), a role which by default has become instructional in practice and for which training and preparation are rarely adequate, at least in the UK context. While there is some research into the nature of TAs’ interactions with pupils and the strategies they use which are helpful for children’s learning, TAs’ perspectives on their own classroom practice have yet to be explored.

This conference paper will present results from a UK study that aimed to explore TAs’ perceptions about their use of inclusive pedagogical strategies. The study involved eleven TAs in two mainstream primary schools in the UK. The TAs were interviewed face to face to explore their views about inclusive pedagogical strategies, and the data were analysed using thematic analysis.

The results revealed that TAs were clear about the strategies they use to offer emotional and relational support to children. There were some gaps, however, in their knowledge about how children learn, specifically in terms of transferring responsibility for learning onto children.

The study advances understanding of scaffolding from a TA perspective. The conference paper will highlight the importance of training TAs in scaffolding theory.