Teacher-teacher aide teaming: Investigating collaboration using cogenerative dialoguing and CHAT

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Abstract

Globally, collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams is under-researched. In Australia, there is a dearth of research into teacher-teacher aide team collaboration. This is despite school reform initiatives requiring staff to work together with the understanding that collaboration has the potential to improve teaching and student learning outcomes (Conley & Cooper, 2013). This emphasises the urgency and importance for research into the collaborative teams, as well as working relationships, of teachers and teacher aides in Australian schools.

The aim of this research is to contribute to understandings around collaborative practices in school settings. This study explored teacher-teacher aide team collaborative practices using cogenerative dialoguing (cogen), seeking to bring to light factors that may influence the effectiveness of collaborative practices utilising an analytical framework of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). Guiding this investigative study was the research question: How is collaboration practised in teacher-teacher aide teams? Supporting this question are the sub-questions: In what ways do the teachers and teacher aides collaborate in their teacher-teacher aide teams? What happened to the quality and the nature of communication between teachers and teacher aides when teacher-teacher aide teams used cogenerative dialoguing? and How can CHAT be used to conceptualise the affordances and challenges of cogenerative dialoguing for understanding and explaining collaborative teacher-teacher aide teaming?

A collective case study approach was chosen for this qualitative study. Supporting this approach, the research took the form of observations, semi-structured interviews that included concept drawings and team cogen sessions. Data were obtained from ten teacher-teacher aide teams. However, due to changes in work commitments and the break-up of teams at the end of the year, only four teams completed the study. This is consistent with teacher-teacher aide teamworking where the purpose and need for these teams often depend on student needs and staff availability with teams sometimes reforming during the year and often splitting up at the end of the school year to reform as different teams in the new school year.

This study found that collaboration between teachers and teacher aides is not a linear process, rather, it is fluid and dynamic, cyclic in nature, occurring on an as needed basis depending on the task or activity team members needed to perform. There were no steps to true collaboration. Instead, participants’ experiences of collaboration involved face-to-face encounters that moved through different elements of collaboration, such as co-ordination, cooperation, reflective communication and carnivalisation. Collaboration was found to begin with team members
voluntarily choosing to participate, being open-minded to collaboration. Key elements in how the teams practised collaboration were: engaging in pre-planning together; making time to talk and plan together; and using a variety of methods of communication, for example, texting, emailing, telephoning and leaving notes for each other, both in and out of school hours.

Cogen provided participants with a new means to: identify barriers to teamworking; reflect on and evaluate their team activities; plan future activities; and listen to and incorporate the ideas of the less vocal team members into these plans. Team members reported that cogen supported and enhanced their teamworking. This enhancement was identified as cogenerativity (Willis, 2016) where the equitable dialogic practices of cogen were continued outside the dialogic space of cogen sessions, acting as *oil on the waters* in relation to many problems associated with teamworking.

Findings from this research offer a way to enhance collaboration in existing teams through the sharing of successful team collaboration strategies that demonstrate how teachers balance their supervisory role with their collaboratory role in relation to teacher aides, how teacher aides can enhance their role as team members, and how schools can support collaboration in these teams.

Note on terminology:

Teacher aide is a term used by the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) to describe a person who works closely with teachers supporting learning and teaching in Queensland schools (DET 2006) and it is used in this dissertation. However, the terms teaching assistant, support staff, classroom assistant, and learning support assistant (United Kingdom), paraeducator and paraprofessional (United States of America) are used in international literature. When citing particular international research, this paper will use the titles/terms applicable to that research. However, when referring to the position/role across literature and research the general term teacher aide is used.
Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

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Teacher, Teacher Aide, Collaboration, Cogenerative Dialoguing, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory.

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List of Abbreviations

AASE Australian Association of Special Education
CHAT Cultural-Historical Activity Theory
Cogen cogenerative dialoguing
DfES Department of Education and Skills
DECS Department of Education and Children’s Services
DET Department of Education and Training
IEP Individual Education Plan
NHMRC National Health and Medical Research Council
USA United States of America
UK United Kingdom
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Collaboration and this study

Collaboration is no longer just an ingredient in school life but an essential feature.
(Cramer, 2006, p. 2)

From all sectors of the community we hear about the significance of collaboration, the benefits of collaboration. Collaborative practice is being touted as the way of our working future. For example, in his book, *21 Trends for the 21st Century*, Marx (2014) claimed that business and education are already moving towards a new horizontal, or collaborative, decision making process. Echoing this Murawski (2010) referred to social networking as crucial in most jobs claiming that “society has become more and more collaborative and interactive” (p. 9). Over the past decade collaboration has become an important issue within school reform initiatives, nationally in Australia and internationally, with the understanding that collaboration has the potential to improve teaching and student learning outcomes (de Lima, 2001; Johnson, N., 2003; Slater, 2004). As Cramer’s (2006) words above suggest, collaboration is now considered an essential component of work life in schools.

In his book, *The New Meaning of Education Change*, Fullan (2016) wrote of the importance of a culture of collaboration in schools where there exists entrepreneurial problem-solving and individuals are energised to make good decisions. He argued that improvement of *relationships* is a key to successful change in education (p. 4). According to Fullan, of critical importance to improving relationships is finding meaning, not just in learning but in relation to others, and not just personal but *shared meaning*. Fullan pointed to a need to “comprehend what meaning might look like from the vantage point of others” (p. 4). In this study seeking to comprehend what collaboration meant to team members in teacher-teacher aide teams, exploring how they collaborated, both individual and *shared* perspectives were sought on teamworking and collaboration. Exploring collaboration in these teams provided insight into their teamworking relationships, what they liked about their working relationships, how they thought teacher-teacher aide relationships might be improved, how collaboration supported a shared meaning and offered insight into how, in relation to these teams, Fullan’s culture of collaboration might be supported in schools.
I agree with Merriam’s (2009) belief that “research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making a difference in people’s lives” (p. 1). Therefore, this qualitative study focused on discovery, insight and understanding from the perspectives of teacher-teacher aide team members with the aim of contributing to understandings around collaborative practices in school settings. In my role as researcher I engaged with the members of various teams to explore their approach to the complexities of their collaborative working relationship – what their day-to-day experience with collaboration is. The data collection incorporated data gathered through team member dialogue, observations, individual interviews and supporting documentation pertaining to their collaborative practice. The methods of data collection employed in this study are discussed in Chapter 3. The data were combined to provide rich, “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) of collaborative practices in these teams. An analysis of the data using activity systems analysis promoted a focus on collaborative activities with the aim of answering this study’s guiding question: How is collaboration practised in teacher-teacher aide teams?

The following two sections discuss the background to this study and why I chose to undertake this study. The next two sections explore how the research issue was defined and how the initial research questions were derived. The following two sections discuss the research approach of a collective case study and identify the research questions. Following on from this is an outline of the setting for this research project and a discussion on participant selection including a table providing a detailed depiction of team participation. The final sections of this chapter contain a discussion on the limitations and delimitations of this research project, an outline of the structure of this thesis and a section providing a summary of this chapter along with some concluding comments.

1.2 Background

In Queensland, teacher aide is a title used by the Department of Education and Training (DET) to describe a person who works closely with teachers supporting learning and teaching in Queensland schools (DET, 2006). In Australia, the State of Queensland employs more teacher aides than any of the other States or Territories (Job Outlook, 2017). A Department of Education and Children’s Services (DECS) (2011) discussion paper identified the ratio of teachers to teacher aides in Queensland in 2010 as 2.59:1. The number of teacher aides employed is continuing to rise as the Queensland Government rolls out its plan to provide “up to $54 million over four years for
more than 600 Queensland State school Prep\(^1\) classes to have the equivalent of a full-time teacher aide in their classroom during school hours” (DET, 2016, para. 1). Teacher aides have also been employed in increasing numbers throughout the United Kingdom (UK), (Lee, 2002) and the United States of America (USA) (Birkett, 2004). Along with this increase has come a change in the roles of both the teacher and the teacher aide (Birkett, 2004; Lee, 2002).

The teacher’s role has broadened to incorporate the role of manager, involving a sharing of leadership, as well as the ability to work and plan in a team situation (Caldwell, 2003; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001; Ruedel, Diamond, Zaidi, & Aboud, 2002). In Queensland, this change has been reflected in the professional standards for teachers. This was seen in standard nine of Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers (Queensland College of Teachers [QCT], 2006), requiring teachers to contribute effectively to professional teams, involving working in partnership with teacher aides and having knowledge and understanding of team related issues. With the superseding of the Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers in 2012 (QCT, 2014), the focus on teaming for teachers is now reflected in standard seven where teachers are required to engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community (QCT, 2011).

In line with changes to the teacher’s role there has been a broadening of the role of the teacher aide. Teacher aides were originally introduced into Queensland schools on the basis that every teacher would have an ‘Aide’, making teachers “more relaxed and happy in their jobs” (The Teacher Aide, 1977, p. 21) as a “result of their lighter home-work load and the freeing of in-school and out-of-school time for them to plan and teach” (The Teacher Aide, 1977, p. 21). From this early position as “Aide” the teacher aide role has expanded, in Australia and internationally, to include increased responsibilities, greater involvement in student education, and an increased need for active participation in teacher-teacher aide teams (Birkett, 2004; Butt & Lowe, 2012; Lee, 2002; Parker et al., 2009; Pickett, Gerlach, Morgan, Likins, & Wallace, 2007).

In literature around teacher-teacher aide working it has been reported that these changes in roles, along with the expectation that teachers and teacher aides will work in teams, have received limited support with few, if any, guidelines in place to assist teachers and teacher aides to develop, manage and promote teamwork (e.g., Heller, 1997; Lee, 2002; Thomas, 1992; Vincett, Cremin, &

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\(^1\) Prep is the title given to the preparatory year, or first year of schooling, for Queensland students.
Thomas, 2005). With collaboration being seen as the way of our working future (Marx, 2014) and an important issue within school reform initiatives (e.g., de Lima, 2001; Hauge & Babkie, 2006), combined with increasing numbers of teacher aides working alongside teachers in school classrooms, there is a growing need to explore collaboration in these teams.

1.3 Why has this study been undertaken?

The genesis of this study began with curiosity, wondering what the reality of collaboration is for teacher-teacher aide team members in today’s schools. Greater numbers of teacher aides have been employed to support in Prep classes (e.g., Department of Education & Training [DET], 2016) and assist students with a disability (Australian Association of Special Education (AASE), 2007). However, very few teachers have been trained to supervise teacher aides (Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001; Blatchford, Russell, & Webster, 2012) while teacher aides are simply told to work under the direction of a teacher (e.g., DET, 2006) and no one seems to have given much thought as to how these teacher and teacher aide team members will collaborate. It seemed to me that the great benefits being claimed for collaboration in schools could be neutralised by tensions that can arise in teacher-teacher aide teams. An example of this can be found in Thomas’s (1992) ground-breaking work on classroom teams in the UK where tensions caused by issues such as the distribution of power and authority, interpersonal and ideological mismatches and lack of clear role definition were found to impact effective teamworking. As a teacher aide, and later a teacher, I encountered similar problems to those identified by Thomas.

Working as a teacher aide I was keenly aware of tensions that could arise in teacher-teacher aide teams and, seeking to ease those tensions, presented the Deputy Principal with a number of brilliant ideas. Over time I presented her with many ideas. One hot afternoon late in the year I entered her office full of enthusiasm for what I thought was a particularly good idea. This idea referred to adjusting teacher aide rosters to allow for 10 to 15 minute meetings with teachers on a regular basis. My idea was presented in a short document that included a rationale for arranging meetings and an outline of a meeting form that the aide would fill out prior to the meeting. The

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2 I began working as a teacher aide in the early 1990s. My work as a teacher aide predominantly involved withdrawing a student/s from a classroom with little or no contact with the teacher. With the Deputy Principal as Line Manger, my work was allocated by the general classroom teacher, one or more advisory visiting teachers, specialists (e.g., speech therapist), and the school’s learning support teacher. At this time teacher aides in the school were rarely invited to IEP meetings, and meetings with teachers were often ad hoc occurring before or after school during teacher aides’ unpaid time.
form was to provide a record of that meeting for both teacher and teacher aide as well as providing the teacher with, for example, regular feedback on student progress, information on any problems encountered, and requests for advice. I proposed that the information on the form might assist teachers when writing, for example, student report cards or Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Little did I know then of the challenge organising regular meetings between teachers and teacher aides could present for the Deputy Principal. This kind and very patient Deputy Principal carefully placed my latest team improvement concept into a bulging folder perched precariously on her overflowing in-tray and made the very strong suggestion that, if I really wanted to make a change, I should go to university, become a teacher and implement my own ideas. Keen to find ways to support both teachers and teacher aides and to explore effective teacher-teacher aide teamworking further, I took her advice.

On completing a dual degree in Behavioural Studies and Education I went on to complete Honours and, such is my interest in effective teacher-teacher aide teamworking, I chose as my Honours study an investigation into teacher-teacher aide teamworking. That study involved nine teams from both private and public schools. Employing observations and interviews, the study explored teacher-teacher aide teamworking with the aim of shining a light on the practices and difficulties the teams faced in school situations. What I found was that these teams faced the same difficulties Thomas (1992) identified and some had experienced similar struggles and successes to those I had experienced as a member of a teacher-teacher aide team. I also found that team members were keen to do the best they could for the students and they wanted to get the best out of their working relationship to ensure they achieved that support for students.

Few Australian studies have been conducted around teacher-teacher aide teamworking. In Australian studies teacher-teacher aide working has been closely associated with roles and responsibilities, particularly those of the teacher aide, and supervision of teacher aides (e.g., Bourke, 2008; Butt, 2014; Harris & Aprile, 2015; Howard & Ford, 2007). Findings from these studies reveal that teacher-teacher aide teams face comparable challenges to teacher-paraeducator teams in the USA (e.g., Chopra, Sandoval-Lucero, & French, 2011; Riggs & Mueller, 2001) and teacher-teaching assistant teams in the UK (e.g., Farrell, Balshaw, & Polat, 1999; Lee, 2002). Looking for a way forward I remembered Schrödinger’s adjuration, “The task is, not so much to see what no one has yet seen; but to think what nobody has yet thought, about that which everybody sees” (Mackay, 1991, p. 219) and began to seek a new understanding of effective teacher-teacher aide teamworking beginning with the idea of perspective.
I had known a teacher aide’s perspective. From a teacher’s perspective I found the challenges and successes of working with an aide were tempered by the demands of my new role. As noted above, the teacher’s role has broadened to incorporate the role of manager. From this new position as manager I came to appreciate why my early improvement ideas were allowed to pile up in that folder on the Deputy Principal’s in tray. I found that the presence of a teacher aide added to a growing list of organisational responsibilities. The reason for this is that much of the responsibility for supporting teacher aides in the classroom falls to teachers (Wilson, Schlapp, & Davidson, 2003). I also came to identify effective teamworking within a school with the term collaboration.

In literature around collaboration and teacher-teacher aide teamworking I found several contrasting perspectives. In some literature, notably literature related to special education, teachers are exhorted to collaborate with teacher aides and collaboration with the aide is identified as a key role for teachers (e.g., Cramer, 2006; Pearson, Chambers, & Hall, 2003; Ruedel et al., 2002). In other literature the terms supervision and used are common and teachers are encouraged not to under-use or waste the resource that is a teacher aide (e.g., Fletcher-Campbell, 1992; French, 2001; Jerwood, 1999; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003; Sharples, Webster, & Blatchford, 2015).

My experiences, and the literature I read around effective working with teacher aides, made me realise that collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams is important. However, the more I read the more I came to understand that collaboration is a far greater complex issue than I had originally thought. I realised that if, as John-Steiner, Weber, and Minnis (1998) claimed, true collaboration involves a commitment to shared power where no one individual’s point of view is dominant (p. 776) a fresh approach, one that moved away from a focus primarily on supervision and a management perspective, would be needed to explore collaboration in these teams.

My experiences as a member of teacher-teacher aide teams made me aware that, working closely together for long periods of time during the working week, team members can become close, anticipating each other’s moods and needs. Discussing teacher team relationships, Murawski (2010) referred to this close bond between team members as a marriage describing it as “two equal adults paired together for a lengthy time to share in the education and raising of children” (p. 2). In consideration of Murawski’s analogy of teamworking as a marriage I pondered whether a different, more unified, approach to teamworking where both team members have an active role might yield a greater understanding of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams.
Given that teacher-teacher aide teams can and do work closely together, and that much research concerning teacher-teacher aide teamworking focuses on the perspective of either the teacher or the teacher aide, I came to realise that a team perspective where both participants contribute equally, jointly reflecting on their work experiences together, could offer a richer and more inclusive insight into teacher-teacher aide teamworking. Exploring the team as a unit engaging in the activity of collaboration offered a new and different way of thinking about collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. However, I also understood that individuals bring to that activity their past experiences of working with others and build on those experiences with their new team member. To provide some background and lend support to the richer, more inclusive, insight I sought I realised I needed to include both individual and joint perspectives on collaboration.

While there is a great deal of literature around collaboration there is considerably less literature around collaboration in schools and very little information on collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams, although aspects of collaboration are embedded in research and discussions on team member roles and responsibilities, equal-status teamwork, and guides to collaboration. James, Dunning, Connolly, and Elliott’s (2007) study on how collaboration supported student attainment in 18 primary schools in Wales concluded that, given that collaborative practice appears to bring about substantive benefits in terms of student attainment, “it is important that the characteristics of collaborative practitioners be explored further so that they can be specifically developed” (p. 552). They asked, “Does collaborative practice take on different forms in different settings and if so what are they and how might they be characterised?” (p. 551). In consideration of their query this study looks at collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams in the classroom setting, an area often ignored with research around collaboration tending to focus on whole school collaboration (e.g., James et al., 2007; Slater, 2004) or collaboration in teacher–teacher teams (e.g., Brouwer, 2011; Johnson, B., 2003).

In summary, my decision to undertake this study into collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams was influenced by my experiences in teacher-teacher aide teams and my desire to support these teams at the chalkface of education. It also developed from the great deal of reading I have done around the topic of teacher-teacher aide teamworking and an understanding that teamworking, from a team perspective, might offer a new way of thinking about these teams. Given the importance of collaboration and the implications for education both nationally (Johnson, N., 2003) and internationally (e.g., James et al., 2007), there is a need to understand collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. Research in the area of collaboration in these teams has the potential to identify
key issues of concern and areas for improvement for teachers and teacher aides. Such research could: provide reflection on collaborative working relationship practices from which teacher-teacher aide teams and their students may benefit; offer a way to enhance collaboration in existing teams by sharing successful team collaboration strategies; add to the understanding of the characteristics of collaboration; and provide a basis for future research in this field. With the realisation that there could be numerous benefits and keen to explore collaboration from a team perspective, from those intimately involved in these teams, I decided to undertake this study into collaborative practices of teacher-teacher aide teams.

1.4 How was the research issue defined?

In defining the research issue I first considered that the issue of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams is both important in terms of benefit to team members and to student outcomes (Ruedel et al., 2002) and complex given that even the physical work environment can impact on collaborative practice (Stewart, 1996; Vincett et al., 2005). According to Devecchi and Rouse (2010), the pivotal element to achieving an effective working arrangement in teacher-teacher aide teams is collaboration between the team members. In their book, Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals, Friend and Cook (2017) offered only three paragraphs relating to collaboration and paraeducators. They state that a teacher’s “relationship with paraeducators is perhaps at this time the least understood and most complex of all the professional relationships [a teacher] will have in [his/her] job” (p. 259) and that clear guidelines on collaborating with paraeducators “simply do not exist” (p. 259). Friend and Cook argued that, while it is possible for teachers and paraeducators to collaborate, what is unclear is how boundaries are established; how teachers balance collaboration with paraeducators with their role as supervisor. Given there is so little information on the issue of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams and no exemplars of successful teacher-teacher aide partnerships (Wilson & Bedford, 2008), I decided to examine collaboration in these teams by exploring how they collaborate. To come to a better understanding of the issues related to collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams I first sought a definition of collaboration as it might relate to teacher-teacher aide teams.

Conscious of Leonard and Leonard’s (2001) claim that, “Defining collaboration may be as difficult as achieving it” (p. 387) I decided to begin with Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey’s (2008) working definition of collaboration based on their examination of 414 studies related to
collaboration in their search for the factors that influence successful collaboration. According to Mattessich et al.’s definition of collaboration, collaboration is a

…mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organisations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards. (p. 4)

Mattessich et al.’s (2008) definition offered a clear picture of collaborative practice, offering procedural recommendation for collaboration in reference to organisational collaboration. However, to assist in getting closer to defining the issue of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams, I needed to add to Mattessich et al.’s definition of collaboration in organisations with what Stewart (1996) identified as the “new ways of seeing and being” (p. 22) that can be engendered in educational collaboration.

While definitions of collaboration are abundant, there is no agreement on a single definition of collaboration in the literature related to collaboration in schools. The lack of a single definition of collaboration as it relates to collaborative practice in schools is possibly, as Stewart (1996) argued, because of the limited research on collaboration in schools and “because of the very nature of collaboration itself” (p. 21). However, there is agreement in literature on collaboration in schools on several key components of collaboration.

Echoing Mattessich et al.’s (2008) definition, five key components of collaboration in schools are: a focus on mutual or common goals; sharing of expertise on a regular basis in an atmosphere of trust, support and respect; shared responsibility for outcomes; and shared resources and rewards (Cook & Friend, 1991; John-Steiner et al., 1998; Lacey, 2001; Montiel-Overall, 2005; Slater, 2004; Snell & Janney, 2010). However, this is where the similarity with Mattessich et al.’s definition of collaboration in organisations ends, with literature around collaboration in schools adding three new key components to collaboration. The first of these is positive interdependence where individuals view the success of the other team member/s as just as important as their own success (e.g., Nevin, Villa, & Thousand, 2009; Slater, 2004; Thomas, 1992).

The second additional key component is parity or equality in the team relationship. Referring to collaboration between teachers and librarians Montiel-Overall (2005) defined
collaboration as “a trusting, working relationship between two or more equal participants…” (p. 5). According to Stewart (1996), in education collaboration “refers to equal partners working together in an equitable, mutually beneficial relationship to attain goals meaningful and desirable to all” (p. 21). However, both Cook and Friend (1991) and Slater (2004) argued that collaboration in schools may involve individuals of unequal status and that, for collaboration to succeed, there needs to be both shared power and equality amongst the stakeholders. This is echoed by James et al.’s (2007) in their research on collaborative practice in Welsh schools. According to James et al., collaboration is a practice of joint working where there is “equal valuing and parity of esteem despite the team members’ different roles and responsibilities” (p. 548).

The third key component of collaboration identified in literature on collaboration in schools is that collaboration must be entered into voluntarily; that no team member should be mandated to collaborate (Cook & Friend, 1991; Murawski, 2010; Slater, 2004; Snell & Janney, 2010). Slater (2004) argued that mandating collaboration “recreate(s) a new version of top-down, hierarchical organization” (para. 20) and that collaborative work relations arise not from mandated collaboration “but from the perceived value and understanding among participants that working together is productive” (para. 20).

