

“It’s Just a New Way of Looking at Learning”: Evaluation of the Mediating Learning Support Assistant (MeLSA) Training Programme

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This feasibility study evaluated the Mediating Learning Support Assistant (MeLSA) training programme. Two cohorts ($N = 16$) of learning support staff (teaching assistants and learning support assistants) completed the MeLSA training programme that consisted of six-day sessions delivered over six weeks. The MeLSA training content focuses on applying psychology to support children’s learning within schools. Feedback was gathered from four learning support staff, using semi-structured interviews to evaluate the training programme. The interviews were analysed thematically. Learning support staff reported on the impact of MeLSA on developing psychologically informed thinking, valued aspects of, and suggested improvements for, the training programme, and the implementation of MeLSA in schools. Facilitating school staff to mediate learning through providing training is discussed as an effective approach for educational psychologists to support children and young people to become independent and competent learners.

Keywords: mediating, learning, MeLSA, teaching assistants, learning support assistants, training

Introduction

MeLSA is an innovative training programme created by Bristol Educational Psychology Service for learning support staff in schools to help children and young people become competent and independent learners. Therefore, it requires systematic evidence-building in order to explore its feasibility, efficacy, and effectiveness, starting with a consideration of its feasibility as a training programme. This paper provides a brief summary of MeLSA (for further details see Stanley-Duke et al., 2022); a description of the systematic frameworks used to build the evidence base for MeLSA; an outline of the current feasibility research that evaluated the training programme; and then a discussion of the findings, future research, and implications for educational psychologists. Throughout this paper, *MeLSA* is used to refer to the training programme and *MeLSAs* is used to refer to the people who have participated in the training.

The Mediating Learning Support Assistant (MeLSA) Training Programme

The Mediating Learning Support Assistant (MeLSA) training programme is an intervention designed to build the

capacity of schools to support the learning needs of children and young people (Stanley-Duke et al., 2022). MeLSA explores the mediating learning interactions between an adult and a learner (Feuerstein et al., 1979), and the importance of working within the learner’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). MeLSA focuses on developing the psychological understanding and skills needed for an adult to mediate and support a child or young person to access learning tasks effectively and, ultimately, to assist a child or young person to become a more skilled and independent learner (Stanley-Duke et al., 2022). MeLSAs learn how to mediate learning by supporting the explicit development of a child or young person’s thinking skills, and by adjusting the content, language, or complexity of the learning task. During the training, the MeLSAs learn about aspects of mindset (), interacting with a learner through mediated learning experiences (Feuerstein et al., 1979), the impact of cognitive load on a learner’s memory and recall (Sweller, 1988), and the importance of supporting a learner’s executive function skills (Diamond, 2013). These psychological concepts are then applied to the learning of reading, writing and mathematical skills. Research evidence suggests that some of the greatest impacts on learning happen when adults support children and young people with thinking for themselves (see, for example, Education Endowment Foundation, n.d.). Children and young people may receive support from a MeLSA to develop a variety of independent learning skills such as their metacognitive

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skills, their mindset, their English or Maths skills, to explore how their memory works (and discover strategies they can apply to support their memory), or to develop the skills for asking for help, etc.

Many schools and education professionals are already familiar with the Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) programme, an evidence-informed approach to supporting the social, emotional, and mental health needs of children and young people in schools (see, for example, McEwen, 2019). Similar to ELSA, the MeLSA programme is a structured evidence-informed training and supervision programme for school learning support staff that consists of six days of training delivered by EPs on various aspects of learning. These are:

- mediating learning and growth mindset,
- thinking about thinking,
- memory and recall,
- the psychology of learning maths,
- the psychology of learning to read and write, and
- planning for implementation.

The success of these six sessions is facilitated by training principles such as psychologically informed content (as previously described), psychologically informed delivery (e.g., using Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction; Rosenshine, 2012), experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), and practical and supportive resources (e.g., using structured workbooks for each session) (for more detailed information regarding the structure and psychological content of MeLSA, see Stanley-Duke et al., 2022). Once trained, MeLSAs are supported through group supervision facilitated by two educational psychologists to help ensure the successful implementation of these strategies (Chidley & Stringer, 2020). As a result, schools with MeLSAs should have a greater capacity to support the learning needs of their students/pupils before needing to engage in additional professional input.