The identification of collaboration as a style of interaction (e.g., Cook & Friend, 1991; Murawski, 2010) combined with the components of collaboration revealed in literature on collaboration in schools, provided a useful basis for a provisional definition of collaboration in schools. Thus, collaboration in schools can be understood as a style of interaction that: is entered into voluntarily; incorporates a focus on mutual or common goals; involves regular sharing of expertise in an atmosphere of trust, support and respect; includes shared responsibility for outcomes, as well as a sharing of resources and rewards; and incorporates participant positive interdependence and participant parity.

This definition offered an explanation of what collaboration might look like in schools. However, it does not explain or detail how, when and why, collaboration occurs in teacher-teacher aide teams, nor does it offer a definitive description of collaboration in schools. To claim this is what collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams looks like would be to place an artificial restriction on any subsequent understandings of collaboration. What this definition provided, however, was a useful basis to explore the insights into participant definitions of collaboration and the work practices they attributed to collaboration. Thus, I found it useful to return to this definition throughout my data collection and analysis. With a tentative definition of collaboration in schools
as a starting point to a consideration of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams I turned to defining the research focus.

In consideration of the definition of collaboration my interest in how the team members collaborate meant I needed a focus on the styles of interaction that demonstrate a team’s collaborative practice. However, both Lacey (2001) and Griffiths (2010) had reported that people are often exhorted to collaborate and, while the issue of why collaborate is well documented, the issue of how we collaborate has received little attention. As a result, individuals may know what collaboration looks like but may be unable to demonstrate collaboration. Friend (2000) referred to school staff talking about the difficulties of collaboration, how in their preparation little attention is paid to collaboration, and how few staff development opportunities are offered that relate to collaboration. Friend and Lacey both reported that school staff will claim knowledge of communication skills, strategies for responding to difficult situations, and shared problem-solving, but often flounder when asked to demonstrate their collaboration knowledge and skills via role play and simulations.

Given Friend’s (2000) and Lacey’s (2001) findings, asking participants to demonstrate collaborative practices may yield limited data on team collaborative practice and, possibly, even make participants feel uncomfortable. Simply observing participants work may yield similar results as participants may not be able to demonstrate their collaborative knowledge and skills. Therefore, taking an approach that focused on a style of interaction as simply a demonstrated physical activity could result in limiting the data in relation to the range of collaboration practised by team members and, limiting participant beneficence as researcher observation leaves little or no room for participant perspectives. To avoid these negative outcomes I looked for another way to explore activities demonstrating collaboration, a way that would permit participants to express their understanding of collaboration in their team, a way that could explore a team’s collaborative styles of interaction beyond simple demonstrations of physical activity.

Reflecting on the definition of collaboration in schools (above) I wondered if there was a key element to collaboration, something that could become a focus for exploration of team engagement in collaboration. Johnson and Johnson (2013) and Friend and Cook (2017) offered insight into a key element to collaboration. In their influential work on group theory skills, Johnson and Johnson argued that the basis of all group functioning/interaction between members is effective two-way communication. Friend and Cook, in their influential work on collaboration skills for school professionals, stated that communication is vital to collaboration. Searching literature on
teacher-teacher aide working I found that open and clear communication is identified as essential in supporting teacher-teacher aide relationships (Fitzell, 2010; Gerlach, 2002; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997; Russell, Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, & Martin, 2005; Vincett et al., 2005). Given the paramount importance of communication to teamwork I saw a benefit to exploring the issue of collaboration by foregrounding communication in this research.

Redefining the research issue as one with greater focus on communication led me to consider the type of communication on which I should focus. In his article on professionalism for the ‘new times’ Quicke (1998) offered a starting point for my exploration of what this type of communication might look like. According to Quicke, in these ‘new times’ there is a need for “professional discourse constructed in line with the Habermasian ideal speech situation” (p. 323). Quicke argued that this ideal speech situation is one in which discussion is free of constraints and all participants are equally able to contribute to the discussion, put forward their ideas, question any proposal and be critical of the content or form of the discussion (p. 332). This type of discussion offered promise as a way of enabling an exploration of collaboration. However, it raised concerns about how, given that research shows that tensions may exist due to unequal status (e.g., Thomas, 1992), equitable participant contribution could be encouraged. Bohm’s (1996) work on group communication offered a solution to what he aptly dubbed “the problem of communication” (p. 2), presenting a way to improve communication with a move towards mutual understanding and trust.

Bohm (1996) argued discussion is like a ping-pong game with ideas being batted back and forth and the aim being to win the game. According to Bohm, equitable communication occurs when individuals engage in dialogue. Bohm identified dialogue as a situation in which there is no attempt to make a particular view prevail. According to Bohm, “a dialogue is something more of a common participation, in which we are not playing a game against each other, but with each other. In a dialogue, everybody wins” (p. 7). Bohm described dialogue as a flow of meaning “out of which may emerge some new understanding. It’s something new, which may not have been in the starting point at all. It’s something creative.” (p. 7). In researching a method that would enable participants to engage in this idea of dialogue I considered cogenerative dialoguing.
Cogenerative dialoguing, or cogen, is a method of communicating that concerns “making sense in a context that does away with privileging some voices in an educational setting … at the expense of others” (Roth & el Kadri, 2016, p. 313). Roth and el Kadri (2016) stated that the values embedded in cogenerative dialoguing “are fundamentally democratic, anti-authoritarian, and emancipatory” (p. 313). They described the use of cogen in schools between teachers and students who engage in cogen as enabling participants to “describe, analyse, and theorise the critical instances that creates some problem … for the purpose of making decisions that meet general needs, that is, needs common to teachers and students alike” (p. 313). Including cogenerative dialoguing as a tool to enable participants to explore collaboration – their collaborative practices through communication – offered benefits to participants as potential harms could be minimised through the engagement with dialoguing and participant beneficence could be maximised. The study also benefits with the parity supported in cogenerative dialoguing permitting voices of each team member to be heard. (For more on how cogenerative dialoguing is employed in this study and how participant beneficence is supported in cogenerative dialoguing sessions see Chapter 3.)

Including cogenerative dialoguing in an exploration of collaboration offered yet another benefit. This approach presented a way that could permit team members to safely explore issues identified as problematic to teacher-teacher aide teamworking. As noted earlier, my own experience as a member of teacher-teacher aide teams had made me aware that inequalities can exist in these teams and, as Thomas (1992) had found, tensions caused by issues such as the distribution of power and authority, interpersonal and ideological mismatches and lack of clear role definition can impact on team engagement with collaborative practice. Much of the literature around teamworking, both in Australia and overseas, relates to these problems.

Two key issues emerged from an initial literature research into collaboration and teamworking relating to problems affecting teamworking in teacher-teacher aide teams. These issues were interpersonal communication and roles and responsibilities. The literature identified interpersonal communication as a key component to collaboration (e.g., James et al., 2007; Slater, 2010).

Throughout this thesis I often use the term cogen in lieu of cogenerative dialoguing. I have done this for three reasons. First, to avoid the awkwardness of frequently repeating a large seven-syllable term. Second, abbreviating cogenerative dialoguing to cogen is common in research and literature around cogenerative dialoguing (e.g., Geelan, Gilmer & Martin, 2006; Higgins & Bonne, 2014; Hsu, 2014; Murphy & Martin, 2015; Tobin, 2014; Wharton, 2010). Third, like Martin’s (in Geelan et. al., 2006) participants, participants in this study preferred the term cogen as they became comfortable with the process of co-generative dialogue.
and to working with teacher aides (e.g., Campbell & Fairbairn, 2005; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2009; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). Communication, particularly open communication between the team members, has been identified as essential in supporting teacher-teacher aide relationships (Fitzell, 2010; Gerlach, 2002; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003; Russell et al., 2005; Vincett et al., 2005). Issues related to communication were found to be at the heart of many of the problems associated with collaboration and teamwork (e.g., Blatchford et al., 2012; James et al., 2007; Slater, 2004; Vincett et al., 2005). Skelton (1997) went so far as to claim that the importance of good communication skills for paraeducators and teachers cannot be overemphasised for “The whole climate of interpersonal relationships in an education centre can be affected by an individual’s ability to communicate” (p. 89). The prominence of communication in literature around collaboration and teamwork supported the focus on communication in this study and the employment of cogen as a tool; as a positive way to encourage participants to proactively engage in reflection on their team communication. Taking such an approach to the exploration of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams could also offer participants and researcher greater insight into team members’ perspectives on individual communication skills in relation to collaboration in their team.

I felt that an exploration of the second key issue that emerged from the literature, that is, roles and responsibilities, might also benefit from a focus on communication in collaboration. However, after researching the issue of roles and responsibilities a little further I felt I needed to adapt how the research issue was defined. A literature review revealed that much of the problem associated with roles and responsibilities has manifest due to changes, over time, in teacher aide roles from paint pot cleaners to paraeducators, working alongside teachers in a similar way to their counterparts, paralegals or paramedics (Campbell & Fairbairn, 2005; Pickett et al., 2007). Lacey (2001) claimed that while there may be role descriptions for team members in education, in practice the roles vary and team members often find themselves moving into jobs that require them to expand their traditionally defined role. Lacey called this the multiple role. The literature revealed that confusion and fears around roles and responsibilities can lead to greater misunderstandings, as well as the teacher aide being perceived as “an extra pressure rather than the asset they really are” (Birkett, 2004, p. 6).

Given that roles and responsibilities seem likely to impact on how teacher-teacher aide teams practise collaboration, I concluded that the possibility of variations in the way team members collaborate needed to be addressed in the research. Given Mattessich et al.’s (2008) claim that, “In
practical use, ‘collaboration’ is commonly interchanged with ‘cooperation’ or ‘coordination’” (p. 60) then there may be many variations of collaborative practice in teacher-teacher aide teams. To permit exploration of the varied approaches to collaboration that team members might use in their collaborative working relationships I added the following sub-question: In what ways do the teachers and teacher aides collaborate in their teacher-teacher aide teams? to the overarching research question: How is collaboration practised in teacher-teacher aide teams?

Thus, the research issue of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams was refined through an exploration of definitions of collaboration, as well as a literature review identifying the issues related to working in teacher-teacher aide teams and collaboration in schools. This resulted in defining the research issue as not just one of a style of interaction that is made up of collaborative activities, such as sharing resources in teacher-teacher aide teams, but also one of communication and activities as practised by these teams. (See the provisional definition of collaboration on page 10 for further examples of collaborative activities)

1.5 Research approach

Thomas (1992) stated that, “Teams are complex social phenomena” (p. 61) and that “the methods of analysing the processes taking place within them must adopt an appropriate form – one which is able to address, assimilate and explicate this complexity” (pp. 61-62). A case study design is particularly suited to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, especially when the phenomenon being studied are impossible to separate from that context (Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2013; Yin, 2014). My understanding is that it is impossible to separate teacher-teacher aide collaborative praxis from the real life context of teacher-teacher aide teamwork. Therefore, a case study approach was selected. As a methodology, case study research covers the design, data collection techniques, and particular approaches to data analysis of a study (Yin, 2014). In this research the case study approach employed the framework and tools of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory to map and gain insights into the collaborative practices of teacher-teacher aide teams as interdependent activity systems. This combination presented a way to address, assimilate and explicate the complexity of the phenomenon of teacher-teacher aide team collaborative working.

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4 See following section and Chapter 3 for more on Cultural-Historical Activity Theory as part of the research approach.
1.6 Research Questions

In defining the research issue two research questions were developed. The first was the guiding question for the research: How is collaboration practised in teacher-teacher aide teams? The second question, permitting variation in collaboration in consideration of the possible varieties of roles and responsibilities, was: In what ways do the teachers and teacher aides collaborate in their teacher-teacher aide teams?

To permit a focus on communication and promote equitable communication I turned to cogenerative dialoguing. In this study cogen was employed as a tool to enable equitable communication between team members. Cogen was employed to develop an understanding of teacher-teacher aide collaboration through participant conversations that focus on their teamwork. The dynamic nature of teacher-teacher aide collaboration, the importance of communication, and positive interdependence noted in the literature review meant that researching collaboration in these teams required a data gathering tool that focused on team collaboration through team discourse. The data gathering tool also needed to be repeated over time, providing more than a snapshot of teacher-teacher aide teaming, and it needed to be flexible enough to cater for changes in team priorities and needs. Cogen provided such a tool.

The importance of cogen as a method for collecting data on teacher-teacher aide discussion around collaboration prompted the sub-question: What happened to the quality and the nature of communication between teachers and teacher aides when teacher-teacher aide teams used cogenerative dialoguing?

In seeking a way to analyse the activity of collaborative practice, that is, how collaboration is practised by teacher-teacher aide team members, I needed a method of data analysis that would permit a focus on the activity of collaboration. Activity systems analysis based on Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) permitted a focus on activity. In the context of CHAT, an activity is identified as a societally-motivated activity, such as hunting, trading, or schooling (Stith & Roth, 2008). In this study the societally-motivated activity is collaboration as practised by members of teacher-teacher aide teams. CHAT is based on the idea of “a logically ordered system of goal directed mental and behavioural actions rather than psychic processes or reactions” (Bedny, Seglin, & Meister, 2000, p. 169). Analysis within CHAT—activity systems analysis—has, as its basic unit of analysis, an object-oriented activity (an activity system) as depicted in an activity system model (Engeström, 1987; Rogoff, 1995). According to Cole and Engeström (1993), an
activity systems model: “provides a conceptual map to the major loci among which human cognition is distributed… [as well as including] other people who must somehow be taken into account simultaneously with the subject as constituents of human activity systems” (p. 8).

Activity systems analysis is a way to take the essence of data in one human activity data set, represent it using a graphic model, and then compare the activities with other activity data sets (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Yamagata-Lynch (2010) put this simply, stating that activity systems analysis is a way “to work with data gathered from complex learning environments and map human interactions in natural settings” (p. ix).

The decision to use CHAT in this exploratory study on collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams prompted the final sub-question: How can Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) be used to conceptualise the affordances and challenges of cogenerative dialoguing for understanding and explaining collaborative teacher-teacher aide teaming?

Thus, as part of the process of developing my research focus around collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams, the following guiding questions were developed.

Overarching question:

- How is collaboration practised in teacher-teacher aide teams?

Sub-questions:

- In what ways do the teachers and teacher aides collaborate in their teacher-teacher aide teams?
- What happened to the quality and the nature of communication between teachers and teacher aides when teacher-teacher aide teams used cogenerative dialoguing?
- How can CHAT be used to conceptualise the affordances and challenges of cogenerative dialoguing for understanding and explaining collaborative teacher-teacher aide teaming?

1.7 Setting and school selection

This study was conducted in two State schools in Queensland over a period of eight months from October 2015 to June 2016. For the sake of anonymity I de-identified the schools denoting
them in this study as Angelwood Primary School and Bayshore Special School, respectively. Angelwood Primary School is a large mainstream school with approximately 700 students. Bayshore Special School is a smaller special needs school with approximately 250 students. These schools were selected because they cover a range of education levels from Prep to Senior Secondary; they employ teacher aides to provide support for students with and without disabilities; and teachers and teacher aides work as a team in the classroom. The principle criterion in the selection of these schools was not whether the schools represented as successful collaborative teamwork environments, rather, it was more about whether the selected schools would have teacher-teacher aide team situations in which collaboration might occur. I did not expect to represent all teacher-teacher aide team collaborative experiences this way but I had confidence that I would find common issues in relation to collaborative working in these teams and that I could learn a lot about how teacher-teacher aide team members collaborated in just two schools. This approach conforms to selection in case study research where the “opportunity to learn is of primary importance” (Stake, 1995, p. 6). Being new to this locale, none of the schools or staff were known to me prior to the commencement of this study.

1.8 Participants

Participants were selected for this collective case study using information-oriented selection. Information-oriented selection aligns with participant selection in CHAT in relation to access to participant experiences considered most relevant to the study, ability to access each participant’s world, and allowance for the phenomenon (collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams) to be explained in terms of activity theory (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). My aim was to collect data on typical and unusual participant experiences to gain a wide range of information (Guba & Lincoln 1989; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Stake, 1995) that would assist in developing an understanding of how teachers and teacher aides collaborate, offering insights into the milieux in which collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams occurs.

I faced a major difficulty in relation to the timing of my research as I was only able to begin data collection in late October 2015. I found that teams willing to participate in the research were not in a position to make a commitment for the duration of the study due to the likely breakup of their team at the end of the 2015 school year in early December. Fortunately, with the support of the school principals, teacher-teacher aide teams at two schools agreed to participate.
Eight teams, four teams from each school, began their participation in this research project in late October 2015. However, only four teams completed the study – two of these were initial teams from Angelwood Primary School and two were new teams from Bayshore Special School who joined the study after the Easter holidays in April 2016. This provided comprehensive data from four teams and partial data from six teams. In all, data were collected from twenty-two individuals, eleven teachers and eleven teacher aides. The ten teams involved in this study covered a range of year levels from Prep to Senior Secondary and team types, including general classroom teams and special needs classroom teams of different size and gender balance (i.e., all-female teams, all-male teams and female-male teams).

Participants included eight female teachers, three male teachers, seven female teacher aides and four male teacher aides. Five teams consisted of a female teacher and a female teacher aide, two teams consisted of a male teacher and a male teacher aide and two teams consisted of a female teacher and a male teacher aide. One team consisted of two teachers (a male and a female) and two female teacher aides. In this study gender balance is consistent with the demographic representation in State schools.

Schools in Queensland break in early December for the summer holidays and do not recommence the school year until the latter part of January. One team, Team D, withdrew from the study due to work commitments. Of the remaining teams five teams were no longer working as a team when the new school year commenced. Of the four remaining teams two (from Angelwood) were from the original eight teams and two new teams (from Bayshore) were able to participate after the Easter holidays in April 2016. These four teams completed the study (the final two in June 2016) and, hence, inform the majority of the data analysis. (See Table 1.1 for a breakdown of team participation.)
Table 1.1 Team participation in the study - October 2015 to June 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Activities:</th>
<th>Angelwood Primary School</th>
<th>Bayshore Special School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team A</td>
<td>Team B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observation 2</td>
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<td>Observation 3</td>
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<td>Interview 3</td>
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<td>Cogen 1</td>
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<td>Cogen 7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: ✓ indicates team participation in a research data gathering activity

One of the greatest problems I encountered in conducting this research was obtaining time for the team members to have time-off together to attend cogen sessions. Cogen sessions, observations and interviews were effected differently in each school. This was, primarily, a result of needing to fit-in with staff availability. For example, if one team member was absent due to illness or work commitments I was unable to conduct a cogen session or observation with that team.\(^5\) Difficulties faced in conducting this research also included having to conduct research around school work schedules such as school camps, and each school’s ability to provide relief staff. Unavailability of participants due to the reasons outlined above impacted on the number of cogen sessions some participants were able to attend and when and if participants were available for observations, interviews and cogen sessions.

It is important to note that it is not an easy task to arrange cover for both staff members and this research was only made possible through the generosity and support of the principals, senior staff, and participating team members at both schools. It is also important to note that not only did participants give generously of their time but, in some cases, they rearranged their schedules or

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\(^5\) The exception to this was Team 3 where there were two teachers and two teacher aides. Aubry (a teacher) was only able to attend one cogen session due to work commitments. Aubry discussed this with the team and myself at the start of the study and, as the majority of the team were able to attend cogen sessions, it was decided the team would continue with cogen and provide her with information on the cogen sessions she missed. Aubry was also absent for the only observation conducted of this team.
came into work even when they were unwell so that they would not miss their interview or their team’s cogen sessions. The gaps in data collection in the table above (Table 1.1) reflect the difficulties faced in collecting data from these teams.

At the commencement of the study all team members who agreed to participate were provided with information sheets and all signed consent forms. All the team members who withdrew from the study provided a written statement giving permission to include their data in this research project.

1.9 Limitations and delimitations

In this exploration of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams I have focused on the teams, seeking only team member perspectives. Principals, senior staff and school administrators were not included as participants in this study. While their inclusion would, undoubtedly, have enhanced the findings of this study, I lacked a large enough timeframe and the benefit of a team of researchers to support data collection and analysis required for such an expansive qualitative study. However, team member perspectives are, arguably, essential in research designed to explore collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. Also, I did not specifically collect demographic data in relation to participant age. As the focus of this study was on teamworking I collected demographic data in relation to teamworking – how long the team members had worked together and how long they had worked as a teacher or teacher aide.

This study is limited in that it only involves ten teacher-teacher aide teams in Queensland and does not include participants from private and alternative schools. Therefore, the findings may not reflect the views of the full range of team relationships or teacher-teacher aide teams in Queensland and other States or regions throughout Australia. Also, logistics dictated that participants were from two schools, possibly limiting the capture of team variance. However, the selection of a mainstream school and a special needs school aligns with current literature on teacher-teacher aide teams, offered a range of teacher-teacher aide education teams, and data collected from the participating teams covered teacher-teacher aide teams from a range of year levels.

A further possible limitation is that the participants may not be representative of the population of teacher-teacher aide teams within these schools because those who volunteered may only be those who believed their teams were working well or were willing to participate in this
study. To mitigate this issue, participants were asked about their best, as well as their worst, working relationships. Asking about their best and worst team relationships allowed for the exploration of relationships beyond their current team relationship. Also, the collection of thick descriptions through the wide range of data sources offered a way to gain valuable insight into team members’ perceptions of their teams’ workings and what impedes and supports their team’s collaborative practice within the school setting. Importantly, analysis incorporating Cultural-Historical Activity Theory promoted understanding of these insights within their social, cultural, and historically situated school systems, thus, expanding understanding of team practices beyond the individual teams and providing a broader view of team relationships within the participating schools.

1.10 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises eight chapters. This first chapter presented the background to this study, explaining why the study was undertaken and how the research issue was defined. This chapter also identified my research approach, questions, setting, participants and the limitations and delimitations of this research project. The second chapter presents a literature review in which I identify challenges teacher-teacher aide team members face in relation to working together, including school support and interpersonal relationships and collaboration in schools. This chapter highlights a gap in the understanding of collaboration in schools, establishing a need to explore the collaborative practice of teacher-teacher aide teams in a school environment.

Chapter three identifies the methodological approach taken in this study, the research design and ethical considerations. Chapter four presents the team profiles of all the teams participating in this study and the outlines of collaboration completed by the four teams that completed the study. This chapter concludes with a discussion on the key elements of collaboration identified in the outlines in relation to literature and research on collaboration.

Chapter five explores the factors affecting collaboration in the participating teams and addresses the first research sub-question – In what ways do the teachers and teacher aides collaborate in their teacher-teacher aide teams? This chapter also discusses participant concept maps; how these became concept drawings and the insight these drawings provide in relation to the ways team members collaborated. Chapter six opens with a discussion on cogen in this study, including the use of cogen as a tool for data collection and the recipe for cogen employed in this study.
study. Following this discussion is an exploration of team member engagement with cogenerative dialoguing, addressing the second research sub-question – What happened to the quality and the nature of communication between teachers and teacher aides when teacher-teacher aide teams used cogenerative dialoguing?