Generating the Evidence Base for MeLSA

There is an increasing demand for schools to implement evidence-based and evidence-informed approaches to support children and young people (see, for example, Brown et al., 2017; Forman et al., 2009; Gorard et al., 2020; Slavin, 2020; Watkins et al., 2022). However, there is also growing acknowledgement that the application of these practices within schools can be very challenging, and there is often a significant disparity between the research evidence and successful implementation of the recommended guidance (e.g., Forman et al., 2009; Gorard et al., 2020; Nelson et al., 2017;

Pegram et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important for any intervention or approach to take part in a systematic evidence-building process beginning with the initial stages of conceptualisation through development and, importantly, into implementation to ensure the best possible practices for schools and the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

There are frameworks available that describe the typical sequential stages of developing evidence-based interventions (e.g., Bowen et al., 2009; Thornicroft et al., 2011). However, some of these frameworks have come from the fields of healthcare and focus on specific stages such as conducting clinical randomised control trials to assess efficacy (e.g., Thornicroft et al., 2011). Therefore, the journey towards building a substantial evidence base for the MeLSA training programme might be better explained using the succinct model proposed by Bowen et al. (2009). This framework provides three key questions to address sequentially as the knowledge base and needs of an intervention or approach progress and these questions can be applied to a wide variety of contexts (Bowen et al., 2009). These questions are *can it work?*, *does it work?*, and *will it work?* Therefore, in the initial phase of development of MeLSA, the focus of research is *can it work?* i.e., is MeLSA a feasible intervention for supporting learning in schools? Then, given some evidence that MeLSA might be feasible, the next question becomes *does it work?* i.e., is MeLSA effective and does MeLSA training have an impact on learning under certain conditions (e.g., when a MeLSA is supporting a child one-to-one on a daily basis to develop executive function skills) when compared to other practices (e.g., when a non-MeLSA-trained person is supporting a child)? Finally, given evidence that MeLSA is effective at supporting learning, the final question becomes *will it work?* i.e., does MeLSA continue to impact learning when applied to the many different ways that MeLSA training could be implemented in practice across schools and education settings?

MeLSA — Can it Work?

Feasibility studies are used to ascertain whether an intervention or a theoretical approach is worthy of further investigation (Bowen et al., 2009). These types of studies enable researchers to assess the initial concepts, methods and protocols of an intervention and identify any necessary changes. With regard to MeLSA, feasibility studies would focus on areas such as whether schools engage with the training, whether the content of the MeLSA training is acceptable to participants and whether the content and delivery of the training support MeLSAs to implement psychologically informed practices. Bowen et al. (2009) propose that there are eight general areas addressed by feasibility studies that provide appropriate areas of focus for research. These are:

- **Acceptability:** (e.g., how do MeLSAs respond to the content of the training programme?).
 - **Demand:** (e.g., what is the interest and engagement in MeLSA training and is there a need for MeLSAs within schools?).
 - **Implementation:** (e.g., what are the facilitators and barriers to implementing MeLSA training successfully?).
 - **Practicality:** (e.g., what are the resources, time, and commitment needed for MeLSA training to be delivered successfully?).
 - **Adaptation:** (e.g., what adaptations are needed to the content and/or delivery of MeLSA training to accommodate the needs of the participants?).
 - **Integration:** (e.g., what systems exist within schools and/or the local authorities that may support or hinder MeLSA training and implementation?).
 - **Expansion:** (e.g., can MeLSA training be used successfully with teachers and SENDCos?).
 - **Limited-efficacy:** testing (e.g., is there some evidence that MeLSA has an impact on learning?).
- **Research Question 1:** *Is there evidence to suggest that the MeLSA training programme helps participants understand how to support the learning of children in their educational setting by using psychology?*
 - **Research Question 2:** *What were participants' experiences of the MeLSA training programme?*

Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research design was chosen as this allows for the exploration of individual subjective experiences and therefore was considered the most appropriate way in which to address the research questions. Interviews were chosen as the method of data collection as they allow for the collection of rich and detailed data regarding personal experiences and perspectives (Gillard et al., 2021). The researchers used semi-structured interviews as they allow for flexibility and give the participants the opportunity to clarify and expand upon their thoughts and ideas (Robson, 2002). The semi-structured interview questions were designed using the recommended areas of focus suggested by Bowen et al. (2009) (e.g., asking specific questions regarding the acceptability of MeLSA and demand for the MeLSA training programme).

Participants and Recruitment Process

This study recruited four participants directly from the seventeen learning support staff who had received the MeLSA training between July 2021 and December 2021, and therefore made use of opportunistic sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). All participants were contacted directly by the research assistants via email and were not contacted by the researchers who had designed and delivered the MeLSA training. The semi-structured interviews were arranged to take place online. The interviews lasted between twenty and forty-five minutes, and the video and audio data from each interview were recorded so that the audio data could be transcribed and analysed. No pilot studies were conducted, due to the limited amount of time and participants available to the researchers. However, the interview procedures (questions, timing, structure, etc.) were evaluated and reassessed after the initial interview.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen to interpret the data as it is a suitable method for examining large amounts of verbal data to generate themes or patterns within the subjective responses given by the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006; McLeod, 2019). Reflexive thematic analysis of the data was carried out following the guidelines and recommendations set out by Braun and Clarke (n.d.) and was conducted in six

The subsequent research designs utilised to conduct feasibility studies somewhat depend upon the chosen areas of focus (e.g., conducting interviews with the MeLSA training participants to assess the acceptability of the content of the MeLSA training programme, conducting single-case experimental design studies to do limited-efficacy testing of the impact of MeLSA on a child's learning outcomes).

Research Questions

It is self-evident that supporting learning in schools is hugely important, and MeLSA may be an effective framework with which to do so within educational settings (Stanley-Duke et al., 2022). However, MeLSA is an innovative approach and therefore requires systematic evidence-building in order to consider its feasibility, efficacy, and effectiveness as a training programme that will help schools to support the learning needs of children and young people. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to consider the feasibility of MeLSA by evaluating the MeLSA training programme through exploration of the experiences of some of the participants. Evaluation of the MeLSA programme may begin to build evidence to substantiate the use of MeLSA as a framework to support learning in schools (i.e., *can it work?*). In light of this purpose, this led to the following research questions:

phases: familiarisation, coding, generating initial themes, developing themes, refining themes, and writing up. The analysis was conducted using a more inductive approach (i.e., the codes and themes generated were guided by the data) and a more semantic approach (i.e., the codes and themes generated were based on the content of the data) (Braun & Clarke, n.d.). A number of steps were taken to encourage reflexivity and to acknowledge the influence of the researchers' subjective beliefs and values on the data analysis. Some of the evaluative criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were implemented to support the trustworthiness of the research by establishing: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For example, negative case analysis was conducted to search for data that contradicted or did not support the themes generated from the thematic analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The themes were checked for their coherence, consistency, and distinction (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researchers used inter-coder agreement (Campbell et al., 2013) and analyst triangulation (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006) in which codes and themes were independently generated using the transcripts and then discussed through reflective conversations to encourage the reflexive process.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All data were kept and held confidentially by the researchers. The data were stored on a password-protected computer only accessible to the researchers. The data were anonymised as part of the transcription process and the original data were then permanently deleted. The four participants were provided with pseudonyms (Alex, Billie, Charlie, and Danni) to help ensure confidentiality when referring to the data. Ethical approval for this study was obtained through the University of Bristol.

Participant's Rights and Informed Consent

Each participant was given an information sheet and consent form as part of the initial recruitment process. During the beginning and at the end of the interviews, the participants were provided with opportunities to ask questions and withdraw from the study if they so wished.