Chapter seven addresses the final research sub-question – How can CHAT be used to conceptualise the affordances and challenges of cogenerative dialoguing for understanding and explaining collaborative teacher-teacher aide teaming? Chapter eight presents a summary of the findings and discusses the contribution of this study and the implications for teacher-teacher aide collaborative practice in schools, as well as the implications for future research. I conclude this chapter with my own reflection on my journey of exploration into collaboration and teacher-teacher aide teams.

1.11 Summary and concluding comments

Collaboration, notably the idea of collaboration in teamwork, is now part of national and international school reform initiatives, requiring school staff to work together collaboratively in the understanding that collaboration has the potential to improve teaching and student learning outcomes (de Lima, 2001; James et al., 2007; King, 2010; Lacey 2001; Slater, 2004; Vagrieken, Dochy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2013). Collaboration is considered an essential feature of school life (e.g., Cramer, 2006).

Research into what collaboration means for teacher-teacher aide teams is important for several reasons. Firstly, it can contribute to an understanding of collaborative culture and teamworking within schools. Secondly, teacher-teacher aide collaboration is an under researched area and research in this area can offer insight into teamworking from which team members and the students with whom they work may benefit. Finally, if, as Fullan (2016) claimed, the key to successful change in education is improvement in relationships where individuals and groups find meaning in relation to others and “comprehend what meaning might look like from the vantage point of others” (p. 6) then exploring collaboration in these teams may offer insight into how teacher-teacher aide relationships might be improved and how Fullan’s culture of collaboration may enhance school outcomes.
The research issue of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams was defined as a style of interaction that is made up of collaborative activities, such as sharing resources in teacher-teacher aide teams, and communication around activities practised by these teams. The focus of this qualitative research was to engage participating teachers and teacher aides in reflection and dialogue on their collaboration; how they interpret and enact collaboration within their working relationship as part of a teacher-teacher aide team. Taking a joint, teacher-teacher aide team focused, approach offered a way to achieve fresh conceptualizations of the familiar topic of this teamworking in schools that may, by changing the terms of discussion around teacher-teacher aide teams, have an impact on thinking about collaboration in these teams and in schools.

With an emphasis on communication in team collaboration, this research project took a collective case study approach to exploring teacher-teacher aide team collaborative practices using cogenerative dialoguing (cogen). Utilising an analytical framework of CHAT supported bringing to light factors that may influence the effectiveness of collaborative practices. The following chapter discusses findings from an extensive literature review concerning teacher-teacher aide teamworking and collaboration in schools.
Chapter 2  
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction and overview

Collaboration is necessary for teamwork. … Collaborative strategies, however, are not simply another business methodology that can be imposed like a new cost-accounting scheme. … True collaboration begins inside the individual, not the organization.  
(Tamm & Luyet, 2005, pp. 7-8)

When we talk of collaboration between teachers and TAs we are talking about a true partnership – a classroom team.  
(Morgan & Ashbaker, 2009, p. 108)

Collaboration is a tool for achieving something of value.  
(Mattessich et al., 2008, p. 34)

In setting out to develop a literature review on collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams I found, while there is a plethora of information concerning collaboration, there is relatively little information on collaboration from the field of education, particularly in relation to collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. I also found that collaboration, especially effective collaboration, as Stivers and Cramer (2015) explained, “is an abstract concept – big, vague, and open to interpretation” (p. 40). Montiel-Overall (2005) claimed “Collaboration is a ubiquitous term that has been defined in numerous ways across diverse fields” (p. 1). He noted that collaboration has been described as dialogue, creative problem solving and systems (p. 1). The comments above by Tamm and Luyet (2005), Morgan and Ashbaker (2009), and Mattessich et al. (2008) reflect this diversity with descriptions of collaboration as: strategies, something that begins inside an individual, a true partnership, and a tool. Making an exploration of literature and research in relation to collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams more complicated are the myriad of factors influencing the effectiveness of collaboration, such as:

- the environment, resources, communication, and the process and structure of the collaborative group (e.g., Mattessich et al., 2008)
• the goals of collaboration, the level within an organisation at which collaboration occurs, the power and influence between members, member proximity, the duration of the collaboration and the complexity of the task on which members collaborate (Meads & Ashcroft, 2005); and
• team-building, training, and understanding classroom structures and responsibilities (e.g., Da Fonte & Capizzi, 2015).

In seeking a way to explore published literature and research in relation to collaboration as it might relate to teacher-teacher aide teams, I recalled Meads and Ashcroft’s (2005) comment that, “At its simplest collaboration is about working together” (p. 15). They argued that, in this form, collaboration is about relationships, about “working together and not just alongside… [which includes] … some conscious interaction between the parties to achieve a common goal” (pp. 15-16). In the previous chapter I introduced a definition of collaboration that, while not definitive, provided a starting point from which to consider collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. Echoing Meads and Ashcroft’s concept of collaboration, this definition of collaboration began with collaboration identified as a style of interaction. Therefore, for this literature review, my investigation began with the premise that collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams is a style of working together, where collaboration can be, as Morgan and Ashbaker (2009) argued, synonymous with effective teamwork between teachers and paraeducators. Taking this approach broadened the pool of literature to include information pertaining to teamworking; a collection of works that offered a great deal more information on teacher-teacher aide teams than the published work around collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. Another reason to include published literature and research on teamworking is the close association in published literature and research between the terms collaboration and teaming.

The idea of collaboration as the hallmark of a high-functioning team, an effective team, is emphasised in much of the literature around collaboration in schools and other organisations (e.g., Conley & Cooper, 2013; Cramer, 2006; Edmondson, 2012; Johnson & Johnson, 2013; Friend & Cook, 2017; Macdonald, 2013; Murawski, 2010; Tamm & Luyet, 2005). According to Friend and Cook (2017), “The relationship between teams and collaboration is simple: An effective team is a collaborative work group” (p. 153). However, literature around teamwork and collaboration in schools tends to present collaboration as collaboration between teachers not teachers and teacher aides (e.g., Hudson & Glomb, 1997; Johnson, B. 2003; Leonard & Leonard, 2001; Macdonald, 2013; Ripley, 1997; Rytivaara, 2012; Sharpe & Hawes, 2003). Given the importance placed on
teamworking in relation to collaboration, and the paucity of published research and literature
directly related to collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams, this literature review explores
literature and research around both collaboration and teamworking in relation to teacher-teacher
aide teams, discussing issues and challenges related to collaboration and teamworking and
collaboration for both teachers and teacher aides in teacher-teacher aide teams.

I begin this chapter by identifying what is meant by a teacher-teacher aide team and noting
how the interest in collaboration and the increase in teacher aide numbers has prompted a move
towards collaborative teacher-teacher aide working. Next, I review literature around what is meant
by collaboration in schools and the connection between teaming and collaboration in relation to
teacher-teacher aide teams. Following on from this I consider models of effective
teamworking/collaborative teamworking in teacher-teacher aide teams and identify the aspects of
school support for successful teacher-teacher aide teamworking as revealed in literature on
teamworking and collaboration. In exploring the challenges team members face I cover issues
related to communication, time to meet and plan, respect, interpersonal relationships, roles and
responsibilities, and the impact of the physical environment on teamworking and collaboration.
Next I explore the idea of collaboration, not cooperation, in relation to improving the effectiveness
of teamworking as it is revealed in literature. Finally, I present a summary of the literature review
and my concluding comments.

2.2 The teacher-teacher aide team and the move to collaborative working

In exploring collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams it is helpful to begin by identifying
what is meant by a teacher-teacher aide team and exploring something of the range of meaning
around effective teamworking in relation to teacher-teacher aide teams.

At its simplest a teacher-teacher aide team consists of one teacher and one teacher aide
working together to support student learning however, team sizes vary and may include several
teachers and several teacher aides (Hryniewicz, 2007). Teams also work in a variety of areas
throughout the school (e.g., classroom, library, and computer rooms), and team members do not
always work side by side for long periods at a time. For example, teacher aides may move between
classrooms working with several teachers during the day (Burbank, 2008; Skelton, 1997). There is
a general consensus in published literature and research, both national and international, that the
inclusion of students with special needs in mainstream schools has increased both the need for
teacher aides in schools and the roles and responsibilities of teacher aides (e.g., Bourke & Carrington, 2007; Butt & Lowe, 2012; Campbell & Fairbairn, 2005; French, 2003b, Forlin 2001; Harris & Aprile, 2015; Howard & Ford, 2007). The increasing numbers of teacher aides and the changes to their roles and responsibilities has occurred alongside the restructuring of school systems as part of school improvement initiatives (Thomas 1992). At the heart of school improvement initiatives is collaboration; encouraged by administrative and governing bodies as traditional ways of thinking about schools as organisations have been challenged, incorporating shared governance initiatives, and demands on educators have become more complex (Leonard & Leonard, 2001; Slater, 2004; Stewart, 1996). Hryniewicz (2007) argued, “Now that teaching assistants have become an essential part of so many schools, the importance of collaborative approaches to working has become even more apparent” (p. 27). However, adopting collaborative approaches to teamworking in schools presents challenges for school leaders and team members alike, whether these teams are teacher-teacher aide teams or other staff teams.

2.3 Collaboration in schools

People drawn to careers in education typically value constructive relationships with others and acknowledge collaboration as an essential aspect of inclusive learning environments. But few of us enter the profession with well-developed collaborative skills or even with useful mental models for the kinds of collaboration needed in schools today (Cramer, 2006; Friend & Cook, 2012).

(Stivers & Cramer, 2015, p. 28)

Stivers and Cramer’s (2015) comment reflects both the interest in collaboration within schools and challenges faced by teachers and teacher aides when they attempt to step into what Quicke (2000) referred to as democratic collaboration of the ‘new times’. According to Quicke, the social and cultural context of professionalism has changed over time to include an emphasis on democratic collaboration, requiring an “autonomous, morally committed, democratic, flexible professional” (p. 304). Quicke referred to the professional culture in these ‘new times’ as being characterised by greater collaboration and a greater capacity for communication countering the production of inequality and fragmentation. The idea that collaboration in schools is both important and necessary to the future of schools is echoed in literature around school reform (e.g., Fullan, 2016; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017; Leonard & Leonard, 2001; Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, & Dutton, 2012; Slater, 2004) where, as Slater (2004) explained, “shared governance
initiatives have been accompanied by endorsements of collaboration as a means of achieving improvement” (para. 1).

In keeping with the interest in and importance of collaboration in relation to schools, the idea of collaboration, notably collaboration in teamwork in schools, is now part of school reform initiatives that require individuals to work together collaboratively with the understanding that collaboration has the potential to improve student learning outcomes and teaching (de Lima, 2001; Hauge & Babkie, 2006; James et al., 2007; Johnson, B., 2003; King, 2010; Lacey, 2001; Slater, 2004; Vagrieken et al., 2013). Collaboration is also viewed as a key component to successfully meeting the needs of the students with disabilities in an inclusive setting (e.g., Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Giangreco, Cloninger, Dennis, & Edelman, 1994; Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999). In Australia, the past decade has seen Australian schools participate in this reform, actively restructuring themselves as more collaborative organisations to better meet the challenges posed by increased competition, marketisation, and public accountability (Johnson, N., 2003). However, according to Jefferson and Anderson (2017), “Collaboration is often misunderstood in terms of what it is, and how it works as a process” (p. 130). Friend (2000) argued that collaboration has become a ubiquitous term, used indiscriminately in schools. Bair (2013) offered corroboration with her claim that, “Collaboration is often used as an umbrella term to incorporate many different concepts, such as team teaching, teacher mentoring, and teacher collective decision making” (p. 17). DuFour (2004) illustrated misunderstanding of collaboration in schools with his claim that some school staff “equate the term ‘collaboration’ with congeniality and focus on building group camaraderie” (p. 9), while others see collaboration in uniting to “develop consensus on operational procedures” (p. 9) and forming committees to oversee different aspects of the school’s operation. One possible reason for these misunderstandings is the very nature of collaboration itself.

Meads and Ashcroft (2005) explained that collaboration can be different in different contexts and vary in both complexity and duration. According to Meads and Ashcroft, “Collaboration can represent a long-term strategic commitment but may also apply to time-limited task-focused joint work. A specific example of collaboration may be short-lived, but part of a much wider and longer-term collaborative process” (p. 18). Meads and Ashcroft also referred to collaboration as being bipolar (involving two individuals) and multipolar (involving multiple individuals), sequential (focusing on a series of steps), and collocated and concurrent (individuals working on the same task at the same time). These descriptions of collaboration intersect with descriptions of teamworking. An example of this can be seen in Johnson and Johnson’s (2013)
descriptions of teams. Johnson and Johnson referred to teams as having two or more individuals who have specific roles, a limited membership lifespan, and positive interdependence between members who strive to achieve mutual goals (p. 500). Echoing Meads and Ashcroft’s explanation of collaboration, Johnson and Johnson referred to a continuum in relation to teams based on their level of cooperation with, at one end, teams as individual members combining their efforts to achieve a single goal and, at the other end, “the efforts of all team members combine in a single coordinated result and where the whole is more than and different from the sum of its parts” (p. 500).

2.4 Teaming and collaboration in relation to teacher-teacher aide teams

In much of the literature around collaboration, collaboration is understood to be achieved through teaming (e.g., Conley & Cooper, 2013; Cramer, 2006; Edmondson, 2012; Friend & Cook, 2017; Johnson & Johnson, 2013; Macdonald, 2013; Murawski, 2010). However, John-Steiner (2000) argued that the creation of successful collaborative endeavours requires “more than enthusiasm for brain-storming and synergy” (p. xvii). Referring to teacher teams, Macdonald (2013) echoed John-Steiner with the claim that, “Collaboration is more than teaming people together” (p. 33). Schrage (1995) took this further with the claim that, “Collaboration isn’t necessarily teamwork; and teamwork certainly isn’t collaboration” (p. xv). In this light collaboration can be understood as a component of teamworking; a component that can promote successful teaming; a component that is not necessarily a part of all teamworking. The identification of collaboration as a style of interaction (Friend & Cook, 2017) corresponds with this understanding of collaborative working. Viewed as a style of interaction, collaboration can be understood as an interaction that is employed by individuals engaged in a particular task/project/activity; a style of interaction that conveys the idea of how the individual team members are working.

In literature and research around collaboration and teamworking, shared goals, good communication, and a willingness to collaborate have been associated with supporting collaboration in school teams. In their book, Supporting and Supervising Your Teaching Assistant, Morgan and Ashbaker (2009) referred to collaboration between a teacher and a teaching assistant as a true partnership with shared goals, an understanding of individual roles, “clear and honest communication” (p. 108), and the sharing of power between the team members. Friend (2000) presented a similar view with her claim that collaboration requires individual commitment to shared
goals, attention to communication skills, and an individual partiality in team member interactions. Tillema and van der Westhuizen (2006) referred to a need for a commitment to collaborate, defining collaboration as a relationship involving a receptivity of the voice of the other. In their book, Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals, Friend and Cook (2017) reminded readers that collaboration is a style that teachers can use when interacting with a paraeducator, “just as you use it with other professionals and parents/families” (p. 259). However, they posed the question of how, in this “least understood and most complex of all the professional relationships” (p. 259), can teachers balance their preference for collaboration with their need to supervise the paraeducator. What then might teacher-teacher aide team collaboration look like?

2.5 Models of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams

In international literature around teacher-teacher aide working there has been a greater focus on managing teacher aides and their impact on student learning than on how teachers and teacher aides should or could work as a team (e.g., Birkett, 2004; Blatchford et al., 2012; French 2003b; Watkinson, 2003; Wilson et al., 2003). In Australia, the work of Howard and Ford (2007), Bourke and Carrington (2007), and Butt and Lowe (2012) aligns with this international literature revealing that, with the increase of teacher aides in the classroom, the focus of research has been on issues related to managing teacher aides rather than on teacher-teacher aide teamworking. However, within the literature and research around teacher-teacher aide teamworking there are references to collaboration between teacher-teacher aide team members in relation to models of effective teacher-teacher aide teamworking, co-teaching with paraeducators, and cooperative teaching with paraeducators. Each of these models is explored further in the following three subsections.

2.5.1 Models of effective teacher-teacher aide teamworking

In the models of effective teamworking identified by Butt (2014), collaboration is associated with planning and communication. Butt’s research explored teacher assistant roles, skills, qualifications, and training needs in mainstream primary schools in the Australian Capital Territory. This research was conducted over three years and involved 34 teaching assistants, 70 class teachers, 11 school leaders, four teacher assistant supervisors, three policy staff, and a vocational education teacher across four school sites. The study identified six models of existing teaching assistant deployment and put forward one alternative model of deployment. However, only three of the seven models identified by Butt were associated with collaboration between teacher/s and teaching
assistant/s. Two of these were existing models of deployment of teaching assistants and the third was the alternative model of deployment proposed by Butt. These three models were:

1. One-on-one support model where the teaching assistant works with one student with disability or learning difficulties in one classroom;
2. Preschool class support model where the teaching assistant works with several students with or without disability or learning difficulties in one classroom; and
3. Teaching assistant as facilitator model where the teaching assistant facilitates learning for students without disability or learning difficulties.

(pp. 304-305, 308)

In relation to the one-on-one model, Butt (2014) stated “Opportunities for collaboration exist” (p. 305) adding, while some planning does occur, no time is allocated for planning with meetings occurring on an ad hoc basis. In relation to the second model, the class support model, Butt stated that collaboration between the teacher and the teaching assistant does occur and planning time is provided but the teaching assistant may be required to work elsewhere in the school during that allocated planning time (p. 305). The alternative deployment model Butt proposed echoes a model put forward by Blatchford et al. (2012) in their five year study into the deployment of teaching assistants in the UK. In this model both team members work in one classroom with all students and the teacher is the team member who works predominantly with students with disability and learning difficulties. Butt identified this model of teacher-teacher assistant working as permitting both cooperation and collaboration between the teacher and the teaching assistant if they are together at all times (p. 308). Like the other two models, a disadvantage of this model concerned access to planning time for team members. For Butt the issue of planning time was compounded by the issue of communication within the school, particularly in relation to teaching assistants.

In her findings, Butt (2014) reported there was a culture of excluding teaching assistants from communication channels in schools, leading to marginalisation and disempowerment of teaching assistants. Butt found this exclusion affected teaching assistants’ self-esteem and motivation, which resulted in teaching assistants feeling isolated and undervalued. According to Butt, “Ineffective channels of communication within schools minimise opportunities for TAs [teaching assistants] and class teachers to discuss lessons and students’ needs, to plan activities and to give and receive feedback” (p. 318). Importantly Butt’s research focused on the deployment of
teaching assistants, not on collaboration between team members. Butt’s references to planning time and time together provide little insight into collaborative practices between team members.

Capizzi and Da Fonte’s (2012) claim that their Collaborative Classroom Support Plan (CCSP) “was designed with the principles of collaboration and delegation in mind” (p. 3) offered an expectation of collaborative working. Capizzi and Da Fonte asserted that the goal of the CCSP was “for all team members to understand the importance of collaboration and to increase teamwork” (p. 3). They identified the four components of the CCSP as:

1. orientation to the setting where paraeducators are provided with the opportunity to understand school and classroom expectations and procedures;
2. professional duties and responsibilities where the roles and responsibilities of the paraeducator are clarified;
3. communication, notably frequent and open communication, regularly scheduled meetings, provision of feedback for paraeducators, as well as understanding and acknowledging work style preferences and differences; and
4. professional development where paraeducators are ‘trained to deal with multiple expectations, skills, and challenges that can occur in the classroom setting’ (p. 13).

Like the teaching assistant models outlined by Butt (2014), Capizzi and Da Fonte’s (2012) model focused heavily on managing the paraeducator within the team. Capizzi and Da Fonte’s statement, “Classroom communication should be based on encouraging each other, providing support and guidance when needed, and being open to discuss and brainstorm potential solutions” (p. 11) hinted at the possibility of some joint planning in relation to brainstorming potential solutions. This model of teaming aligns with the collaborative practices of understanding individual roles, attention to communication skills, and sharing goals as identified by Friend (2000) and Morgan and Ashbaker (2009) however, it lacks Friend’s individual parity in team member interactions and Morgan and Ashbaker’s sharing of power. Parity was identified in a model of teamworking from research conducted by Vincett et al. (2005).

Vincett et al. (2005) conducted research into organisational regimes involving teacher-teaching assistant teams in classrooms in six primary school classes in the UK with the aim of identifying ways of enabling teacher-teaching assistant teams to improve their work practices. Two of the classroom teams engaged in Room Management, two in Zoning, and two in Reflective
Teamwork. The first of these, Room Management, is similar to the teaching assistant as facilitator model outlined by Butt (2014) where the teacher is in overall charge and both team members work with all the students. In Zoning, the classroom is organised into learning zones and, under the overall direction of the teacher, the zones are split between the teacher and the teaching assistant. Vincett et al. explained the third model of classroom organisation, Reflective Teamwork, as “a method of improving the planning, organization and general teamwork of teacher and TA [teaching assistant]… through teamwork games and exercises and by implementing a regime of planning and reflection meetings” (p. 6).

According to Vincett et al. (2005), the aim of Room Management and Zoning is to enhance teamwork by ensuring role clarity and the aim of Reflective Teamwork “is to improve classroom teamwork by enhancing communication, planning and review” (p. 50). Of the three classroom organisational regimes, Reflective Teamwork elicited the most positive responses from participants involved in the study. It was found to encourage a problem-solving approach where team members found new definitions and ways of thinking, and adopted new ways of working (p. 116). Reflective Teamwork, with the central belief of equalising relationships between teacher and the teaching assistant, was found to encourage the teaching assistants to contribute their insights and skills to the planning process (p. 72). Vincett et al. identified the following three challenges to this model; finding time for planning, teaching assistants were not always paid for meetings with teachers, and meetings were difficult to organise when the teaching assistant worked with many different teachers.

2.5.2 Co-teaching with paraeducators as a model of teamworking and collaboration

In their book, A Guide to Co-teaching with Paraeducators: Practical Tips for K-12 Educators Nevin et al. (2009) stated that, “Co-teaching roles can be effectively carried out by paraeducators, volunteers, and student themselves” (p. 58). In discussing how paraeducators can be co-teachers, Nevin et al. stated this is possible if paraeducators are provided with time for planning and given the “benefit of careful training and supervision” (p. 62). In this model of teamworking, Nevin et al. associated collaboration with planning. They argued that collaborative planning between team members promotes synergy and higher level thinking, and “Team members experience belonging and freedom from isolation as well as fun, as they jointly engage in stimulating dialogue and creative solution finding” [emphasis in original] (p. 42). In relation to effective teamworking, Nevin et al. emphasised the importance of clarifying paraeducator roles,
positive interdependence, open communication, and devoting time early in the team relationship to “learning about one another’s cultural, personal, and professional backgrounds as well as each member’s experiences with collaborative teaming” (p. 44). As with the other models of teamworking outlined above, the lack of time for joint planning was identified as a challenge to successful communication and teamworking.

2.5.3 Cooperative teaching with paraeducators as a model of teamworking and collaboration

In their article on the developing roles of paraeducators, Daniels and McBride (2001) classified the role of paraeducators working with teachers as “critical team members” (p. 67) and highlighted collaboration between the team members in the form of “cooperative (team) teaching” (p. 67) [brackets in original]. In the cooperative teaching model, successful collaboration was dependent on “the teacher’s ability to delineate and articulate responsibilities and task assignments, the teacher’s supervisory abilities and communication skills, and the teacher’s effort in building trusting and collaborative partnerships” (p. 67). The paraeducator’s role in this collaborative partnership was identified as assisting the teacher to meet the social and academic needs of the students, attending informal and formal team meetings, as well as cooperatively planning for instructional delivery and possibly taking “a more assertive role in helping the classroom teacher manage disruptive and inappropriate student behaviors” (p. 69). In this model of teamworking, Daniels and McBride stressed the importance of managing, supervising and evaluating paraeducators, calling on school principals to encourage collaboration by initiating, supporting and enhancing collaborative partnerships in the school (p. 70). Based on cooperation, this model of collaborative teamworking is similar to the descriptions of Johnson and Johnson’s (2013) teamworking outlined in Section 2.3.

2.5.4 Summary and concluding comments on effective/collaborative team models

In the models of teamworking identified above the issues of role clarification, communication, planning and meeting time appear as common themes for effective teamworking and collaborative team practices. Other aspects associated with collaboration and effective teamworking within the models included: the management and supervision of the teacher aide; clarification of the teacher aide’s roles; parity or power sharing between team members; the teacher aide working with the teacher in one classroom rather than moving between classrooms; and having time for teachers and teacher aides to get to know each other at the start of their team relationship.
With the possible exception of Reflective Teamworking, with its central belief of equalising relationships between the teacher and the teaching assistant, each of these models of collaborative teamworking positions the teacher in a managerial role where the focus is on supervising the teacher aide and cooperation of team members. Calder and Grieve (2004) defined this type of collaboration for the teacher as “working with others in a cooperative yet assertive manner to find a mutually satisfying solution” (p. 122).

The idea of the cooperative, assertive teacher as collaborative team leader may offer an answer to the question Friend and Cook (2017) posed concerning whether teachers can balance their preference for collaboration with their need to supervise the paraeducator. Echoing the emphasis on communication and planning reflected in the models of collaborative working outlined above, Calder and Grieve (2004) explained this role of the teacher, stating, “In order to take the lead role the class teacher should consult, liaise and plan with other adults who have a responsibility to support pupils” (p. 122). Maintaining that “Effective leadership is critical for team success” (p. 34), Pickett et al. (2007) classified this lead role of the teacher as teacher-mentor. As teacher-mentor the teacher’s role is “similar to that of a coach and involves assessing the paraeducator’s skills and helping the paraeducator use them to the fullest” (p. 34). However, as with the Reflective Teaming model, the roles of the teacher and the teacher aide can also have some parity. For example, in defining the characteristics of successful teacher-paraeducator teams Pickett et al. stated that it was important to establish a climate of teamworking that includes, “Team members establishing helpful interpersonal relationships and mentoring one another” (p. 37). These different roles within the models of effective team/collaborative working support the claim by Friend and Cook (2017) that the teacher-paraeducator relationship is “the least understood and most complex of all the professional relationships” (p. 259).

The different roles for the teacher and teacher aide and the different strategies employed to support effective teamwork reflected in the models of effective and/or collaborative teamworking discussed above reveal that the aspects of collaboration between team members are many and varied and that communication, notably in time spent planning together, is central to both effective teamworking and collaborative working. How then can schools support collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams?
2.6 School support for successful teacher-teacher aide teamworking

Although it is true that, in the example of human endeavours, success or progress often turns on the efforts of the individuals involved, the influence of the organization that has shaped individual behaviors, beliefs, and forms of communication cannot be overlooked.

(Ware, 1994, p. 343)

Ware’s (1994) comment highlighted the idea that schools, as organisations, have a valuable role to play in influencing the success of staff working. In published literature and research relating to teacher-teacher aide teams there is an overall agreement that support for the teacher-teacher aide team begins with school leaders/senior management (e.g., Balshaw, 2010; Birkett, 2004; Gerlach, 2015; Harris & Aprile, 2015; Railsback, Reed, & Schmidt, 2002). In this literature, school support for successful teacher-teacher aide teamworking includes:

- orientation of school setting for new paraeducators to “make the paraeducator feel valued, informed, and welcomed, thereby setting the stage for collaboration” (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012, p. 4);
- ensuring teachers are prepared for their role as supervisor (Pickett, 1999);
- providing time and training for teambuilding (Balshaw, 2010; Farrell et al., 1999; Lacey, 2001; Riggs, 2002);
- providing joint training and professional development (Jones, Ratcliff, Sheehan, & Hunt, 2012; Shaddock, Nielsen, Giorcelli, Kilham, & Hoffman-Raap, 2007; Wilson & Bedford, 2008; Wilson, Schlapp, & Davidson, 2002);
- providing clear definition of teacher aide roles and responsibilities to assist in improving communication and building effective working relationships (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012; Fitzell, 2010; Morgan, & Ashbaker, 2009; Shaddock et al., 2007);
- providing time for teachers and teacher aides to communicate, to meet and to plan together (Balshaw 2010; Daniels & McBride, 2001; Fitzell, 2010; Lacey, 2001; Pickett et al., 2007; Riggs & Mueller, 2001; Shaddock et al., 2007; Snell & Janney, 2010);
- involving teachers in the selection of teacher aides (Daniels & McBride, 2001); and
- assisting team members to resolve any interpersonal problems that may occur (Daniels & McBride, 2001; Gerlach 2015; Railsback et al., 2002)
However, a review of the literature on collaboration in schools reveals very little mention of teacher aides as members of collaborative teams. The problem is, according to Rueda and Monzó (2002), schools have a “hierarchical structure of social relations” (p. 518) which work against the idea of teamwork, including teamwork in teacher-paraeducator teams. Lacey (2001), writing on collaboration in education, supported this, claiming, “Most individual people are willing to work together in partnership but they spend much of their time battling against the systems and structures that seem to get in the way” (p. 24). In her thesis on collaboration between paraeducators and parents, Chopra (2002) posited that a reason for school intractability around the installation of collaborative practices was that there was a lack of understanding of “the complexity of the change process, the emotional struggles experienced by those involved in it, and the time it takes to institutionalize any change” (p. 54).

2.7 Challenges to teamwork and collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams

The themes of communication, time to meet and plan, respect, interpersonal relationships, and roles and responsibilities have been identified in much of the literature around teacher-teacher aide teamwork as challenges to teamwork and collaboration. In this section I explore these challenges in relation to teamwork and collaboration. I conclude this section with an additional challenge, one well represented in research on teamwork and collaboration in business organisations (e.g., Brager et al., 2000; Hua, Loftness, Kraut, & Powell, 2010; Klitzman & Stellman, 1989; Robertson & Huang, 2006) but rarely mentioned in relation to teamwork and collaboration in schools. This challenge concerns the physical environment in which the teams work, specifically their classroom. I begin the discussion on the challenges to teamwork and collaboration with communication, described by Friend and Cook (2017) as critical to teamwork and collaboration, influencing the effectiveness and success of professional interactions (p. 26).

2.7.1 Communication

The importance of communication to teamwork and collaboration is illustrated by Johnson and Johnson’s (2013) statement, “Communication is the basis for all human interaction and for all group functioning … It is through communication that group members interact, and effective communication is a prerequisite for every aspect of group functioning” (p. 130). Effective communication and open communication are recurring themes in the literature around teacher-teacher aide teamwork and collaboration (e.g., Da Fonte & Capizzi, 2015; Fitzell 2010; Friend
and Cook, 2017; Gerlach, 2002; Montiel-Overall, 2005; Pickett et al., 2007; Powell, 2013; West, 1990). A review of this literature reveals that communication in teacher-teacher aide teams is complicated by the team member positions within the team.

As previously highlighted in this literature review, the issue of teacher aide status and the teacher’s role as manager have influenced the way communication is conducted within the team, positioning the teacher as having the lead role in instigating and maintaining communication within the team. This is clearly illustrated in the Australian Association of Special Education (AASE) (2007) position paper where communicating effectively with colleagues is identified as, primarily, the teacher’s responsibility. Thomas (1992) and Gerlach (2003) also single out the teacher as the pre-eminent communicator within the team. While stating that both teachers and paraeducators must demonstrate effective communication skills, Gerlach (2003) identified communication as a team leadership skill and urged teachers – not teacher aides – to take the same step-by-step problem-solving process they use with students and use it to resolve the challenges within the team. However, in other research (e.g., Fisher and Pleasants, 2011) the teacher aide is the team member urged to take a proactive role, to initiate and contribute to team communication. Commenting that successful communication is, “often a challenge for teacher-paraeducator teams” (p. 11), Capizzi and Da Fonte (2012) argued that effective, successful communication involving frequent and open communication is essential in teacher-paraeducator teams (pp. 10-11). Adding to the challenges around communication for team members are the issues associated with meeting and planning.

2.7.2 Time to meet and plan

Planning time for communication with paraeducators can improve the overall work environment and should be made a priority in order to enhance communication and encourage common team goals.

(Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012, p. 12)

Writing about collaboration in schools, Holcomb (2009) observed that “time for teamwork is the scarcest resource in the educational setting” (p. 76). The comment by Capizzi and Da Fonte (2012) above illustrates both the importance of meeting and planning and a central challenge, time, in relation to meeting and planning. In literature related to teamwork in schools and to teacher-teacher aide teams, having time to meet and plan is emphasised as integral to teamwork. In the business and sporting sectors it is expected that a team will have a team meeting and the focus is on
the mechanics of meetings. For teacher-teacher aide teams however, the primary challenge is having/finding time to meet. Reasons for this include: the part-time nature of teacher aide work, aides may only be paid for a few hours a week (e.g., arriving and leaving in the morning), and aides may work with several teachers and have several jobs within the school (Lacey, 2001).

In literature, the challenge of finding time to meet and plan for teacher-teacher aide teams is also associated with:

- day-to-day preparation for instruction or adaptation of the curriculum (e.g., Bentham & Hutchins, 2012; Watkinson, 2003, Wilson, Stone, & Cardinal, 2013);
- understanding what each team member can contribute to the team (e.g., Fitzell, 2010; Lacey, 2001; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001);
- provision of feedback and lack of inclusion in the development/implementation of plans/classroom activities for students with a disability (e.g., Blatchford et al., 2004; Howard & Ford, 2007; Wilson et al., 2002);
- effectiveness of communication (e.g., Bentham & Hutchins, 2012; Blatchford et al., 2012; French, 1998; Pickett et al., 2007; Ruedel et al., 2002; Wallace, 2002); and
- connectedness to the community (notably the teacher aide’s role as local community liaison) where either team member can become isolated (e.g., Chopra et al., 2004; Hermanson & Hoagland, 2002; Rueda & Monzó, 2002; Weiss, 1994).

The challenges outlined above point to the difficulties team members face when teaming and to the value placed on meeting and communication for these teams. Referring to the importance of team meetings for teachers and teaching assistants, Vincett et al. (2005) stressed that, for teamwork to be effective, it is important to hold face-to-face meetings where all members actively participate and every member’s ideas and views are promoted and valued, regardless of their status within the team (p. 53). Lacey (2001) explained that teaching assistants need to be included in planning what goes on in the classroom in order to share the day-to-day responsibility with the teacher and so that they do not enter the classroom “completely unprepared for what is going to happen” (p. 103). This approach to communication in meetings is highlighted in books relating to working with teacher aides (e.g., Fitzell, 2010; Lieberman, 2007; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001; Nevin et al., 2009; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003; Watkinson, 2003), where team effectiveness is achieved by sharing expectations, active participation by all team members, appreciation of unique personality traits, and respect for diversity.
2.7.3 Respect

Respect is an issue that influences job satisfaction for teachers (e.g., Johnson, B., 2003, Wilson & Bedford, 2008; Schwarz, Shanley, Gerver, & O’Cummings, 2002) and teacher aides (e.g., Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2001; Russell et al., 2005). Friend (2000) argued that, “Successful collaboration is not about ‘like’: it is about respect” (p. 131); that is, respect that incorporates a better understanding of each other and leads to a greater likelihood of engaging with the risks involved in a working relationship. In their work on primary school staff relationships, Nias, Southworth, and Yeomans (1989) claimed that being a team means “to recognize and value the unique contribution of each member, teachers and non-teachers alike to a joint enterprise” (p. 60). Commenting on collaboration in schools, including between teachers and support staff, Conzemius and O’Neill (2001) stated that, “People in collaborative environments feel appreciated, valued, and respected; the system brings out the best in them” (p. 67). Echoing Friend, Conzemius and O’Neill claimed that collaboration is not about feeling good about each other, rather it has a great deal to do with respect, respect for each other and for risk taking and innovation (p. 67). In the literature on teamworking, respect, appreciation of unique personality traits, and understanding are just a few of the aspects that influence the effectiveness of interpersonal relationships.

2.7.4 Interpersonal relationships

Teams too often are formed or thrown together with little regard for what makes a team work. Team members are left on their own to figure out the dynamics they will encounter in moving from a group of individuals to a highly functioning team. Their hit or miss efforts produce results not unlike those in the classic, *Lord of the Flies* [emphasis in original]. Stranded on an island, the group of students first relied on democracy to elect a leader and then tried to evolve a structure of roles and relationships. Their hard slog was quickly undercut by a power struggle that split the group into factions. The two emerging subcultures then developed their own ways, eventually leading to conflict and warfare. This progression is similar to what happens in forming teams anywhere. (Deal & Redman, 2013, pp. 44-45)

As collaboration is considered an interpersonal style (Friend & Cook, 2017; Riches, 1982; Thomas, 1992), it is important to consider interpersonal relationships when exploring collaboration
in teacher-teacher aide teams. Deal and Redman (2013) painted a somewhat depressing picture of teamwork with team members actively working against each other. Despite their negative depiction of teaming, Deal and Redman claimed teaming is a “good thing” (p. 36) and indicated the problem is that teamworking has been imposed on teachers and there has been inadequate initial or continuing support for teamworking. Deal and Redman referred to teacher teams – not teacher-teacher aide teams. However, a review of research and literature on teacher-teacher aide working reveals that their teaming is also considered a good thing, that these teams face similar challenges, and that these challenges can be exacerbated by interpersonal relationships.

Thomas’s (1992) research into teacher-teaching assistant working relationships found that mismatches between participants’ ideologies and interpersonal or personal styles created stress in team members. According to Thomas, in attempting to ameliorate the challenge of interpersonal relationships to their team, team members will either facilitate teamwork processes or work to minimise team processes and make the team into merely a “set of individuals working in the same environment” (p. 178). Quicke (2000) however, took a broader social and cultural overview of professional collaboration and suggested that how school staff engage in interpersonal collaborative relationships is strongly influenced by bureaucratic constraints, the differentiations of knowledge and expressions of what Foucault described as disciplinary power. Illustrating Quicke’s point, Rueda and Monzó’s (2002) two year study involving thirty-two Latino paraeducators identified a marginalisation of the Latino paraeducators in teacher-paraeducator teams. They found that the low status of the paraeducators served to legitimise the “marginalization of minorities in the school setting” (p. 519) where the Latino staff were generally paraeducators whose role “contrast[ed] sharply with the central and dominant role played by teachers, generally staffed by White middle class women” (p. 519). Rueda and Monzó claimed that the power differences created by the marginalisation of the Latino paraeducators had a negative impact on the team’s collaborative relationship.

Rudan (2003) added another dimension to the challenge of interpersonal relationships, arguing that consideration of interpersonal relationships in teams also involves a consideration of gender as “there are important differences in the way the sexes work alone and in groups” (p. 179) and a failure to recognise these differences may create problems within the organisation. Salzberg and Morgan (1995) widened the scope of the challenge of interpersonal difficulties further, stating that these difficulties may be exacerbated when the team members are from different cultures, ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic groups, or when there is a large age discrepancy between the
Birkett (2004) stated that younger, less-experienced teachers may feel unsure of what teacher assistants should be expected to do and older teachers may resist sharing their workload, indicating yet another dimension to the issue of interpersonal relationships in teacher-teacher aide teams.

Focusing their attention on self-contained (separate from general classrooms) special education classrooms, Cipriano, Barnes, Bertoli, Flynn, and Rivers (2016) acknowledged both the importance and the challenge of collaboration between teachers and paraeducators. In the interest of improving student outcomes they developed a framework for Teacher-Paraeducator Interactions consisting of “Solidarity, Delegation of Staff, Respect and Disrespect” (p. 16), which they claimed accounted “for the full range of interactions between educators in self-contained special education classrooms …” (p. 16). This framework was to form part of an observational tool they were developing. Cipriano et al. foresaw a use for their observational tool as a guide for researchers and practitioners, informing improvements to teacher-teacher aide interactions. Reporting on the findings from their study, Cipriano et al. concluded that the teacher-paraeducator relationship “is of the utmost importance to the overall functioning of the classroom and student development” (p. 16). However, their focus on solidarity, staff delegation, respect and disrespect presented only part of the picture in relation to teamwork. As identified earlier, having effective communication, time to meet and plan also influence teacher-teacher aide interactions and hence, the operationalisation of their team. Another issue identified as presenting challenges to teacher-teacher aide teamworking is team member roles and responsibilities, particularly those of the teacher aide.

2.7.5 Roles and responsibilities for team members

**Evolving roles.** In early work, (e.g., Clough & Clough, 1978; Gartner, Riessman, & Jackson, 1977), teachers were portrayed as managers who underutilised teacher aide’s skills. In this work teachers were exhorted to develop managerial skills so that they might better supervise teacher aides and thus, enhance their classroom practices. As the teacher aide role has evolved to include greater responsibilities (Parker et al., 2009), the teacher’s managerial role has also changed as head teachers, special needs advisors, administration staff, and other teachers working with a teacher aide are now involved in managing teacher aides within the school system (Riggs, 2002; Wallace, 2002; Watkinson, 2003). With the increase in the number of managers involved in supervising teacher aides has come a muddying of the waters in relation to how teamwork between a teacher and teacher aide is to be conducted. The complicated nature of teamwork between a teacher and teacher
aide is made all the more problematic as each country employing teacher aides has variations on how teacher aides are employed (Giangreco & Doyle, 2007). In Australia, the position title, role descriptions, and work level definitions of teacher aides differ across the country (DECS, 2009) pointing to the widespread nature of the issue of role for team members.⁶

**The teacher’s role.** In research and literature around teamworking role clarity is predominantly associated with the teacher aide’s role. However, role clarity can also be a challenge for the teacher within the teacher-teacher aide team. When working with the teacher aide the teacher’s role has been identified as that of: supervisor (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2013; Fitzell, 2010); executive (Berliner, 1983; French, 2003a); instructional team leader (Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001); boss teacher (Skelton, 1997); manager (French, 2003b); line manager (Pendergast & Danby, 2012); delegator, director, planner, monitor, program manager, and coach (French, 1999). French (n.d.) stated that the role of the teacher has become,

more like that of a middle-level executive, an engineer, or a doctor or lawyer, who consults with colleagues, diagnoses and plans, and then directs the work of paraprofessionals in order to meet the needs of the client or patient. In this case, the professionals plan curriculum, instruction, and appropriate adaptations and direct the paraeducator in helping to carry out the plans. (para. 5)

The central problem associated with this managerial-style role for teachers is that very few teachers have been appropriately prepared to supervise teacher aides (Blatchford et al., 2012; Chopra et al., 2011; French, 2001; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003; Wallace, Shinn, Bartholomay, & Stahl, 2001). In her study involving special education teachers who supervised paraeducators, French (2001) reported that of the 321 questionnaire respondents, “more than 88% of those who supervised paraprofessionals reported that ‘real-life experience’ served as the primary source of their knowledge and ability to supervise paraprofessionals, rather than inservice training, college courses, or help from administrators” (p. 45). According to Chopra et al. (2011), this lack of training in relation to supervising paraeducators means that teachers are

⁶ In Australia, teacher aide roles can include administration, support for students with special needs, support in specific locations such as pre-school, language laboratories, library or home science areas, and/or combinations of these work roles. Some teacher aides work as part of a team under the direction of a special education teacher while others work alone under the direction of the class teacher/s. These Role descriptions can vary within and between schools (DECS, 2009).
unprepared to work effectively with paraeducators. However, French (1998) found that teachers “were reluctant to provide supervision, and preferred to think of paraeducators as peers rather than supervisees” (p. 357). The morphing of the teacher’s role, coupled with the lack of preparation, points to an ambivalence in the teacher’s role in relation to working with a teacher aide. In literature, this ambivalence with role can lead to problems creating and maintaining the team and to teacher stress (e.g., Thomas, 1991, 1992).

An example of this ambivalence in the teacher’s role was revealed in a recent study by Stivers and Cramer (2015) involving 67 special education teachers and paraeducators generating and analysing metaphors to describe their relationship. Stivers and Cramer found that these team members valued relationships characterised by compatibility and coordination of effort in teacher-paraeducator relationships, rather than the teacher’s role as team leader. This contrasts with descriptions of teachers in teacher-teacher aide teams as managers and supervisors. Thus, the issue of role can be a challenge for teachers when partnering with teacher aides in teacher-teacher aide teams.

The teacher aide’s role. In much of the literature on teacher aides and teacher-teacher aide teamworking the issue of role clarity for teacher aides is directly linked to the quality of teamworking. In international literature, the widespread and continuing lack of role clarity for the teacher aide is associated with detrimental effects on teamworking (Blatchford et al., 2012; Picket & Gerlach, 1997; Ruedel et al., 2002; Thomas, 1991, 1992). Thomas (1992) stated that in the classroom teams he studied, role definition was either absent or designed, and that role tension or lack of role definition led to team members seeking to define their own roles and ameliorate role tension by a variety of “ploys which minimise rather than maximise their effective team involvement” (p. 44). In relation to teacher aides, Weiss (1994) argued that their position was characterised by ambiguity and inconsistency, stating, the “duties of any aide depended first upon the assignments given to her [sic] by the supervising teacher and second upon what responsibility the aide was willing to assume” (p. 339). This lack of role clarity/definition has been identified as leading to:

- individuals feeling stressed and uncertain about appropriate behaviour (Vincett et al., 2005);
- tension that reduces the likelihood of effective collaboration (Morgan & Ashbaker, 2009; Thomas, 1991);
• challenges to assistants working with a number of teachers who have different ideas about the role of assistants (Wilson et al., 2003);  
• “confusion, disillusionment and a deterioration in personal relationships” (Clayton, 1993, p. 40);  
• ineffective support for students and teachers (Department for Education & Skills [DfES], 2000; Ruedel et al., 2002);  
• frustration as teacher aides attempt to determine what is expected of them (Balshaw & Farrell, 2006; Ruedel et al., 2002); and  
• concern over which roles are legally and ethically the role of the teacher or the role of the aide (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012).