Findings

A summary of the main findings that were generated from thematic analysis of the data may be found in Table 1.

Theme 1: Impact of the training on developing psychologically informed thinking

It's just a new way of looking at learning ... It just happens, I mean you'd be with a child and you'd speak a little differently or you talk to them with different language. (Alex)

What it's really helpful for is using the things like thinking about thinking to help establish how to further help with difficulties they're having. (Billie)

All four participants suggested that the MeLSA training programme had helped them to develop psychologically informed thinking through either reframing their current understanding and practices of learning interactions, and/or refreshing prior learning of psychology (e.g., regarding growth mindset), and/or reinvigorating their desire to use psychology and evidence-informed practices (e.g., implementing precision teaching). For example, Alex stated that the training provides "a new way of looking at learning" that can "just change your whole method of teaching"; Billie explained that "it really was fascinating just linking some of the things we talked about [to my practice]"; and Danni felt that the training "refreshed what we're doing" and has "reignited my passion" for putting psychological theories and techniques into practice. As a result of the training, Billie suggested that being a MeLSA could help build the capacity of schools to support the learning needs of their students rather than always relying on educational psychologists for support and that "... it's going to make life easier for [EPs] and us ... rather than constantly calling on an EP to come in and assess and having this major waiting list ... having a MeLSA at school is very much like a middleman ... it's going to be so helpful to start assessments [and] to try other things that previously we would have had to wait for an EP to come in and suggest certain things but [we would] never fully understand exactly what the EP wants". These findings suggest that the MeLSA training programme has facilitated some degree of change, or at least an intention to change, in the thinking and practices of the learning support staff. However, it was unclear whether these changes included the explicit use of psychology (rather than implicit) for all the participants who were interviewed (i.e., some participants spoke specifically about using psychological theories and skills whereas others spoke more generally about a change in their thinking and practices).

Theme 2: Valued aspects of the training programme

... that was really valuable when we have to practice, some of the interventions ... You know, putting yourself in the shoes of a child, I think, is invaluable. (Alex)

All participants valued specific aspects of the training programme, particularly the relevant and accessible content, the practical and experiential nature of the sessions, the structured resources that were provided (e.g., the workbooks), and the professional and supportive relationships that were developed with the educational psychologists who delivered the training. For example, Alex particularly valued "[having]

Table 1

Themes and Sub-Themes From Thematic Analysis of the Semi-structured Interview Transcripts

Main themes	Sub-themes
The impact of the training programme on developing psychologically informed thinking	Reframing, refreshing, and reinvigorating thinking and practices
Valued aspects of the training programme	Relevance, accessibility, practicality, structured resources, and relationships with educational psychologists
Suggest improvements for the training programme	Additional time and space, more practical activities, more demonstrations, and a need for reassurance
Implementing MeLSA in schools	Facilitators and barriers to implementation, roles and responsibilities, next steps

all those professionals to . . . you know, to train with and ask questions, and, you know, learn from. That was the thing that really struck me in comparison with any other courses that the amount of expertise that you’ve got there to hand.” Charlie stated that the practical activities were *“ . . . the best bit of it all”*. Billie said that the training resources *“ . . . just makes so much sense, so you can really see every area and where it works”*. These findings suggest that there was a variety of valued aspects of the training programme but that the practical and pragmatic focus of the training was particularly appreciated.

Theme 3: Suggested improvements for the training programme

We need time to get our heads back round it.
(Alex)

I wish we could have done more looking at how it’s done, watching the nuances of when you do it. (Charlie)

Each of the participants suggested some improvements for the MeLSA training programme, such as being given additional time and space to familiarise themselves with the content and a desire for more practical activities with more modelling and demonstrations by the trainers. For example, Charlie stated that *“sometimes it was quite a lot of information, but I didn’t know how actually practically would use it in the classroom”*. All the participants indicated a need for reassurance regarding the MeLSA content and implementation. For example, Billie said, *“it was just a lot of information, and it is difficult and there’s a lot to look at and a big process”*. These findings suggest that, despite valuing the practical focus of the training and support from the educational psychologists, the participants needed more reassurance to understand and implement some aspects of the

MeLSA programme. This is somewhat unsurprising given the scale and scope of the MeLSA content, and it highlights the importance of providing ongoing support post-training (e.g., through regular supervision sessions).