While much literature on teacher-teacher aide working focuses on negative aspects related to the teacher aide’s role, some literature refers to ambiguity and inconsistency in the teacher aide’s role as a strength (e.g., Mansaray, 2006; Wilson et al., 2003). Questioning the core-periphery model of teaching and learning where teachers are positioned as core and teacher aides as the periphery, Mansaray (2006) claimed that the liminality or “boundary position” (p. 175) of the teacher aide makes their work all the more valuable. According to Mansaray, the liminality of the position of the teacher aide supported their role of connector and mediator in the classroom between students and between students and teachers “because they are not constrained within the intuitional structures of schooling … [and] are able to bring more of their own cultural and social resources to bear in creative and transformative directions…” (p. 184). Whether viewed as a strength or a deficit, there is agreement in literature and research on the ambiguity of the role of the teacher aide and that the role of the teacher aide can be problematic and contribute to points of tension within the team. Another area that can cause tension and stress in teacher-teacher aide teamworking is the classroom itself, the physical environment in which the team operates.

2.7.6 Impact of the physical environment on teamworking and collaboration

Studies on the effect of the workplace environment on collaboration are more commonly associated with organisational performance (e.g., Hua et al. 2010; Robertson & Huang, 2006). However, there are indications in literature on teacher-teacher aide teamworking that aspects within

Arguably, this could equally apply to teachers feeling challenged if the assistants they work with have different ideas about the teacher’s role.
the physical environment of the teamwork area may also influence the effectiveness of teamworking. For example, Thomas (1992) argued that an aspect to consider in relation to meetings and team communication was the layout of the classroom. Referring to the work of Cohen, Meyer, Scott, and Deal (1979), Thomas (1992) posited that the layout of the classroom can have a detrimental influence on teaming and suggested that open-planned classrooms benefit teamworking. In her article on collaboration and improving educational practice, Stewart (1996) stated that the setting, “can have considerable impact on creating an environment in which each individual experiences acceptance and feels able to interact freely while enabling the group to operate as a whole towards ends upon which participants have mutually agreed” (p. 22). Both Thomas and Stewart pointed out the importance of considering the physical environment as an influence on team communication. They did not expand their discussion to include detailed features of the environment that could influence teamworking. However, literature around team/group working in organisations, such as the critical work by Johnson and Johnson (2013), offered some insight into the challenges the physical environment may present teacher-teacher aide team members.

Discussing the physical influences on communication in their influential book on group work, Johnson and Johnson (2013) contended that the physical environment can be a source of stress if it is “too hot, too cold, too impersonal, too big, too small, too noisy, or contain too many distractions” (p. 157). Johnson and Johnson argued that the temperature of the room can affect productivity explaining, “If a room is too hot, physical effects such as exhaustion, aggressiveness, and even physical damage (such as heat stroke) can result” (p. 157). They claimed that if a room is too noisy it can be distracting, irritating or even produce psychological stress. According to Johnson and Johnson, even the seating arrangements adopted by groups can exert a significant influence on their status and participation (p. 158). Johnson and Johnson maintained,

The effectiveness of group communication may be enhanced if the members pay attention to where they meet, the acoustics of the meeting space, the time of day the meeting takes place, the duration of the meeting, and the ventilation, temperature, and lighting in the room. (p. 158)

Johnson and Johnson’s (2013) claim in relation to noise was echoed by findings from Enmarker and Boman’s (2004) study on noise involving 166 teachers and 207 students in middle school classrooms in a medium-sized city in Sweden. According to Enmarker and Boman,
“teachers experienced themselves as more sensitive to noise, had poorer hearing status, and reported more intense stress symptoms than the pupils” (p. 527). They noted that feelings of irritation, distress, frustration, and discomfort were associated with noise annoyance (p. 527) and “teachers perceived that it was more difficult to communicate due to high sound levels” (p. 534).

In some literature equal accessibility to all areas of the classroom by both team members has been identified as important to teamworking (e.g., Riggs, 2001, Ruedel et al., 2002; Schwartz, Shanley, Gerver, & O’Cummings, 2002). Also, creating or setting aside a space for teacher aides to store their personal items and equipment has been linked to facilitating teamwork and fostering respect (e.g., Ruedel et al., 2002; Schwartz et al., 2002; Wallace, 2002). It is possible that the team’s classroom setting may have considerable influence on their collaborative practice. The impact of the physical environment – the classroom environment in which teacher-teacher aide teams work – on effective/collaborative teamworking is an under researched area. The inclusion of a consideration of the impact of the physical environment on collaborative teamworking in my study assists in addressing that gap.

2.8 Collaboration not cooperation in teacher-teacher aide teams

Across international literature there is consensus on the cooperativeness of teacher aides. Two large scale international research projects namely, Finn, Gerber, Farber, and Achilles (2000) (USA) and Blatchford et al. (2012) (UK), have highlighted the cooperativeness of the teacher aide. Finn et al. noted teachers’ satisfaction with paraeducator work performance and how teachers perceived positive effects on their workload and class behaviour management with paraeducators present in the classroom. Blatchford et al. stated that teachers valued teaching assistants and reported on the benefits of teaching assistants’ good will, working extra hours for no pay, that included arriving early or leaving late so as to have “valuable liaison time with teachers” (p 54). Despite the obvious cooperation of teacher aides, Finn et al. and Blatchford et al. identified no improvement in student performance. The idea that collaboration, rather than cooperation, holds the key to improved student learning outcomes is highlighted in Rueda and Monzó’s (2002), Parvey’s (2008), and Devecchi and Rouse’s (2010) respective studies related to teacher-teacher aide collaboration.

Rueda and Monzó’s (2002) two-year study took place in two large public elementary schools in California. Their study involved observations and semi-structured interviews with 24
paraeducators, eight teachers who were former paraeducators, and two interviews with two administrators responsible for hiring and classroom placement of paraeducators. Their study began as a “focus on examining the socio-cultural scaffolding practices of Latino paraeducators in working with Latino students” (p. 507). However, not long after data collection began, they realised that these practices had a great deal to do with the paraeducators’ classroom roles so they shifted their focus to an exploration of the ways teachers and paraeducators worked together. They found that:

- schools did not recognise or promote teacher-paraeducator collaboration;
- the hierarchical structure of social relations in schools with separate meetings and workshops supported power differences, directly impacting teacher-paraeducator relationships;
- most teachers did not acknowledge or see the benefits of the paraeducators’ cultural and community knowledge;
- most paraeducators did not receive verbal assistance, and teachers rarely assessed or monitored paraeducator teaching strategies; and
- little or no interaction/communication between teachers and paraeducators occurred outside class time.

Rueda and Monzó (2002) acknowledged their study only provided a general understanding of teacher-paraeducator relationships and that more in-depth studies were needed. Rueda and Monzó suggested future studies should involve a focus on particular teams of teachers and paraeducators to give a more nuanced view of their working relationship and how they support each other’s learning. My study, involving in-depth nuanced accounts of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams helps address that gap, contributing to the knowledge of collaboration in schools.

Parvey’s (2008) doctoral study, involving four schools in Long Island, New York, investigated teaching assistants’ roles and responsibilities and opportunities to collaborate with teachers and contribute to the schools where they worked. Parvey conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 participants – eight teacher-teaching assistant teams, and four school principals. All teachers had worked an average of seven years and had spent two years with the teaching assistant who participated in the study. Parvey concluded: teaching assistants were viewed as valuable members, often equals, in the instructional team; lack of team planning did not stop the teams working collaboratively; and that successful collaboration between the team members was
supported by on-the-job success and consistent opportunities for team building. However, Parvey only interviewed team members who had been working together for two or more years. It is possible that a study that included team members who have been working together for shorter periods of time may yield different results. Importantly, Parvey’s findings supported those found later by Devecchi and Rouse (2010) in relation to positive working relationships and collaboration occurring in teacher-teacher assistant teams.

Devecchi and Rouse (2010) reported on a two-stage study in two secondary schools in England that had the stated aim of comparing “collaborative classroom practices with school practices and policies so as to describe and reflect on the system dynamics and cultural factors that influenced effective teamwork” (p. 93). The first stage of the study was a whole school exploratory stage focused on “understanding the features of effective collaboration” (p. 95). They concluded that “classroom collaboration was closely dependent on whole school systems of staff support, participation, training and induction” (p. 95). The second stage of the study involved semi-structured interviews and observations of four teams – two from foreign language classrooms, one from a science classroom, and one from a maths classroom. Devecchi and Rouse found that teams did work collaboratively, sharing a common understanding of what was needed to support and work effectively as a team. They also found that collaboration supported both teams and students. The study took place after Blatchford et al.’s (2009) large study into the deployment of teaching assistants. It “responds to and articulates further” (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010, p. 91) Blatchford et al.’s (2009) findings, with the conclusion that effective collaboration in teacher-teacher assistant teams was not only related to clearly defined roles and responsibilities, but also to “the ability of team members to respect and trust each other’s knowledge, competence and experience” (p. 91).

In Australian research and literature teacher-teacher aide collaborative working tends to be presented as an ideal work arrangement (e.g., Bourke, 2008; Butt, 2014) or is barely mentioned (e.g., Howard & Ford, 2007), with much of the focus being placed on teacher teamworking and managing teacher aides. One study by Shaddock et al. (2007) into the ways mainstream teachers and teaching assistants “work together to improve the learning outcomes of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms” (p. 213) claimed to involve models of teacher-teaching assistant collaboration. However, in this study, collaboration between team members equated to the team members’ ability to work satisfactorily together. The focus of their study was on how the teams were supported and how best to utilise teaching assistants, rather than team collaboration.
Shaddock et al.’s (2007) research involved “different models of teacher-teacher assistant relationships that were purported to be working satisfactorily” (p. 213) within five schools from primary, secondary and post-compulsory settings, across State, Catholic and Independent sectors over four Australian States and Territories. Employing Actor Network Theory to examine the socio-technical networks around teaching assistants the researchers observed teachers and teacher assistants working in classrooms for four days in each of the five schools. Shaddock et al. also interviewed 19 teachers and 22 teacher aides, four principals and one head of school, and 17 parents, and examined policy documents, procedures and protocols in the schools. Shaddock et al. found that the models of teamworking were “not models in any accurate sense” (p. 252); they were “pragmatic responses to perceived needs using available resources” (p. 252). Shaddock et al. described these non-models as “fluid, dynamic and responsive, held together by school values and ethos and usually dependent on the vision and vigilance of the principal and/or executive team” (p. 253).

Shaddock et al. (2007) argued that, as a consequence of the lack of support and direction from school leaders for teamworking, “the quality of the relationships between teachers and teaching assistants was crucial to the effectiveness of the support provided to students with disabilities in all sites” (p. 253). This finding pointed to a need for more than cooperation between team members. In relation to teamworking the findings from Shaddock et al.’s study were in accord with findings from research on effective teamworking in that teamworking was supported by good relationships between school staff, understanding of roles and responsibilities and “time to build the team relationship, to plan and to reflect on their work” (p. 209). However, while they claimed it is “legitimate to study the factors that contribute to its [the teacher-teacher assistant model] smooth operation” (p. 255), the authors questioned the efficacy of the teacher-teacher assistant model and put forward “recommendations oriented towards educational and cost effectiveness with a primary emphasis on reinstating the central position of the classroom teacher” (p. 255). Therefore, even though their study examined teacher-teacher aide working, and the findings were similar to international literature in relation to the need for communication between team members and an understanding of roles and responsibilities, their study did not examine collaboration between teacher-teacher aide team members. Nevertheless, if, as Shaddock et al. implied, collaborative working in teacher-teacher aide teams equates to the team members’ ability to work satisfactorily together and the quality of the working arrangement is crucial to the effectiveness of the support they provide then this study also appears to indicate that collaboration, not just cooperation, supports effective teacher-teacher aide teamworking.
It is possible that the lack of research and literature relating to teacher-teacher aide collaborative working in Australia is due to what Bourke and Carrington (2007) have referred to as the invisibility of the position of the teacher aide. Missing from the literature is Australian research involving in-depth, nuanced accounts of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams.

2.9 Summary and concluding comments

I began this chapter by noting that collaboration itself is a complex issue involving more than simply teaming people together and that teamworking, particularly effective teamworking, is associated with collaboration in much of the literature and research. Teamworking, therefore, features prominently in the literature review. Published literature and research around collaboration revealed that collaboration has different meanings within schools and that most of the research and literature around collaboration in schools has focused on teacher collaboration, not teacher-teacher aide collaboration. The literature on teacher-teacher aide teamworking has focused on managing or supervising the teacher aide and teaming with the teacher aide, as well as the problems encountered by the individual team members as they work together.

In relation to compiling descriptions of teamworking from literature and research around teamworking and collaboration it is important to acknowledge that there are differences in the aim and focus of the literature, and that research differed in the questions, methodologies and focus of the research. Compiling descriptions and making comparisons between studies and literature related to teamworking and collaboration is made more difficult by the many interpretations of collaboration and differing models of teamworking. However, an examination of literature and research related to both effective teamworking and collaborative teamworking reveals common features about teacher-teacher aide teamworking and the challenges these team members face.

A clear message from the literature is that teacher-teacher aide collaboration is generally viewed in a positive light and there is both a need and an interest in collaboration in schools and between the team members themselves. A literature review identified both reasons for and challenges to successful collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. It has also confirmed that successful collaboration between teachers and teacher aides can and does exist, but a range of conditions need to be in place for these teams to succeed as effective collaborators. Good communication, willingness to collaborate, understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and opportunities to meet and plan have been identified as important aspects of effective teamworking.
and collaboration. The central challenges to teamworking and collaboration revolve around the issues of communication and role clarity. For teacher aides, the issue of status also influences their participation in teamworking. This literature also revealed that team member collaboration faces challenges related to school support for teamworking and team member interpersonal relationships. The interest in collaboration, the complexity and challenge of collaboration combined with the paucity of research directly related into teacher-teacher aide collaboration, notably here in Australia, indicates a need for research involving in-depth, nuanced accounts of collaboration in these teams.

The prominent role of communication in collaboration is highlighted in literature and research relating to teamworking, both in the business world and in schools. A literature review revealed that the role communication plays in teacher-teacher aide collaboration is arguably of paramount importance, given it is a “prerequisite for every aspect of group functioning” (Johnson & Johnson, 2013, p. 130), and critical for the success and effectiveness of teamworking (Friend and Cook, 2017, p. 26). The importance of communication in these teams supported a focus on communication between team members in this study.

The following chapter examines the methodology considered appropriate for an initial exploration of the complex issue of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams.
Chapter 3
Exploring the *how* of collaborative activity at the chalkface

3.1 Overview

This chapter presents the methodological and theoretical approaches for this study. I begin this chapter with a discussion on my methodological approach including my philosophical paradigm of social constructionism, the influence of my research focus and Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and activity systems analysis. Following on from this I outline the research design involving case study and the data sources. Next I identify and discuss the ethical considerations in this study, and the authenticity in this study. In the final section of this chapter I provide a summary of the chapter and some concluding comments.

3.2 Methodological approach

We sometimes cannot conceive of how the new paradigm could be true or see the reasons to reject an old paradigm until we have started looking at the world through the lens of the new paradigm.

(Menuge, 2004, pp. 47-48)

Menuge’s (2004) statement above, although written about scientific paradigms, neatly expresses my understanding that there are multiple realities, and that each individual, while constructing their own reality, is influenced by the beliefs and ideas—the paradigms—of others around them. My philosophical paradigm is that of social constructionism, identified by Holstein and Gubrium (2011) as the understanding that, “everyday realities are constructed in and through forms of social action” (p. 341). Engaging with social constructionism, I see the development of my research methodology as a complex and integrated process, more in keeping with the idea of bricolage research than “monological research methods” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 325) framed through the lens of only one paradigm.

Bricolage derives from the term, *bricoleur*, identified by Lévi-Strauss (1966) as a craft person creatively using materials and the tools at hand to construct new projects, new artefacts. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) described the qualitative researcher as bricoleur, as using “aesthetic and
material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods or empirical materials are at hand” (p. 4) and state that the researcher’s “choice of which interpretive practices to employ is not necessarily set in advance”. I take Kincheloe’s (2005) view of research methodology where research methods are viewed actively and reconstructed “from the tools at hand rather than passively receiving the ‘correct’ universally applicable methodologies” (p. 324). This can be seen in my research with the inclusion of concept maps as part of the interview process and the inclusion of participant-produced drawings as descriptive and analytical tools.

Bricolage research from a social constructionist perspective is slightly different from Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) view of the self-reflexive bricoleur above and Rogers’ (2012) bricolage research as “a critical, multi-perspectival, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to inquiry” (p. 1). Crotty (1998) contended that the qualitative researcher, as bricoleur, needs to focus attention on the objects of the research more than “versatility or resourcefulness in the use of tools and methods” (p. 1116). From a constructionist perspective, Crotty argued that the researcher is not “straightjacketed” by conventional meanings but “approach[es] the object in a radical spirit of openness to its potential for new or richer meaning” (p. 1116).

As a novice researcher I do not have the knowledge of all the approaches and techniques for conducting research. However, Lévi-Strauss (1966) argued the bricoleur only needs enough knowledge “to have one definite and determinate use” (p. 12). For me that definite and determinate use is the development of an understanding of collaboration as practised by teacher-teacher aide teams—the object of my research. In my methodological approach discussed in the paragraphs below, I have focused on the object of my research as I engaged with Crotty’s (1998) bricoleur approach, incorporating theories and methods that can offer a new or richer meaning of collaboration.

3.2.1 Social constructionism

I understand that the choice of research methodology is influenced by the researcher’s own worldviews, paradigms or beliefs (Creswell, 2007; Gearing, 2004; van Manen, 1990) and the focus of the research (Neuman, 2003). My research methodology is influenced by my philosophical paradigm of social constructionism and by the focus on collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. In essence, a constructionist approach “focus[es] on how the social world is interpreted by those involved in it” (Robson, 2011, p. 24). Social constructionism is based on the principle that an
individual’s everyday realities are actively constructed and constantly refined in and through their interaction with the environment (Bonk & Cunningham, 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 2011). In constructionism truth is situated, that is, it is “located within particular communities at particular times, and used indexically to represent their condition” (Gergen & Gergen, 2000, para. 22). How the team members in this study explain collaboration – their truth of collaboration – can be understood as the truth about collaboration for them at that time, in the social environment of that team in that school.

In social constructionism the construction of knowledge occurs through conversation and making things (artefacts) in learning, whether they are physical things, such as a sand castle, or mental things, such as a theory (Ackermann, 2001; Papert, 1991). Central to the construction of self and the world in social constructionism is relating together, most notably, engaging in dialogue together (Jupp, 2013). Therefore, from a social constructionist perspective, and of relevance to my research, understanding an individual’s practice of collaboration requires the examination of the context, together with the setting in which these actions occur, and a focus on dialogue—the way it functions to produce knowledge (artefacts) in the team—in order to identify and analyse interdependencies and factors affecting teacher-teacher aide collaboration.

In the following section I explain how my research methodology was influenced by my theoretical framework, my review of literature around teacher-teacher aide working, and my definition of the problem of how collaboration is practised in teacher-teacher aide teams.

3.2.2 Influence of my research focus

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.

(Geertz, 1973, p. 311)

According to Geertz’s (1973) comment above, the individual is surrounded by “webs of significance” the individual has constructed and the analysis of these webs needs to be interpretive, “in search of meaning”. My theoretical understandings led me to see the participants in my study as suspended in “webs of significance” that they had constructed in relation to collaboration. Geertz
also referred to the “intellectual effort” necessary to capture this meaning, how the researcher needs to develop “thick descriptions” of events to provide “a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures” (p. 312) in order to achieve the capture of meaning. I saw value in Geertz’s thick descriptions. I came to the conclusion that in aiming to engage in what Geertz called the double task of the researcher and to “uncover the conceptual structures that inform our subjects’ acts, the ‘said’ of social discourse” (p. 321), as well as to construct a system of analysis that permits the “generic structure” of collaboration to stand out, I would need the support of thick descriptions. Thick descriptions in Geertz’s work are descriptions in which both the context and observed behaviour are explained. Appreciating Geertz’s valuing of such an interpretive approach into culture, I saw how this approach might have equal significance for a study on collaboration; a qualitative study on collaboration.

Hence, rather than a quantitative or mixed-method approach, I chose a qualitative approach for my research as it offers what Denzin (2011) identified as central to qualitative research: “the avowed humanistic and social justice commitment to study the social world from the perspective of the interacting individual” (p. xiii). This qualitative interpretive approach permits a focus on natural events in natural settings, providing a “strong handle on what ‘real life’ is like” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 11), as well as thick descriptions of team members’ real world experiences of and with collaboration. Miles et al. (2014) stated that qualitative data are: “well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes and structures of their lives and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them” (p. 13).

This approach supports my ontological perspective of relativity where the tenable viewpoints/statements individuals make about existence vary in relation to context, time and an individual’s circumstances and depend on a worldview that is not just determined by empirical or sense data about the world, (Patton, 2015; Somekh & Lewin, 2005). Patton (2015) provides an example of this worldview stating, “two people can live in the same empirical world, even though one’s world is haunted by demons, the other’s by subatomic particles” (p. 122). My stance is not an extreme form of the relativist position, but is more in keeping with Blaikie’s (2009) ontological assumption of an idealist where, “Reality consists of representations that are the creation of the human mind” (p. 93) and social reality consists of “shared interpretations that social actors produce and reproduce as they go about their everyday lives” (p. 93). According to Blaikie, in this view, “constructions of reality are regarded as different (multiple) perspectives on an external world” (p. 94).
Creswell (2013) argues that when conducting qualitative studies researchers “embrace the idea of multiple realities” (p. 20) conducting their studies with the intent of reporting these multiple realities, using multiple forms of evidence, employing “the actual words of different individuals and presenting different perspectives” (p. 20). The varied data collection methods in this study were designed to support this approach. The qualitative approach of this study also supports my epistemological perspective of subjectivism. I agree with Walsh and Downe’s (2006) perspective of the subjectivist epistemological premise that “knowledge is constructed and hermeneutic in intent encompassing individual, cultural and structural representations of reality” (p. 108).

With the understanding that the term qualitative research is an “umbrella term” (Merriam, 2009, p. 13) for what Creswell (2013) called the “baffling number of choices of approaches” (p. 7), I sought a qualitative approach that would suit my philosophical understanding of social constructionism and would meet the needs of my research focus.

As I reviewed literature pertaining to types of qualitative research, I found myself agreeing with Merriam’s (2009) assessment that, while the process of developing a research methodology may appear linear it is, in reality, an interactive process between the problem definition, literature review, and theoretical framework. The definition of the problem, as discussed in Chapter 1, had revealed the issue of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams was not just an issue of collaborative activities (such as sharing resources) in teacher-teacher aide teams, but also one of communication and activities as practised by these teams. A social constructionist approach supported a focus on dialogue/communication in the teams. A literature view on collaboration and teacher-teacher aide working relationships had revealed that two key problems associated with teacher-teacher aide team functioning are roles and responsibilities and communication. Engaging with Merriam’s interactive approach had revealed the methodological approach chosen for this study needed to accommodate a way to explore collaboration in team activities, as well as team communication.

Merriam (2009) identified a qualitative approach as one in which there is a focus on meaning, understanding and process, where the sampling is purposeful and data are collected via interviews, documents and observations. According to Merriam, the data analysis is both inductive and comparative and the findings are “richly descriptive and presented as themes/categories” (p. 38). As my interest is in developing thick descriptions of collaboration I found this approach appealing however, it lacks the distinction of an explicit focus on a bounded system that I felt my
research needed. Turning to Merriam’s work I sought a variation of this approach that would permit a focus on a bounded system and allow the flexibility of a bricoleur approach that my study needed to explore the complex issue of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams.

Merriam (2009) identified the following six types of qualitative research: critical qualitative research, narrative analysis, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and qualitative case study, that share the characteristics of basic research and add another dimension. Only qualitative case study offered the flexibility required to present the bricoleur’s “multiple dimensions of multilogicality” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 323) where the bricolage “exists out of respect for the complexity of the lived world” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 324). Seeing case study in this light meant my research also required a particular type of case study.

Stake (1995) identified three types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. In intrinsic case study, the case itself is of primary interest. In instrumental case study, research is conducted on a particular case to gain an understanding of another thing/something else. In collective case study, the researcher studies several case studies within the same project. An advantage of a collective case study for my research was the opportunity to compare the phenomenon being studied, namely teacher-teacher aide collaborative practice, across and between cases. With this in mind I selected the collective case study approach as the type of case study most suitable for my methodological approach.

Consistent with a case study approach, I incorporated the following methods to support this study on collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams: individual semi-structured interviews, participant concept maps on what supports and impedes collaboration in their team, documents relating to collaboration among participants in their team, as well as in-class observations of the team members working together. Observations were included as they provide situational dimensions of knowledge (Jones & Somekh, 2005), such as what the work area is like and how the team members operate in that work area.

Engaging with the social constructionist bricoleur approach to methodology, I sought a method that would permit an understanding of collaboration through dialogue that was focused and purposeful. Cogenerative dialoguing, with its heuristic (set of participant-developed rules promoting equity) and focus on co-generating understanding (Siry & Martin, 2014), was chosen as eminently suited to a focus on construction of knowledge about collaboration.
My research design needed a way of analysing the data collected on what Thomas (1992) argued is the “complex social phenomena” (p. 61) of teacher-teacher aide teams. Thomas argued that “the methods of analysing the processes taking place within them must adopt an appropriate form – one which is able to address, assimilate and explicate this complexity” (pp. 61-62). In the process of developing my research methodology, engagement with Merriam’s (2009) idea of the interactive process had enabled an innovative research design. But to focus the data collection on the activity of collaboration and to assist in interpreting and understanding the data I also needed a theoretical framework.

Thomas (1992) wrote that theory enables the researcher to frame ideas, providing a “mental scaffold for our experiences and our reading”, as well as providing “stimulus to new ideas and new understandings” (p. 61). Yin (2014) described theory in case study research as the research blueprint with the theoretical propositions providing strong guidance on what data to collect and strategies for analysing the research data. Thomas’s and Yin’s perspectives on the development of a theoretical framework suggest that the choice of a theory needs to be settled on at the beginning of the research design process. As discussed earlier, I began my theoretical framework with social constructionism. However, as I progressed with my research design, engaging in Merriam’s (2009) interactive process, I realised that a social constructionist perspective alone would not capture the nuances associated with the activity of collaboration. Miles et al. (2014) argued:

The analytic challenge for all qualitative researchers is finding coherent descriptions and explanations that still include all of the gaps, inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in personal and social life. (p. 10)

To assist in finding these gaps, inconsistencies and contradictions, and offer stimulus for the new ideas and understandings that Thomas (1992) referred to, as well as provide the guidance Yin (2014) referred to, I added the analytical framework of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory.

3.2.3 Activity Theory and collaboration

My understanding of collaboration as an activity led me to consider Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). CHAT, with its origin in the work of Lev Vygotsky on how knowledge is constructed and its focus on activity, promotes the understanding of complex learning environments (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). As such, it provides a powerful lens through which to
explore the complex social activity of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. In this study, CHAT permits a move away from looking at individual participants and their actions in isolation towards looking at the team activity of collaboration and how actions are mediated within that activity. Incorporating this theory supports my research design in two important ways. First, it gives a central position to activity as a unit of analysis thus, assisting in the analysis of collaborative practice in teacher-teacher teams. Second, as the volume of data from qualitative studies is large, engaging with CHAT with a focus on the activity assisted in providing a manageable unit of analysis. CHAT and activity systems analysis are explained further in the following section.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and activity systems analysis. First generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, often shortened to activity theory, began with Vygotsky’s interest in the study and explanation of human activities (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Vygotsky introduced the idea of mediated action to explain human meaning making processes “through interaction with artifacts, tools, and social others in an environment” (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 16). This mediation between individuals and artifacts occurs over time and, “The focus is on the individual performing actions in a sociocultural setting” (Engeström & Miettinen, 2007, p. 11). Second generation activity theory, which is employed in this study, is attributed to the work of A. N. Leontiev and Engeström and emphasises “the collective nature of human activity” (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 23). This generation of activity theory represents activity as Engeström’s (1987) activity systems model.

Activity systems analysis is a way to take the essence of data in one human activity data set, represent it using a graphic model, and then compare the activities with other activity data sets (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Yamagata-Lynch (2010) explained this form of analysis is a way, “to work with data gathered from complex learning environments and map human interactions in natural settings” (p. ix). Thomas’s (1992) description of teacher-teacher aide team relationships as “complex social phenomena” (p. 61) lends support for this approach to data analysis in a study exploring collaboration in these teams, in their school environment. Analysis within CHAT—activity systems analysis—has, as its basic unit of analysis, an object-oriented activity (an activity system) as depicted in an activity system model (Engeström, 1987; Rogoff, 1995) (see Figure 3.1). According to Cole and Engeström (1993), an activity systems model: “provides a conceptual map to the major loci among which human cognition is distributed… [as well as including] other people who must somehow be taken into account simultaneously with the subject as constituents of human activity systems” (p. 8).
Figure 3.1 Activity system model

Adapted from Cole and Engeström (1993) to show the arrows indicating directional connections between activity system components as identified by Engeström (2007).

As indicated by the arrows in the activity system model shown in Figure 3.1 there are multiple mediations within an activity system as each component of the system mediates others. In this model of an activity system the subject is the individual or participants, dyad or group engaged in the activity, and the mediating artefacts or tools are things that can influence the subject’s activity (Russell, 1997; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The artefacts could be physical objects, such as a notebook, or resources for the subject, such as prior knowledge contributing to the subject’s involvement with the artefact within the activity; “material tools and tools for thinking” (Kuutti, 1995, p. 25). Each of these mediating artefacts or tools are historically formed and open to change/further development. The object is the direction or purpose of the activity, rules affect how the activity takes place, community is the social group to which the subject belongs while participating in the activity, and division of labour refers to how the tasks are shared in the activity (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 2007). The outcome “is the end result of the activity” (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 2).

A central tenet of activity theory is that contradictions are an inevitable function of an activity system and that they are valuable tools of analysis (Foot, 2001). Contradictions often occur over time and manifest as disturbances and conflicts within the activity systems (Engeström, 2016).
In this study an examination of the contradictions or tensions occurring within the activity systems presented a way to explore the challenges team members faced when collaborating and how they worked to overcome those challenges.

In order to produce activity system models of team member activity and to avoid being overwhelmed with the analytical process in this study, I engaged in steps associated with expansive visibilisation (Engeström, 1999) and with Rogoff’s (1995) planes of sociocultural analysis.

**Expansive visibilisation.** Expansive visibilisation is a process, involving four sequential steps, that is designed to make contradictions visible and analysable (Engeström, 1999). It is a process associated with third generation activity theory where activity systems analysis is applied in developmental research. In this study the aim is to explore collaboration—not develop collaboration—in teacher-teacher aide teams. However, I was aware that the inclusion of cogen in my research design, where team members are encouraged to reflect on their collaborative practices, could generate changes in the way they worked. (See Section 3.4.1 for more on cogen in this study). As expansive visibilisation involves a series of steps, each expanding on the other, I have been able to engage with the steps I needed to support a visibilisation and analysis of contradictions within team member activity systems in relation to the data I collected.

**Steps of expansive visibilisation in this study.** Expansive visibilisation involves the four sequential steps of gaining insight, analysis, formulating new ways of working, and practical applications (Glen, 2009). The first step involves data collection from participants in their work setting. According to Engeström (1999), this step, “includes the identification and questioning of myths that are typically invoked by practitioners to explain away and defend disturbing aspects of the work practice” (p. 68). In the literature review I identified the many challenges participants face in relation to teamworking and collaboration. During the data collection process participants were asked about these challenges and what their experiences were with these challenges. The contradictions or tensions revealed by participants assisted in the development of key themes from the data and in the development of team narratives and activity systems.

The second step of expansive visibilisation involves mapping the activity systems. In this study this step began with coding the data. Richards and Morse (2013) identify coding as a way of linking rather than labelling data, stating: “It leads you from the data to the idea and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea” (p. 154). I employed descriptive coding as it supports “studies
with a wide variety of data forms” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 88). Description, Saldaña (2013) claimed, is the foundation for qualitative enquiry, having the primary goal of “assisting the reader to see what you saw and to hear what you heard in general” (p. 88). According to Saldaña, descriptive coding is a way to analyse the basic topics contained in the data to assist in answering questions, such as: What does this study concern? and What is going on here?

Use of descriptive coding permitted analysis in context of participant-produced concept drawings (the concept maps that some participants completed as drawings) along with other data sources, including participants’ descriptions of their map. Such an analysis of participant-produced drawings supported and enhanced descriptions from other sources and, in keeping with a bricoleur approach, opened the door to other lenses from which to view the data. As Ganesh (2011) stated, participant-produced drawings, “permit expression of feeling and imagery; … allow for defining and redefining shared attitudes held by society; and they can be analysed using psychological, sociological, and cultural lenses with attention to the phenomena or concepts under study” (p. 238). From the initial coding I developed narratives of participant experiences endeavouring to include thick descriptions to assist readers’ understanding of those experiences. I then focused on identifying participant activities that were both relevant and essential to the study. I chose to focus on object-oriented activities rather than goal-directed activities in the data analysis process as this made more sense in relation to the research questions. Being new to developing activity systems diagrams and to activity systems analysis, I initially employed Mwanza’s (2001) Eight-Step-Model as a framework to identify the activity systems and develop the activity system/s diagrams.

Mwanza’s (2001, 2002) model identifies the following eight components of the activity system: activity, object, subjects, tools/artefacts, rules and regulations, division of labour, community and outcome. The interpretive questions associated with each of these components promoted the visibilisation of that component within the selected data. Employing Mwanza’s framework supported the development of activity system/s diagrams and analysis of those diagrams. (See Appendix 1 for an example of how Mwanza’s Eight-Step-Model was employed in this study.) The development of the activity system/s diagrams was an interactive process with the diagrams going through multiple revisions as I compared the activity system/s I identified with the data, triangulating with each data source and checking for discrepancies or information that needed further attention.
The third step in expansive visibilisation, formulating new ways of working, “is when participants of the activity system are encouraged into formulating practical solutions to solve contradictions in their work activity” (Glen, 2009, p. 66). While participants did formulate ways of working and did problem solve some of their work activity during cogen sessions these were few due to the limited timeframe for this research and the break-up of the teams over the school holidays. Analysis in relation to this stage of visibilisation is, therefore, limited.

Engeström’s (1999) fourth and final step in the process of expansive visibilisation is practical applications where participants apply the new ways of working they formulated. The limited timeframe for this research meant there was no capacity to follow-up on changes participants made as a result of their team discussions during cogen. However, brief discussions with some participants, for example Uwh from Team 1, at the conclusion of the study provided an indication of the practical applications of new ways of working that some participants adopted. (See Chapter 6 for more information on these new ways of working.)

To assist in analysis and discussion on the activity systems developed through the process of expansive visibilisation I engaged with Rogoff’s (1995) planes of sociocultural analysis. This conceptual tool is based on the personal, interpersonal and community planes of analysis where the subject of the activity is the individual, group or team of individuals, and the community, respectively (Rogoff, 1995). As part of the approach to analysis in this study I focused-in on these planes within the study, blurring out the others, to gain a greater appreciation of the complex activities, and the tensions and contradictions inherent in the activities involved in collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. However, because the aim of this study is exploratory, as collaboration between teachers and teacher aides is still a relatively new area of study, my focus was on the team members. Therefore, in engaging with Rogoff’s three planes of sociocultural analysis, I predominantly focused-in on the personal and interpersonal planes of analysis. Within these planes I examined the teachers’ and teacher aides’ activities, the mental models and/or physical tools they employed in these activities, and the objects/outcomes and intentions of the activities in the sociocultural space in which they operated.

My focus on joint team member perspectives and understandings has meant that cogen had an important role in relation to data collection within this study. The use of CHAT in this exploratory study on collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams prompted the sub-question: How can CHAT be used to conceptualise the affordances and challenges of cogenerative dialoguing for
understanding and explaining collaborative teacher-teacher aide teaming? The following section expands on the role of case study within this research.

### 3.3 Case Study

According to Tellis (1997), “Case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed” (p. 17). In the methodological approach to this study, a qualitative case study approach influenced the design, data collection techniques, and particular approaches to data analysis.

In the design of my research, a case study approach permitted the focus on collaboration within a teacher-teacher aide team as a bounded system, permitting a research approach that encouraged a team rather than individual approach to collaboration. Hetherington (2013) argued that: “case study methodology is an appropriate choice for complexity-based educational research” (p. 75). I understand that not only are teacher-teacher aide teams complex (Thomas, 1992), but also the idea of collaboration is a complex issue—“made complex by ambiguities in practical usage and scholarly disagreement about the term” (Mattessich et al., 2008, p. 59). Such complexities, therefore, made case study a good fit for my research project and a collective case study approach, where the researcher studies several cases within the same project (Stake, 1995) provided the opportunity to compare and contrast the ways teacher-teacher aide teams practised collaboration across and between cases.

Comparing and contrasting is often linked with the term triangulation in case study (e.g., Stake, 1995). In this study, triangulation was employed for two distinct purposes in accordance with Evers and van Staa (2010). The first purpose of triangulation in case study research is the construction, through the convergence of evidence, of more/valid interpretations of the data (Evers & van Staa, 2010). The second purpose of triangulation is to achieve “a deeper insight by combining methods, data, and analysis techniques” (Evers & van Staa, 2010, p. 751).

The data collection methods that were triangulated in my collective case study were cogen transcripts, in-class observations, interviews, concept maps, and team documents pertaining to collaboration. These methods have been adopted with the aim of permitting greater interpretive understandings (Jones & Somekh, 2005) and thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of each case in this collective case study. Data were collected in a similar manner across cases. Data collected were
member-checked, allowing participants to provide feedback with the aim of improving the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the study. Member-checking also supported greater participant engagement with this study.

The data collected from the different cases of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams were analysed using activity systems analysis supported by the theoretical framework of CHAT. A case study approach was suited to the theoretical framework of CHAT, with its focus on socially constructed human activity, dynamic relations, historical change, and the collective nature of human activity (Engeström, 1987, 2007) because case studies permit the study of an individual’s social reality, a reality that is “complex, dynamic, and context-dependent” (Mabry, 2009, p. 215). A case study approach was suited to bounded units of activity in CHAT, as case studies involve intensive analyses and descriptions of single systems or units that are bounded by space and time (Creswell, 2014; Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2013; Yin, 2014). This permitted data collection and analysis to focus on goal-directed action, object-oriented activities, and activity settings as independent and interrelated bounded systems, permitting alignment between data collection and data analysis techniques. Table 3.1 below provides an outline of how each data source applies within my case study approach and within activity systems analysis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Application within case study</th>
<th>Application within activity systems analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cogen transcripts</td>
<td>Provide individual and team perspectives on teaming practices</td>
<td>As language is the master tool in the activity system (Cole &amp; Engeström, 1993), cogen transcripts offer in-depth insight into tool use and outcomes of team activity systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>To gain a better understanding of the phenomenon in a naturalistic setting (Stake, 1995)</td>
<td>Aid in identification and understanding of teacher-teacher aide activity systems in school environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To provide situational dimensions of knowledge (Jones &amp; Somekh, 2005) (e.g., how crowded the work area is; how hot/cold the work area is; where the work area is located and how the participants operate individually and collectively within that work area)</td>
<td>Aid in verifying or nullifying information provided in other forms of data collection thereby pointing to areas of tension or contradiction in activity systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Aid in providing context-rich, thick descriptions of participants' teamwork activities within their school environment Provide individual perspectives</td>
<td>Promote a sketching of the structure of the teacher-teacher aide team's activity systems Assist in the identification of the rules, community, and division of labour in the activity systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept maps as part of the interview process</td>
<td>Promote multiple perspectives on activities and issues as well as rich in-depth descriptions</td>
<td>Gain participant tacit knowledge in relation to contradictions/tensions in team activity systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
<td>Documents collected provide information on team planning and working arrangements Examples of documents include: teacher plan showing teacher aide role and activity, teacher aide notes in relation to planning, and participants’ protocols or rules for their cogen sessions</td>
<td>Promote a sketching of the structure of the teacher-teacher aide teams’ activity systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Data Sources

As outlined in Table 3.1, data collection methods adopted in this study were: cogenerative dialoguing (cogen), observation, interviews, concept maps as part of the interview process, and participant documents pertaining to teamworking. The following sections discuss each method in more detail.

3.4.1 Cogenerative dialoguing

My interest in cogen initially grew out of my thinking about how I might obtain a team perspective on collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams and how this could be explored in a respectful way. I wanted to create an opportunity for different perspectives, both teacher and aide perspectives, and sought a method that would support participant beneficence, given the issue of unequal status within these teams (e.g., Rueda & Monzó, 2002).

Cogen has been described as, analogous to a debriefing (Roth & El Kadri, 2016), a “reflection on practice” (Roth & Tobin, 2004, para. 11), and “encounters that create fields in which culture is enacted allowing individuals with different stocks of knowledge to interact with one another” (Pitts, 2007, p. 138). Thus, the inclusion of cogen in my research design offered a method of gaining a team perspective on collaboration where different perspectives are welcomed. Also, cogenerative dialoguing praxis is consistent with a feminist ethic of care and critical perspective of power relations for, as Roth and El Kadri (2016) explained, “The values embedded in cogenerative dialoguing praxis are fundamentally democratic, anti-authoritarian, and emancipatory” (p. 313). Through the use of cogen in this study, I saw a way to provide participants with an equitable forum to express their views and have a hand in shaping both the dialogue around collaboration and any actions resulting from the dialogue.

**Cogen as a tool.** My intention for cogen in this study is as a tool, a method of obtaining data on collaboration between team members, promoting equity and participant beneficence. This use of cogen varied from previous studies where cogen has deliberately been employed as an intervention. Here I take Somekh and Lewin’s (2005) view of intervention meaning participants are invited to make a change and the research then “focuses upon the impact of the change and its implication for future development” (p. 346). The focus of this study is collaboration – not cogen. I was aware from the initial stages of my research design that I would not have the luxury of an
extended timeframe to develop and explore any change cogen might engender, or expect that, with limited experience with cogen, participant engagement with cogen would engender any effective change. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, my own experience with change in a teacher-teacher aide team leads me to agree with Fullan (2007) that to create effective change in an educational environment it must be viewed as a developmental process that can take two or more years to develop, time I did not have. Secondly, my understanding that participant engagement with cogen would not necessarily result in change was influenced by my own experience of attending meetings, training sessions and conferences. For, as Johnson and Johnson (2013) argued, “Information and knowledge can generate interest in changing but that does not bring about change” (p. 49).

While cogen in this study was not employed as an intervention, in accordance with Somekh and Lewin’s (2005) interpretation of intervention, as a researcher my presence and research actions can be interpreted as an indirect intervention. As Wagner (1997) argued, all forms of educational research involving cooperation between the researcher and participants constitute a form of unavoidable intervention as the research “provides those individuals with the opportunities for new or revised forms of social life, regardless of what the research is about” (p. 20). Wagner argued that even the organisational features of the research, made as a consequence of design decisions by the researcher/s, represent social interventions in their own right as: “They bring people into new relationships with each other … and they absorb the limited time, attention, and affective engagement of project participants” (p. 20). Therefore, while cogen in this study was not intended as an intervention it can be seen as a form of intervention. For cogen was selected and employed as part of the study design and it offered participants what Wagner identified as opportunities for new/different forms of social life through their reflections on teamwork practices during cogen sessions.

Cogen was employed in this study to support an understanding of teacher-teacher aide collaboration through participant conversations that focus on their work practices. The focus of the content of the cogen sessions was on supporting team member reflection on collaboration, providing a forum for the different perspectives and understandings of the team members. The focus of the research was to understand what teacher-teacher aide teams identify as collaboration and how they put that into practice.
The dynamic nature of teacher-teacher-aide collaboration, and the importance of communication identified in the literature review, meant that researching collaboration in these teams required a data gathering tool that focuses on team collaboration through team discourse. The data gathering tool also needed to be repeated over time, providing more than a snapshot of teacher-teacher aide teaming, and it needed to be flexible enough to cater for changes in team priorities and needs. Cogen provided such a tool.

**Cogen and the teacher-teacher aide teams.** In developing the research design I had intended the cogen sessions would be negotiated with the participants and conducted once a fortnight over a period of six months (12 cogen sessions) between October 2015 and April 2016. However, early on in the research project this timeframe of one cogen session per fortnight had to be adjusted to meet the needs of both school timetabling and staff work requirements. Due to time constraints, team workload, school timetabling and the splitting-up of participating teams, times and dates for available cogen sessions were constantly being changed. One team was unable to attend any cogen sessions and had to withdraw from the study. The nine remaining teams attended between one and seven cogen sessions each. Each cogen session was conducted in a room that provided privacy, reduced the likelihood of interruptions and minimised background noise thus, promoting participant comfort and the reflective process. Each cogen session was of approximately one hour duration. The majority of cogen sessions were conducted one week apart. However, due to the start of the school holidays, three of the four cogen sessions with teams 1, 2, 3 and 4 had to be conducted in the same fortnight. Each of these teams re-formed with different team members in the new school year so were unable to complete the study. Four teams (teams A, B, 5 and 6) were able to complete between six and seven cogen sessions. These teams, therefore, inform the majority of the discussion on cogen in this chapter. (See Table 3.2 for the number of cogen sessions attended by each team.)
The number of cogen sessions, the timing of the sessions around the interviews and observations, and team member participation in cogen sessions in this study were also affected by team member workload and their school commitments, the availability of the team members (e.g., if they were ill or absent from school), and the availability of relief staff to cover for both teachers and teacher aides.