Theme 4: Implementing MeLSA in Schools

. . . buy in from the senior leadership team, and then the teachers. As long as they’ve got a thorough understanding of what the benefits of the MeLSA is . . . what can we do for these children, how will it benefit them. (Alex)

. . . some of the other [MeLSAs] were probably a little bit worried about their role in school . . . how it was all going to work and why, in particular, they have been asked by the school to come in and do [the training]. (Billie)

All participants shared their views regarding implementing MeLSA in schools, such as facilitators and barriers to implementation; the often unclear, necessarily self-motivated, and ever-changing roles and responsibilities of support staff; planning next steps for implementation; and the importance of ongoing supervision. For example, support and “buy-in” from line managers and a school’s senior leadership team were seen as being significant facilitators of implementation (when support existed). Alex stated that *“I think senior leaders . . . they feel that there’s some value in [MeLSA]”*. However, a lack of support and buy-in from line managers, senior leadership teams and teachers was also seen as a significant barrier to implementation. For example, Charlie explained that *“SENDCos don’t really know much about this course so it’s quite hard to like to push it”* and *“ . . . it’s new information . . . you might have to change the way that you do things, people might not want to do that, they’re quite happy just to do what they’re doing”*. Many of the participants suggested

that the roles and responsibilities of learning support staff can be nebulous and dynamic, which may hinder the implementation of MeLSA within schools. For example, Danni explained that much of their time was taken up by “*a lot of covering classes*” and Billie described that “*... you just don't know what life's going to throw at you. It's staffing, I can be pulled out at any time to do all sorts of other tasks and things*”. Alex appreciated the supervision provided as part of the training because of the “*fact that we have ongoing support. So it's not just you know here you go, you've spent the money, you've done the training off you go. You know we've got this supervision and as well, so we've got that connection*”. Finally, all participants expressed an intention and/or desire regarding their next steps for implementing MeLSA within their respective schools. For example, Danni stated, “*I think I need to have a meeting you know with my SENDCO just to go over [MeLSA]*”. These findings suggest that explicitly planning for the implementation of MeLSA during Session 6 of the training is hugely important. However, despite this, the participants still shared concerns regarding the specific actions that they would take or potential barriers to the implementation of MeLSA.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

Four themes were identified from the reflexive thematic analysis of the data. These themes will be discussed in relation to the two research questions:

- *Is there evidence to suggest that the MeLSA training programme helps participants understand how to support the learning of children in their educational setting by using psychology?*
- *What were participants' experiences of the MeLSA training programme?*

Implications for educational psychologists are raised alongside a discussion of the findings.

Research Question 1: Is there evidence to suggest that the MeLSA training programme helps participants understand how to support the learning of children in their educational setting by using psychology?

Theme 1 — “*it's a new way of looking at learning*”, indicates that the MeLSA training content had supported reframing, refreshing and reinvigorating MeLSAs' understanding and engagement in learning. It would seem that the MeLSA training had some impact on MeLSA thinking and that the impact was subtle but potential across all interactions. The comment by Alex illustrates that participating in the training allows a MeLSA to “*... speak a little differently or you talk to [children] with different language*”. It

is suggested that the “different language” being used is now psychologically informed by aspects of the MeLSA training, perhaps around mindset (Dweck, 2015), use of questioning (Blank et al., 1978) or implementing the three essential aspects of mediating (Feurestein et al., 2010; Karpov, 2005; Mentis et al., 2008) for example. The data suggests that from the MeLSAs' perspectives the training content had helped them understand how to use psychology to support the learning of children in their setting. The findings also suggest that the MeLSAs responded positively to the content of the training programme and showed an interest and engagement in the training (i.e., demonstrating acceptability and demand; Bowen et al., 2009). Thereby building evidence regarding the feasibility of MeLSA as an intervention programme to support learning, i.e., *yes, it can work*. However, as previously discussed, ensuring the effective implementation of these practices in schools can be very challenging (e.g., Gorard et al., 2020; Nelson et al., 2017; Pegram et al., 2022) and therefore it is vital that educational psychologists provide comprehensive support for implementation, such as highlighting to schools and to MeLSAs the importance of ongoing supervision (Chidley & Stringer, 2020).