In selecting cogen as the best method to elicit purposeful communication around collaboration I considered the issues of hierarchy or dominance, as these have been identified as problematic to effective teacher-teacher aide teamworking (e.g., Rudan, 2003; Rueda & Monzó, 2002; Salzberg & Morgan, 1995). To address the issue of dominance in this study, I first ensured that participants entered into the research willingly with an express desire to bring together their collective expertise to expand and deepen teaching and student learning opportunities. The second way the issue of dominance was mitigated in my research was the use of protocols and strategies to encourage equitable participation in the cogen discussions. The protocols and strategies employed in cogen sessions in this study are discussed in Chapter 6.

The importance of cogen as a method/tool for collecting data on teacher-teacher aide discussion around collaboration prompted the sub-question: What happened to the quality and the
nature of communication between teachers and teacher aides when teacher-teacher aide teams used cogenerative dialoguing? This question is explored in Chapter 6. The following section discusses the use of in-class observations in this study.

3.4.2 Observations

When Thomas (1992) studied effective classroom teamwork he took into consideration Cohen et al.’s (1979) finding that “the factor having the most profound influence on teaming was the architecture and layout of the class” (Thomas, 1992, p. 24). In the literature review I noted the many physical influences Johnson and Johnson (2013) identified as affecting team member comfort, productivity and participation. To understand the layout of the classroom I conducted observations in each team’s classroom. Three observations were planned for each team participating in this study, however, only the four teams that completed the study were observed three times.

During the initial observation the classroom layout, or work area, was sketched and annotated. During observations key words and phrases pertaining to collaboration between the teachers and teacher aides were noted verbatim to reduce possible risks of obscuring intended meanings (Somekh, 2005). Participants were invited to comment on the observation notes and the classroom sketch during their interviews. Observations fulfilled two important roles in this study. They provided information on classroom layout and on teacher-teacher aide working within that layout.

In this research, observations provided situational dimensions of knowledge (Jones & Somekh, 2005) and a better understanding of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995). Following the example of Somekh (2005), I adopted an unstructured observational method. This involves a holistic approach permitting broad decisions derived from the focus of the research to be made in advance about the sort of things to be recorded. To aid the gathering of observational data I employed Potter and Richardson’s (1999) viewing framework, modified for personal rather than video observation of classroom teams. (See Appendix 2)

As an observer, the researcher will have some effect on what happens and how those being observed react (Merriam, 2009; Walker & Adelman, 1990). Merriam (2009) stated that the mere presence of the observer “can affect the climate of the setting, often effecting a more formal
atmosphere than is usually the case” (p. 127). However, Merriam notes that in qualitative research, subjectivity and interaction are assumed and the question is, “not whether the process of observing affects what is observed but how the researcher can identify those effects and account for them in interpreting the data” (p. 127). Using triangulation, checking the observation data against data collected during interviews and cogen sessions and member-checking with participants assisted in accounting for such affects.

3.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews aim to “understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects’ own perspectives” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 27). Interview questions for this study were developed from a review of literature on teacher-teacher aide teamworking, as well as literature on collaboration and literature on cogenerative dialoguing. The topics addressed during the interviews included: participant demographic information; participant perceptions of their roles and responsibilities; participant perceptions and experiences of collaboration; participant perceptions of their work environment and the impact it had on how they work; their relationship with each other and past experiences working in a teacher-teacher aide team; and their experience with cogenerative dialoguing. The interviews were conducted individually in a room or area in each school that provided privacy. This provided participant comfort, reduced the likelihood of interruptions and minimised the background noise thus assisting interactive dialogue and promoting accurate documentation. Each interview was audio-taped and averaged between 45 to 60 minutes. Each participant was provided with a copy of the transcribed interview to check for authenticity. Participants were encouraged to comment on their interview transcript. All participants approved their transcripts and a number of participants provided comments, expanding on their responses, providing further insight into their understanding of teacher-teacher aide teamworking.

Open-ended questions were employed in the interviews to obtain individual narrative accounts in relation to teamwork, enabling a richer understanding of teacher-teacher aide relationships through respective interviewee accounts. This approach gave authority to the voice of the interviewee and allowed for what Bell (2002) identified as a way to explore assumptions inherent in the shaping of the stories – to not only provide a window into people’s beliefs and experiences but also to allow for the presentation of a holistic view of their experience.
The use of semi-structured interviews to collect data supported the need for context-rich, meaningful, and thick descriptions in case study (Simons, 2013), as well as providing salient information to support the analysis of the team members’ activities.

### 3.4.4 Concept maps/drawings as part of the interview process

Concept maps are essentially “graphical tools for organizing and representing knowledge” (Novak & Cañas, 2008, p. 1). As noted by Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009), concept maps give participants a way to display their analysis of an issue. In this study concept maps were planned as part of the interview process to provide a form of stimulus material designed to encourage abstract thinking about collaboration in the participant’s team. Participants were asked to create a map showing the relationships among the concepts as part of the interview process. However, not all participants were interested in creating a concept map, some preferred to do a drawing. In these drawings participants identified new possibilities, expressing their understanding of collaboration in ways I had not anticipated. Participants were encouraged to talk about the map/drawing they were creating. This is in line with a draw-and-talk technique designed to facilitate a rich exploration of participant reflections and perspectives (Mitchell, Theron, Stuart, Smith, & Campbell, 2011). Rose (2012) argued that discussing a drawing with an interviewee, “allows the participants to reflect on their everyday activities in a way that is not usually done; it gives them a distance from what they are usually immersed in and allows them to articulate thoughts and feelings that usually remain implicit” (p. 306).

Three concept maps, as part of three interviews, were planned for this study. However, as noted in Chapter 1 and above, only four of the ten teams completed the study, and all three maps. These maps provided a historical progression in relation to team member understanding of collaboration before, during and after team members discussed collaboration in their cogen sessions. The guiding question for the concept map in each of the three interviews was as follows:

1. What impedes and/or supports collaboration in your team?
2. What impedes and/or supports cogen in your team?[^8]
3. What impedes and/or supports collaboration in your team now?

[^8]: This question was, originally, What impedes and/or supports communication in your team? but, by the second interview, participants were employing cogen in their classrooms. Therefore, I amended this question to What impedes and/or supports cogen in your team? to support the choices participants were making.
The use of concept maps as a data source for this study was important for two reasons. Firstly, concept mapping encouraged participants to think critically about the concepts or issues being explored and the relationships between represented information, assisting them to clearly express their understanding of the issues under discussion (Edwards & Fraser, 1983; Novak & Cañas, 2008). Introduced at the start of the interview, concept mapping promoted participant focus on collaborative practice in their team, developing and enhancing their understanding of their team situation. Having individual concept maps of team situations, promoted multiple perspectives on activities and issues, as well as rich, in-depth descriptions – aspects identified by Stake (1995) as important components of case study research. Tillema and van der Westhuizen (2006) made the point that reflection and dialogue, where implicit beliefs and conceptions are communicated with others, are central to the production of knowledge and that deliberately reflecting on an issue can promote the explication of tacit knowledge.

The explication of tacit knowledge is the second reason concept maps were selected for this study. Tacit knowledge is knowledge “acquired over years of experience and derives in part from activities of the expert that involve thinking, feeling and acting” (Novak & Cañas, 2008, p. 29). Novak and Cañas argued that concept maps offer a way to capture gaps in knowledge structure that are missed in interviews. From an activity theoretical perspective obtaining tacit knowledge is relevant to understanding mediation within the activity. Engeström (2007, 2010) stated that tacit knowledge is just as important as explicit knowledge for understanding the social practices oriented at objects within activity systems. It was for these reasons that concept maps were incorporated into all the interviews in this study.

When participants chose to complete drawings instead of maps they communicated experiences beyond those framed by the guiding questions for the concept maps. An example of this was Saige’s rainbow concept drawing (Figure 3.2). Saige was one of the teacher aides in Team 3. Saige completed her concept drawing while waiting for the other team members to start their final cogen session (8 December 2015).
When I asked Saige to tell me about her concept drawing, she replied, “There is light at the end of the rainbow and this is everyone having their say and everyone is happy because they are having a chance to have their say” (Cogen 4, 8 December 2015). Saige drew small faces (eyes and smiles) in the rainbow illustrating people who are happy because they have a voice. Saige explained that collaboration occurs when everyone has a voice. Her drawing points to inclusivity in collaboration as something that makes it special, different and important, particularly for teacher aides. Saige’s concept drawing informed themes related to communication and status within teacher-teacher aide teams. (See Chapter 5 for more on these aspects of teamworking in this study.)

In creating their drawings participants like Saige shifted the research process towards greater co-production as participants gained agency, expanding the exploration of collaboration in the teams and becoming co-authors of the findings generated in this study. These concept maps/drawings formed part of the collection of documents in this study.

3.4.5 Documents

Documents were collected from participants in this study to aid in covering what Yin (2014) called “the complexity of a case and its context” (p. 220). The documents pertained to team activities, such as a teacher’s lesson plan showing the teacher aide’s role, and the list of protocols or rules for cogen. An example of the latter document is Harry and Alaric’s rules of engagement (Figure 3.3).
Evidence from documents, such as the list of rules, was triangulated with evidence from the cogen transcripts, observations, interviews, and concept maps to inform research findings.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in relation to this research were informed by Australia’s National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) (2007) principles of respect for human beings, research merit and integrity, justice, and beneficence. These principles inform both the procedures for planning and conducting the research. Participant recruitment for this research project began when ethical clearance had been received from The University of Queensland School of Education Research Ethics committee (ethical clearance number 15-002) supporting my research, followed by approval from the Department of Education, Training and Employment, and approval by the school principals. Permission was sought and granted from each of the principals from the two participating schools before teachers and teacher aides were approached. The nature and purpose of the study, including ethical and anonymity issues, were explained to principals, teachers and teacher aides and they were provided with the opportunity to ask questions/raise any concerns they might have with me. Principals, teachers and teacher aides were informed that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or consequence.
Ethical concerns relating to confidentiality and anonymity are important in a study involving audio recording. In this study confidentiality was supported by the use of pseudonyms, de-identifying all names and location details. Participants were free to choose their own pseudonym or I assigned one for them. With participant consent, audio recordings were made of individual interviews and cogen sessions for the purpose of transcribing data verbatim. The digital audio tapes were downloaded to a password protected computer and erased after all data had been transcribed. The transcriptions from the audio recordings will be kept for a period of five years and then destroyed. All hard copies of transcriptions and participant documents were de-identified and kept in a locked cabinet.

3.6 Authenticity of the study

In addition to the ethical concerns, research credibility and authenticity in this qualitative study was addressed in accordance with four criteria outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1989). The first criterion is that research meets ontological authenticity, which “refers to the extent to which individual respondents own emic constructions are improved, matured and expanded, and elaborated, in that they now possess some more information and have become more sophisticated in its uses” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 248). In this study ontological authenticity was demonstrated by participant testimony in relation to how their reflections on collaboration during their cogen sessions expanded their understanding of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams.

The second criterion is that research should have educative authenticity, assisting participants to improve their understanding of others outside their stakeholder group. This research brought together teachers and teacher aides who shared their different viewpoints during cogen — at its core an equitable process designed to provide opportunities for participants with different stocks of knowledge to interact and share experiences and events (Pitts, 2007).

The third criterion is catalytic authenticity. In reference to catalytic authenticity Guba and Lincoln (1989) stated that, “…no fourth generation evaluation is complete without action being prompted on the part of participants” (p. 249). In this study participants jointly reflected on their collaboration, developed their own collaborative outlines, and negotiated action in relation to work related issues during cogen sessions.
The fourth criterion is *tactical authenticity*, which concerns the degree to which participants are empowered to act. The inclusion of cogen in this study provided a forum where each participant was empowered to contribute and, through their contribution, gain a significant role in both the dialogue and outcome process.

### 3.7 Summary and concluding comments

This chapter presented the research methodology considered the most relevant and appropriate approach for this study. The methodology was developed from the perspective of a social constructionist view of bricolage research focused on exploring the complex issue of collaboration as practised in teacher-teacher aide teams. I discussed the influence of my research focus, including my choice of a qualitative collective case study and my choice of activity systems analysis as the analytical framework for this study. In discussing activity systems analysis I identified the step by step process employed in this study to collate, sort, and depict data collected from the various data sources.

The data sources supporting this study were identified as: cogenerative dialoguing (cogen), in-class observations, semi-structured interviews, concept maps/drawings and participant documents. In this study cogen was employed as a tool supporting joint teacher-teacher aide dialogue and reflection on collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. Following the discussion on data sources I identified and discussed ethical considerations in this study concerning confidentiality, anonymity, and the use of audio recording. Finally, the authenticity of this study was discussed in relation to the four criteria outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1989) for qualitative research.

The development of my research methodology was a complex and integrated process, as challenging as it was interesting. As collaboration is a complex issue and there is limited research in relation to this issue in teacher-teacher aide teams I sought a methodology that could capture and illustrate a broad perspective of collaboration in these teams. The data sources were selected to gather both explicit and tacit knowledge in relation to collaboration and support participant beneficence. The inclusion of cogen as a data gathering tool supported a joint perspective of collaboration and participant beneficence. In my role as bricoleur researcher I selected the method of analysis and methods of data collection to suit the research approach I needed for this study into the complex issue of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. The following chapter introduces
the teams and discusses the outlines of collaboration developed by the four teams that completed the study. Key elements to collaboration that participants identified in these outlines are discussed in relation to research and literature on teamworking and collaboration.
Chapter 4

The teams and the four outlines of collaboration

4.1 Overview

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first is this overview. The second section introduces the teams involved in this study providing team profiles including team member background and identification of the teams that completed the study. The third section explores the outlines of collaboration developed by the four teams that completed the study; teams A, B, 5, and 6. This section includes what each outline of collaboration entails, how the teams saw the outline being used and the comments the teams made in relation to how they felt about their outline of collaboration. The final section discusses the ten key elements of collaboration identified by participants in their outlines of collaboration in relation to literature and research on collaboration.

4.2 Team profiles

This study was conducted over eight months from October 2015 to June 2016 with a break over the Christmas school holidays between mid-December 2015 and late January 2016. Eight teams began this study in October, four from each of the two schools. Only two teams, both from Angelwood Primary School, continued into the next year, completing the study in April 2016. Two new teams from Bayshore Special School joined the study in April 2016 and completed the study in late June 2016. The profiles of each of the ten teams participating in this study are listed below under their relevant school. For readers who prefer a table format I have included a simplified version of the profiles in Appendices 3 and 4.

4.2.1 The teams from Angelwood Primary School

Angelwood Primary School is a Queensland State school that caters for approximately 700 students from Prep to Year 6. Four teams from Angelwood Primary School participated in this study. However, only two teams, Team A and Team B completed the study. Team C disbanded at the end of the school year in December 2015 having completed one observation, one interview and one cogen session. Team D left the study in November 2015 due to work commitments. Team D completed one observation and one interview only.
Teams from Angelwood that completed the study

**Team A.** This team consisted of a female teacher, Erica, and a female teacher aide, Kate, working in a Prep class. Erica was an experienced teacher who had been teaching for over thirteen years at this school. She was also the year level co-ordinator for Prep. Erica had a Bachelor of Education and Kate had attained a Certificate III in Education Support. Kate had over three years’ experience as a teacher aide. Erica and Kate had worked together for over two years. Erica and Kate’s participation in this study spanned the end of one school year and the beginning of another. In this time they changed classroom location; working with a new group of Prep students in a different classroom in the Prep area of the school.

**Team B.** This team consisted of a female teacher, Karen, and a female teacher aide, Marie, working in a special needs class. Karen was a Special Education teacher who had been teaching for over three years at this school. She had worked with Marie for those three years. Karen worked as a teacher aide before she became a teacher and had a Bachelor of Education, Special Education (Honours). Marie had over seventeen years’ of experience as a teacher aide and had worked at Angelwood for over eleven years. Marie had a Certificate III in Education Support, a First Aide Certificate and had completed two Auslan short courses. Karen and Marie did not work throughout the day in the same classroom. Both also worked in the classrooms of other teachers. At the time of this study they worked together for one session of approximately half an hour every Wednesday morning and for one session each afternoon (Interview 2 Marie, 25 February 2016). Karen and Marie’s participation in the study spanned the end of one school year and the beginning of another. In this time, they changed classroom location; working with a new group of students in a different classroom in a different part of the school.

**Initial or starting teams from Angelwood that did not complete this study**

**Team C.** This team consisted of a female teacher, Ann, and a female teacher aide, Jay, working in a special needs class. This team was a new team, who had been working together for just over nine months at the time of the study. Ann had worked as a teacher for ten years. This was her first year at Angelwood Primary School. Ann had a Masters of Special Education. Jay had worked as a teacher aide for over fifteen years. Jay had worked at Angelwood Primary School for twenty years, first as a parent helper then as a teacher aide. Jay had a Certificate III in Education
Support and a Diploma of Education Support. Jay began the Certificate III in Education Support when she was a parent helper.

**Team D.** This team consisted of a female teacher, Fran, and a female teacher aide, June, working in an Early Years special needs class. Fran and June worked together for five years prior to starting work at Angelwood Primary School. This was their first year together at this school. Fran had worked as a teacher for just over nineteen years. This was her first year at Angelwood. Fran had a Master’s Degree in Special Education. June had over seven years’ experience as a teacher aide. This was her first year at Angelwood. June did not have any formal qualifications for her work as a teacher aide. However, during the time they had worked together they had developed rapport and had an a good working relationship. Fran stated that they were “great mates”, that she could “always rely on [June]”, and that she would be “lost without her” (comments from Interview 1, November 2015). June commented on how much they respect each other and stated, “We are good friends. I don’t feel like a work colleague. … We are a team. We get along. Everything just works” (Interview 1, 6 November 2015).

### 4.2.2 The teams from Bayshore Special School

Bayshore Special School is a Queensland State school that caters for approximately 250 students. Six teams from this school participated in this study. Four teams began the study in October 2015 (Teams 1-4) but were unable to continue participating in the study in the new school year due to the break-up of each team. Some team members left the school, others continued to work at the school but were teamed with different teacher aides/teachers. Two members of these teams – a teacher from Team 4 (Jessica) and a teacher aide from Team 2 (Alaric) – along with their new team members, Alexa (teacher aide) and Alese (teacher) respectively, agreed to participate in the study in 2016. These two teams, designated Team 5 and Team 6 completed the study in June 2016.

*Initial or starting teams from Bayshore that did not complete this study*

**Team 1.** This team consisted of a male teacher, Uwh, and a male teacher aide, Bailey, working in a Senior Secondary class. At the time of this study Uwh and Bailey had been working together for almost two years. Uwh had worked as a teacher for over twenty-one years. This was his sixth year at Bayshore Special School. Uwh was from New Zealand and had a Diploma in
Teaching. Bailey had over two years’ experience as a teacher aide, both of those years at Bayshore. Bailey had a Diploma in Management and a Certificate IV in Disability Studies. Bailey had Workplace Health and Safety certificates and was in his fourth year at university studying a Bachelor of Education in Primary, Special Education.

Team 2. This team consisted of a male teacher, Harry and a male teacher aide, Alaric, working in a Junior Secondary class. Harry had worked as a teacher for just over three years. This was his second year at Bayshore Special School. Harry had a Masters in Teaching (Secondary). Harry was a Zimbabwean and has worked in a Pupil Referral Unit in England. Harry and Alaric were a new team having not worked together previously. At the time of this study these team members had been working together for approximately eight months. Alaric participated in two teams in this study. After Team 2 broke up at the end of 2015, Alaric re-joined the study in April 2016 as a member of Team 6. At the time of his participation in Team 2 Alaric had over ten years’ experience as a teacher aide. Alaric had worked at this school as a volunteer for five years before he became a teacher aide. Alaric had a Certificate III Disability Support and a Statement of Achievement in Cooking as well as a First Aid Certificate.

Team 3. This team consisted of two teachers, a female teacher, Aubry and a male teacher, Cos, and two female teacher aides, Lisandra and Saige working in a Primary Years class. Aubry had worked as a teacher for almost seven years, three and a half of those years at Bayshore Special School. Aubry worked as a volunteer teacher aide before she became a teacher. Aubry had three masters degrees, a Masters in Special Education, a Masters in Guidance and Counselling and a Masters in Leadership Management (leading and managing in educational organisations). Aubry was from Northern Ireland. Due to work commitments Aubry was only able to attend one cogen session.

Cos had worked as a teacher for six years. This was his second year at Bayshore Special School. Cos had a Masters in Environmental Science, Environmental Change Management, and a Graduate Diploma in Educational Studies with a concentration in Educational Leadership. Cos was from the USA. He described himself as an American. Cos had worked in Denmark and in the USA. Due to work commitments Cos only attended three of the four cogen sessions in which this team participated.
Lisandra had worked as a teacher aide at Bayshore Special School for six years. Lisandra had a Certificate III in Family Services and a First Aid Certificate. Before working as a teacher aide Lisandra was a childcare assistant for twenty-seven years. Lisandra had also worked as a group leader in childcare while studying to be a group leader but did not complete her group leader studies, deciding she did not wish to be a group leader in the area of childcare.

Saige had worked as a teacher aide for just over one year. She had worked at Bayshore Special School for only seven months. Saige was an enrolled nurse. She had a Diploma in Child Care, a Certificate IV in Work Health and Safety and a Certificate III in Aged Care and Disabilities. At the time of this study Saige was in her first year of a Bachelor of Education degree with a major in Special Education.

**Team 4.** This team consisted of a female teacher, Jessica and a male teacher aide, Darwin, working in an Early Years class. Jessica participated in two teams in this study, Team 4 and after Team 4 broke up at the end of 2015, Jessica re-joined the study in April 2016 as a member of Team 5. At the time of her participation in Team 4 Jessica had been working as a teacher for only one year. This was her first year at Bayshore Special School. Jessica and Darwin had been working together for eight months when they began their participation in this study. Jessica has a Bachelor of Education, Special Education. Darwin had seven years’ experience as a teacher aide, all at Bayshore. Darwin had certificates in first aide, tube feeding and epilepsy/seizure management and Smart Pups training so that he could work with a student with visual impairment. Darwin had also nearly completed a Certificate IV in Youth Work and Community Services.

**Teams from Bayshore that completed the study**

**Team 5.** This team consisted of a female teacher, Jessica, and a female teacher aide, Alexa, working in an Early Years class. This team was a new team, who had worked together for just over two months at the time of their participation in this study. Jessica had worked as a teacher for just over one year. This was her second year at Bayshore Special School. Jessica worked in childcare as a childcare assistant before she became a teacher. Jessica has a Certificate III in Childcare (Children’s Service), a Certificate III in Education Support and a Bachelor of Education, Special Education. Jessica was part of the earlier team participation in this study as a member of Team 4.
Alexa was older than Jessica and had over 20 years’ experience as a teacher aide. This was her third year at Bayshore Special School. Alexa had a Certificate III in Disability – Teacher’s support in Disability and had completed “management type structured courses on communication. Communication skills as a team effort” (Interview 1, 11 April 2016) and certificates in communicating with children, “Different skills with children” (Interview 1, 11 April 2016). Alexa had also worked in the USA as a paraeducator for six years, supporting students with special needs in that country.