Theme 2 — *Valued aspects of the training programme*, suggests that experiential learning, practising activities, and modelling using videos were activities that supported MeLSAs' understanding of psychology, as having more of these were raised by several participants as being desirable. However, Theme 3 — *Suggested improvements for the training programme* also highlighted that the plethora of psychological content in MeLSA (see Stanley-Duke et al., 2022) was, for some MeLSAs, contributing to feelings of being overwhelmed and a need for more guidance. Therefore, educational psychologists may wish to respond by spreading the delivery of MeLSA training over a longer period (e.g., every other week rather than every week). In addition, it will be important to consider Rosenshine's (2012) ten research-based principles of instruction. For example, presenting new material in small steps and assisting MeLSAs to practise to support their learning, perhaps through planned out-of-session activities in the two-week period between training sessions. Furthermore, increased use of video and trainer-led demonstrations, as identified in Theme 3 — *Suggested improvements for the training programme*, and scaffolds for the between-session practice would also address Rosenshine's “provide models” and “provide scaffolds” principles of instruction (Rosenshine, 2012).

Research Question 2: What were participants' experiences of the MeLSA training programme?

Chidley and Stringer (2020), using Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of the Transfer Process, indicate three areas for supporting implementation: training design, trainee characteristics, and work environment, the latter being “the transfer

climate”. Theme 3 — *Suggested improvements for the training programme* and Theme 4 — *Implementing MeLSA* indicate that some of the barriers MeLSAs face with implementation are within the “transfer climate”. For example, comments from Alex (e.g., “*buy in from the leadership team*”) and Charlie (e.g., “*SENDCo’s don’t really know much about this course*”) indicate the importance of school senior leaders seeing the value of having a MeLSA-trained individual in their school along with having some knowledge of the MeLSA training content and applicability in their setting. This suggests that areas of focus such as implementation, integration and adaptation (Bowen et al., 2009) may need further consideration to ensure the feasibility of MeLSA. Therefore, educational psychologists should consider the importance of ensuring senior leadership knowledge and understanding regarding MeLSA training to facilitate the implementation of MeLSA. Prior to delivering the MeLSA training to the participants in this study, school senior leaders were provided with written and video content regarding MeLSA (e.g., an overview of the structure and content of the training programme). However, it would seem that the busy nature of education and competing demands for time might have impacted on senior leaders engaging with these resources. Educational psychologists linked to schools could facilitate understanding of MeLSA through their work in the setting (e.g., through strategic conversations with school senior leaders, during planning meetings with SENDCos, during individual casework, etc.). Furthermore, a need for supporting MeLSAs within the “transfer climate” of their work environment further highlights the importance of providing ongoing supervision to ensure effective implementation (Chidley & Stringer, 2020).

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations to this research which should be acknowledged. For example, given the innovative and recent creation of the MeLSA training programme, it was not yet appropriate at this stage, and therefore within the scope of this research, to explore the impact of MeLSA training on supporting learners in the classroom. However, this will be an important area to address in the future (e.g., via limited efficacy testing to continue building the evidence base for MeLSA; Bowen et al., 2009). In addition, the participants opted into the evaluation of the training. Those who chose not to participate may have done so because they felt that the training had little or no impact. Sapsford and Jupp (1996) argue that the context of the interview can influence the response of participants. For example, the participants may have given answers designed to seem agreeable to the interviewer (Oltmann, 2016). Furthermore, the analysis and evaluation of the results could have been made more rigorous. For example, respondent validation could have been used after the analysis had been conducted, in which the par-

ticipants are asked whether they agree with the analysis and whether it incorporates the ideas expressed by the interview discussions (Mays & Pope, 2000).

Future Directions

The small-scale nature and specific focus of this study indicate the need for further evaluation regarding the appropriateness of the MeLSA training programme. For example, future studies should consider evaluation of the MeLSA training from a range of perspectives (e.g., MeLSAs’ line managers, children and young people who work with MeLSAs). As highlighted within the findings of this study, it will also be hugely beneficial to explore further the facilitators and barriers to implementing MeLSA in schools. Furthermore, as the answer to the question “*can MeLSA work?*” becomes clearer, it will be vital to address the subsequent question of “*does MeLSA work?*” through evaluation of the impact of the training programme on children and young people learning effectively.

Summary

This paper has provided a summary of an initial feasibility study that evaluated the Mediated Learning Support Assistant training programme. This study made use of semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of four participants who had taken part in the MeLSA training. Transcripts from these interviews were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis and four themes were subsequently generated: impact of the training on developing psychologically informed thinking; valued aspects of the training programme; suggested improvements for the training programme; and implementing MeLSA in schools. The findings suggested that MeLSA may be a feasible approach for educational psychologists to facilitate schools to support children and young people to become skilled and independent learners.

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Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Introduction

- I want to begin by thanking you for taking the time to meet with me today. I know that your time is valuable, so we really do appreciate your willingness to be a part of our research.
- Just as an overview of the interview, we will be talking about your experiences with the MeLSA training programme.
- As was stated in the information form, this interview will be completely confidential. There will be no mention of your name or any other details that could identify you or your place of work. The interview will be recorded and transcribed, but only we (the researchers) will have access to the interviews. We will transcribe the interviews and the transcriptions will be fully anonymised. I may also write down some notes while we speak, but mainly just for my own use, and these will be anonymised. It is possible, that due to nature of the participants spending time together during the training, that aspects of what you say might make you identifiable to other participants in the training even though your name, school, job role will be anonymised.
- This interview will take about thirty minutes of your time, is this ok with you?
- If anything at all comes up during the interview, you can choose not to answer and also you can ask to stop at any time. We want you to feel completely comfortable with the information you are giving us, so please let us know if at any time you do not want your interview being used.
- Do you have any questions? If it is okay with you, I will start the recorder and we shall get started.

Acceptability

- Can you talk about whether you think that the MeLSA training programme will help you to support the learning of children that you are working with?

Additional Prompt Questions

- Did you enjoy the MeLSA training?
- Do you intend to continue to use the content covered in the MeLSA training programme?
- Do you think that the content of the MeLSA training was appropriate?
- What were your most important ideas, techniques, or activities that you learned from doing the MeLSA training?
- What would be your improvements to the MeLSA training?

Demand

- Can you talk about whether you think that the content of the MeLSA training is likely to be used in your school/setting?

Additional Prompt Questions

- Do you think being a MeLSA coach fits within the culture of your school?
- Do you think the MeLSA training programme will have any positive or negative effects on your school?
- Do you think there is a demand for being a MeLSA coach in your school?
- Can you talk about how it was decided that you attend the MeLSA training? What were the reasons?

Implementation

- What do you think about the way the MeLSA training was delivered?

Additional Prompt Questions

- What was helpful?
- What was unhelpful?
- Would you change anything about it?

Practicality

- Can you talk about whether you think the MeLSA training was practical?

Additional Prompt Questions

- What did you think of the workbooks?
- What did you think of the activities?
- Was the venue appropriate for the MeLSA training?
- Was the cost fair and was the training good value for money?
- How was it having weekly sessions? Do you think another time scale would be better? (for example, every other week, or every day (plus one more) for a week?)

Integration

How do you think you might use the content of the MeLSA training on a day-to-day basis?

Additional Prompt Questions

- What are the challenges?
- What do you think you need to fulfil your role as a MeLSA coach in your setting?

Ending

- I have no further questions. Is there anything else you would like to bring up, or ask about, before we finish the interview?
- Thank you again for your time.