Team 6. This team consisted of a female teacher, Alese, and a male teacher aide, Alaric, working in a Senior Secondary class. This team was a new team, who had been working together for just over two months at the time of the study. Alese had worked as a teacher for just over seven years. This was her third year at Bayshore Special School. Alese had a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Education. Alaric had over ten years’ experience as a teacher aide. He worked at this school as a volunteer for five years before he became a teacher aide. This was his eleventh year as a teacher aide at Bayshore Special School. Alaric worked with Alese for four days a week, working one day a week with an alternative teacher. Alaric had a Certificate III Disability Support and a Statement of Achievement in Cooking, as well as a First Aid Certificate. Alaric was part of the earlier team participation in this study as a member of Team 2.

The following section contains the outlines of collaboration developed by the four teams that completed the study (Teams A and B from Angelwood and Teams 5 and 6 from Bayshore). In chapters 5 and 6 I include and discuss the data from all teams. In my role as researcher as bricoleur (Lévi-Strauss, 1966) I chose to include data from teams that did not complete the study on the principle that the raw material, the elements collected from these teams, will enrich the stock of the data from the four teams that completed the study.

4.3 Team developed outlines of collaboration

The following are four, joint team-member-developed, outlines of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. These outlines were produced by the four teams that completed the study. These outlines were developed during team member cogen sessions. This activity was introduced during their cogen sessions as a way to support and encourage team member dialogue around collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. Team members first discussed what an outline of collaboration might involve then they jointly constructed their own outline of collaboration for
teacher-teacher aide teams. These outlines represent each teams’ idealised version of collaboration – how they saw collaboration should be between teachers and teacher aides. Each outline is represented below under the team title and includes pictures of the finished outline, as well as team member comments on the development and completed outline. A summary of these outlines is discussed in the following section (Key elements of collaboration) in relation to research and literature on teacher-teacher aide teamworking and collaboration.

4.3.1 Erica and Kate’s Building Blocks of Collaboration

Erica (teacher) and Kate (teacher aide) (Team A) began developing their outline of collaboration during Cogen 6. They were encouraged to be creative and use the dialogic space of cogen to aid them in developing their approach to teacher-teacher aide collaboration. Erica and Kate chose to represent the process of collaboration as a series of building blocks (Figure 4.1). Each block had one face on which was written a highlighted word or phrase that represented the headings or covering idea for that box.

Initially, Erica and Kate had different ideas on how the structure or layout of the boxes should be interpreted. Kate advocated that the boxes should be understood “from left to right but cogen is in the middle being part of all of them” (Cogen 7, 21 March 2016). Erica saw the boxes as forming a circle explaining, “I am seeing it as, this is in the centre and all of these need cogen to be able to work” (Cogen 7, 21 March 2016). However, during the dialogue around the development of the elements of collaboration in their outline Erica and Kate came to understand collaboration as a cyclic process. They spoke of the need to revisit elements within the outline, for example, reflection and discussion/problem-solving in cogens. Both Erica and Kate agreed that building a collaborative team needed to begin with building team structure and learning teamwork skills, and that all collaborative teacher-teacher aide team relationships need to have time set aside for reflection.
Erica and Kate placed three blocks on the bottom level of their block tower. The highlighted phrases on these blocks when read, from left to right are; Building Team Structure, Learning Teamwork Skills and Coordinating Action. On the middle level of boxes the highlighted headings are Enacting Collaboratively and Problem-solving. On the top level the final box has the title Reflection. In Figure 4.1 the boxes are positioned to show highlighted and non-highlighted box sides. Table 4.1 identifies the location of the boxes and the words/phrases written on each box in relation to Figure 4.1.
Table 4.1 Box location and words/phrases on each box

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Box</th>
<th>Stage of collaboration represented</th>
<th>Box number</th>
<th>Highlighted heading on box</th>
<th>Words or phrases on the other sides of the box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bottom level</td>
<td>Initial/ developing stages of collaboration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Building Team Structure</td>
<td>Create and protect time to talk, define team purpose, focus and develop shared values and ground rules, define team roles and responsibilities, create space for notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Learning Teamwork Skills – Team effectively on the fly</td>
<td>Make decisions by consensus, listen and interact well, reflect on team process, respect others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Coordinating Action</td>
<td>Coordinate with other team members, organise any paperwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle level</td>
<td>Middle or main stage of collaboration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Enacting Collaboratively</td>
<td>Plan with/between members, evaluate outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Problem-solving and Action Planning</td>
<td>Present all sides, use cogen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top level</td>
<td>Final stage of collaboration</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Boxes have been numbered for ease of understanding from bottom row to top row and left to right in this table. They correspond with the boxes pictured in Figure 4.1.

**Box 1 – Building Team Structure.** In this initial stage of collaboration Erica and Kate pointed out that team members need to: create and protect time to talk; define team purpose; focus and develop shared values and ground rules; define team roles and responsibilities; and create space for notes. I asked Erica and Kate how they might use these boxes with a new team. Erica responded:

I would be talking about building team structure to them and defining what the purpose and everything is of what we are doing. [Kate: Yes]. You know, why do we need to have a team? Why do we need to have a teacher and why does she need to have a teacher aide? And working out what the roles and responsibilities are
[Kate: Yes] and creating a space like we have got [Kate: Yes] where they can work. I think that we really need to build the team structure because if you don’t have the team structure done then how do you know who you are working with? [Kate: Yes] That, to me, would be something that we would need. And I guess, for me, I would be talking about what sort of skills you need to know. [Kate: Yes] I wouldn’t reflect yet. I’d do reflection last. [Kate: Yes] Because you have to reflect on everything that you have to do, go back, go back around. [Kate: Yes] (Cogen 7, 21 March 2016)

Erica’s comment above about creating space “like we have got” illustrates how this team incorporated aspects of their own teamworking within their outline of idealised collaboration between teachers and teacher aides.

**Box 2 – Learning Teamwork Skills – Team effectively on the fly.** At this stage of collaboration the team members make decisions by consensus, listen and interact well, reflect on team process, and respect others. Erica also identified a need for honesty between team members stating, “I think you need to have honesty because you can’t just say, yes, okay but you don’t really agree with it” (Cogen 6, 14 March 2016). In relation to ‘respect others’ both Erica and Kate agreed that respecting others also includes respecting their beliefs (Cogen 6, 14 March 2016).

**Box 3 – Coordinating Action.** Erica and Kate both agreed that, as part of coordinating action, team members need to coordinate with the other team member/s and organise any paperwork.

**Box 4 – Enacting Collaboratively.** For Erica and Kate enacting collaboratively involves creating a plan with/between members and evaluating the outcomes of the plan.

**Box 5 – Problem-solving and Action Planning.** For Erica and Kate problem-solving and action planning involves presenting all sides and using cogen. Respect also played a part in cogen with Erica explaining, “… in cogen we want it to all work so if you don’t have respect for each other it is not going to be very successful” (Cogen 6, 14 March 2016). Kate commented, “I was just thinking, our rules for cogen mean the same as having respect for the other person” (Cogen 6, 14 March 2016). Erica saw cogen as sitting in the centre of the building bock tower. She explained:
I know that we are talking about using cogen when there is a problem – to solve the problem. But part of cogen is building these teams and building these skills up so that you are able to feel comfortable to do cogen [Kate: Yes] because if you are not feeling comfortable you are not going to do it no matter what. That is why I think cogen should have its own little box, (Laughter) and maybe we can make … have you got a ball? Because it could be in the middle!

(Cogen 7, 21 March 2016)

**Box 6 – Reflection.** In this final level of their collaboration outline Erica and Kate had only one word, *discussion*, under the heading reflection. However, Erica acknowledged that there was more to reflecting, commenting that “Know and trust each other is part of reflecting” as well as “Communicate accurately and being sensitive to a person” (Cogen 6, 14 March 2016).

### 4.3.2 Karen and Marie’s Ladder of Collaboration

Karen (teacher) and Marie (teacher aide) (Team B) began their outline of collaboration in Cogen 6. Karen and Marie were encouraged to be creative and use the dialogic space of cogen to aid them in developing their approach to teacher-teacher aide collaboration. Karen and Marie chose to represent the process of collaboration in a teacher-teacher aide team as steps on a ladder (Figure 4.2).
Figure 4.2 Karen and Marie’s Ladder of Collaboration

Improving Communication & Handling Conflict
- Speak from personal experience
- Respect each other's expertise
- Constructively consider the human side of the issue
- Communicate positively & honestly
- Clarify, summarize, & check understanding
- Take turns, balance
- Encourage each other
- Review common understandings
- Clarify points together

Teaching Collaboratively
- Follow action plan
- Have company - team on the fly
- Mini-reflections

Coordinating Team Action:
- Keep shifting tone
- Empower participants
- Collaborate with other team members

Problem Solving and Action Planning
- Cognitive Dialoguing
- Involve all team members
- Reflect on team process

Learning Teamwork Skills:
- Dialogic Listening
- Define Team Roles and responsibilities
- Encouraging networking - make decisions by consensus
- Team effectively "on the fly"

Building Team Structure:
- Know and trust each other by playing quick "get to know each other" or "icebreaker" games
- Have a cup of coffee
- Develop/define rules - open rules
- Create & protect team time & space
The following is a description of Karen and Marie’s Ladder of Collaboration, beginning with the first step in the ladder, with participant comments relating to aspects of their outline of collaboration.

The title this team gave to the first step in their collaborative outline is Build Team Structure. Building team structure for this team involves:

- Know and trust each other by playing quick “get to know each other” or ‘icebreaker” games
- Have a cup of coffee
- Develop/define rules – cogen rules
- Create and protect team time and space

Reviewing their Ladder of Collaboration during their last cogen Karen declared that the first step to collaborating in teacher-teacher aide teams is “getting to know each other. Maybe have a cup of coffee then develop and define rules. Create and protect team time and space. Develop communication strategies” (Cogen 7, 22 March 2016). Marie agreed, explaining that she felt “it is pretty important to make it [their initial meeting] informal” (Cogen 7, 22 March 2016). Commenting on protecting team time and space Karen stated that space is their classroom and that, protecting team space is important because, “the way we are operating at the moment; we don’t have our time together as much as we would like” (Cogen 6, 16 March 2016). Marie concurred commenting, “Yeah. I agree with that because it’s trying to convince the other teachers that we need our time here with the children. Our time, our space. Yes, I agree that would be our classroom” (Cogen 6, 16 March 2016).

The title given to the second step is Learning Teamwork Skills. This involves:

- Dialogic listening
- Define team roles and responsibilities
- Encouraging nexting, making decisions by consensus
- Team effectively on the fly

Dialogic listening was a communication strategy employed in team cogen sessions. See Chapter 6 for more information on dialogic listening.
Commenting on *Team Effectively on the Fly* both Karen and Marie acknowledged that it was a skill that teachers and teacher aides need to learn and that it has taken them a long time to be able to team on the fly with Karen stating, “We are pretty good at it now!” (Cogen 6, 16 March 2016).

The third step on their ladder of collaboration is entitled, *Problem-solving and Action Planning*. This step involves:

- Cogenerative dialoguing – problem-solving approach, solve issues, review and revise team action plan
- Involve all team members
- Reflect on team process

Both Karen and Marie declared that reflection was important with Karen commenting, “And we do reflect all the time” (Cogen 6, 16 March 2016). On this section of their ladder the team members drew a circle off to the side. Written in the circle is the word cogen. The circle is made up of three arrows. This represents the cyclic nature of cogen where a problem is presented, discussed, reviewed, and revised, “and then reflect on team process which is probably the whole thing again” (Karen’s comment Cogen 6, 16 March 2016).

The fourth step in the Ladder of Collaboration is entitled *Coordinating Team Action*. This step involves:

- Record/note take
- Organise resources
- Coordination with other team members

The team members identified note taking as a way of recording their decisions and responsibilities (Cogen 6). Once a record has been made team members need to arrange, “Organise resources and then coordinate with other team members” (Karen’s comment Cogen 6, 16 March 2016).
The fifth step on their ladder of collaboration is entitled *Teaching Collaboratively*. This step involves:

- Follow action plan
- Have contingency – team on the fly
- Mini-reflection

Marie was, at first, reluctant to include teaching collaboratively stating, “I feel it would take something away from you, like you do the majority of the work. You are the teacher …It feels like if I say that I am taking credit for a lot of what you do” (Cogen 6, 16 March 2016). However, Karen persuaded her to accept the title of teaching collaboratively. She reminded Marie of their equal partnership, of Marie’s contribution and “fabulous ideas” arguing, “It was an equal thing. You came up with a lot of ideas so, to me, that was a collaboration. If it was cooperation it would have been me going, okay we are going to do this and this and this and this and you would go, Okay” (Cogen 6, 16 March 2016).

The final step on their Ladder of Collaboration is entitled *Improving Communication and Handling Conflict*. This step involves:

- Know that communication is equitable;
- Respect each other’s opinions;
- Communicate accurately and honestly 100 percent of the time;
- Communicate optimistically and realistically;
- Reflect, reflect, reflect;
- Resolve conflicts constructively; and
- Celebrate success together.

Both team members identified respect as a key component of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams (Cogen 7, 22 March 2016). Karen commented that practice is an important component of collaborating, practising problem-solving and practising reflection (Cogen 7, 22 March 2016). Marie was the last to comment on their Ladder of Collaboration stating that she thought it was “Good advice to a new team” (Cogen 7, 22 March 2016).
4.3.3 Jessica and Alexa’s Tree of Collaboration

Jessica (teacher) and Alexa (teacher aide) (Team 5) began their outline of collaboration in Cogen 4. As with the other teams they were encouraged to be creative and use the dialogic space of cogen to aid them in developing their approach to teacher-teacher aide collaboration. Jessica and Alexa chose to represent the process of collaboration as a tree growing out of the seed of being open to collaboration (Figure 4.3). Branches, vines, leaves and flowers identified different aspects of collaboration for this team.
Figure 4.3 Jessica and Alexa’s Tree of Collaboration
To assist with readability of the drawing of The Tree of Collaboration the tree is represented in stylised form in Figure 4.4.

**Figure 4.4 Stylised version of The Tree of Collaboration**

Jessica began the outline of collaboration with her seed of collaboration stating, “I think before you can even do it you need to be open to it. Because if you are not open to collaboration then you may as well not do it at all” (Cogen 4, 20 May 2016). Jessica continued, “Then, if you are open to it, then you start building. So, if I do the opening do you want to start?” Alexa agreed and came up with the idea of the tree growing out of the seed and they both built on the idea as illustrated by the following excerpt from Cogen 4 (20 May 2016):
Alexa: We could have it, if you wanted to, like that shape you are doing and have a stump and you could make it like a tree blossoming for the steps.

Jessica: I like that idea.

Alexa: Like a trunk and have these as our stepping stones but it is blooming to the top. Open and expanding and growing. (Laughter)

Jessica: That one is like the seed cracking open. (Laughter) Because without it being open the tree won’t come out.

Alexa: I love it!

Jessica suggested putting the term Building team structure on the trunk of the tree saying that this is realistic “Because you get bumps along the road” (Cogen 4, 20 May 2016). Alexa introduced the idea of the circle of skills and Jessica built on that idea, linking the circle to a collaborative approach to skill development as can be seen from the following excerpt from Cogen 4 (20 May 2016):

Jessica: And then we have skill development with communication, team something or other, whatever you think.

Alexa: And you could make it go like that (indicating a circle)

Jessica: Yeah

Alexa: Communication could be like a circle coming together (Laughter)

Jessica: Yes! Beautiful! (Laughter) No pressure, no pressure!

Pause and cutting sounds

Jessica: So, I was thinking, maybe skill development then all the skills we need to be collaborative in each so communication would go in one.

Alexa: Oh, that’s a lovely idea! Yes.

Jessica: So, what else?

Alexa: Listening, communication.

As there was not enough time during Cogen 4 or Cogen 5 to complete their Tree of Collaboration, Jessica and Alexa completed their Tree of Collaboration during Cogen 6. It was during this cogen session that Alexa came up with the idea of a vine to connect the elements of their cogen session as noted in the following excerpt from Cogen 6 (3 June 2016):
Jessica: Get creative!
Alexa: Let’s do a vine then. (*Laughter*) So, it all links up. Look it is going to be fine.
(*Alexa drawing*)
Jessica: It’s beautiful.
Alexa: (*drawing*) It’s very, very artistic I know.
Jessica: Mm-hm. (*Laughter*)
Alexa: These leaves follow the way. (*Laughter*)

Jessica explained the circular nature of the vine around cogen stating that it was circular:

> because if the action plan doesn’t work then we reflect on it and it goes back to the problem again. Then we have another cogen session and then we have another action plan and then reflect on it and then we come back and hopefully there is no problem.

(*Cogen 6, 3 June 2016*).

The pinnacle of their outline of collaboration between teachers and teacher aides appeared as the three large leaves designated, *Achieve shared outcomes, Team synergy, Celebrate success and Reflect*. Both Jessica and Alexa were happy with their Tree of Collaboration with Alexa stating, “I love it! It is not the most artistic tree but I think it does what it needs to do” (*Cogen 6, 3 June 2016*). Jessica agreed that it was a work of art and suggested that each team in the whole school should make their own outline of collaboration “Because this would look different for each team” (*Cogen 6, 3 June 2016*). Commenting on the finished Tree of Collaboration, Jessica declared:

> It is a really nice visualisation. Yes. It is really lovely. It would be nice, in each team, to have one of these up on the wall. So, it even creates that conversation with students who are at that higher level of understanding. Because it shows that there are a lot of steps and a lot of processes involved in collaboration. It is not an easy thing at all.

(*Interview 3, 3 June 2016*)
4.3.4 Alese and Alaric’s Jewel of Collaborative Wisdom

Alese (teacher) and Alaric (teacher aide) (Team 6) began their outline of collaboration in Cogen 4. As with the other teams, Alese and Alaric were encouraged to be creative and use the dialogic space of cogen to aid them in developing their approach to teacher-teacher aide collaboration. In developing their outline of collaboration Alese and Alaric represented the process of collaboration as a necklace with the two ends representing the teacher and the teacher aide as “two individuals coming together to form a partnership” (Alaric’s comment Cogen 6, 10 June 2016) (Figure 4.5). Alese came up with the title for their necklace – the Jewel of Collaborative Wisdom – reflecting the unity created by a necklace and the wisdom of the jewels within the necklace.

Referring to the necklace Alaric explained, “I reckon that collaboration is a continuous circle. You start at a point where you come in as individuals and you finish that as a team” (Cogen 6, 10 June 2016). Alaric identified the circular aspect of their outline of collaboration as being important to their team because the problems they face in regard to the students they work with demand they constantly re-evaluate their plans, as noted in the following comment by Alaric:

That is something that we have to keep re-evaluating and changing our strategies a lot with. And that is why, in the circle we discussed earlier [reference to the team’s outline of collaboration – Jewel of Collaborative Wisdom], re-evaluating is a big part of working with these students.

(Interview 3, 10 June 2016)
Figure 4.5 Alese and Alaric’s Jewel of Collaborative Wisdom
In Table 4.2 each segment of the necklace is identified along with its corresponding step in the circle of collaboration developed by Alese and Alaric. In the paragraphs following the table each section of the necklace is outlined and explained with supporting comments by Alese and Alaric.

### Table 4.2 Sections of the necklace and their corresponding steps in the collaborative process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section of the necklace and section title</th>
<th>Corresponding step in the circle of collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clasp</td>
<td>Step 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewel 1 (beginning on the left hand side)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create space to come together and create purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jewel 2 - Joint problem-solving, cogen</td>
<td>Step 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewel 3 - Determine a leader</td>
<td>Step 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jewel 4 - Developing an action plan –</td>
<td>Step 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>who does what</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jewel 5 - Implementing plan together</td>
<td>Step 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewel 6 - Revise and evaluate action plan</td>
<td>Step 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewel 7 - Review and celebrate success</td>
<td>Step 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This step joins with Step 1 to begin the cycle over again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The clasp.** The necklace clasp is the first step in this circle of collaboration. The clasp represents the two individuals coming together, both willing and open minded. Alese explained that having an open mind was important because, “If you were to go in with judgement, preconceived judgement, then you are putting yourself behind the eight ball” (Cogen 4, 17 May 2016). Alaric agreed, stating that you need to go into a relationship “with an open mind and no preconceived ideas… It is not good going into a partnership with a closed mind” (Cogen 4, 17 May 2016).

**The first jewel** (beginning on the left hand side of the necklace and continuing around). The first jewel is the second step in their necklace of collaboration. Each of the following steps in this necklace of collaboration is represented by a jewel. The first jewel contains the words, *Create space to come together and create purpose.*

In relation to the first jewel Alese and Alaric spoke of creating purpose as being about having goals. Alese declared that reaching a goal meant you had “to have a team of players with an
open heart and an open mind” (Cogen 4, 17 May 2016). Alaric added to this, arguing that, in order to develop the team’s goals, you “first need a discussion to see what both parties want” (Cogen 4). Alese agreed stating, “I like to know what the purpose is before I start because I like to know why I am doing what I am doing” (Cogen 4, 17 May 2016). During their discussion on goals Alese and Alaric identified two different types of goals. Referring to the first type of goal, Alese said this was about creating team expectations. Alaric agreed with the idea of expectations, stating, “That, to me, brings it together. So, when you are defining the goals you are defining the expectations” (Cogen 4, 17 May 2016). Alaric provided an example of this type of goal as a teacher and teacher aide being on the same page. Alaric identified the second type of goal as the team goal. Alaric provided the example of this type of goal as being about setting out their expectations for behaviour management for a particular student they know will be in their class.

The second jewel. The third step in this circle of collaboration is entitled, Joint problem-solving, cogen. Alaric argued that there needed to be a problem-solving approach that involves both teacher and aide, “A joint problem-solving approach” (Cogen 4, 17 May 2016) and that if a team faced a problem they could employ cogen. Alese agreed and put forward the idea that cogen suited problem-solving, commenting, “I was just thinking. What problem could arise in the cogen communication? But the way it is set out, it can’t … [because] it is very levelling isn’t it” (Cogen 4, 17 May 2016)? See Chapter 6 for a discussion on equity in cogen and team member comments on cogen and their team.

The third jewel. This team identified the fourth step in their necklace of collaboration as, Determine a leader. Alese and Alaric discussed this step in Cogen 6 (10 June 2016). Alaric identified this step as, “elect[ing] a leader for a specific goal or task” explaining that a leader could be the teacher or the aide depending on their role within the given goal or task. Alese agreed. Alese also argued that this step and the following step, Developing an action plan, who does what, were closely linked and that the selection of a task leader needs to occur “after the discussion”.

The fourth jewel. This fifth step of their necklace of collaboration is entitled, Developing an action plan – who does what. Alese explained that this step is closely connected to the fourth step (above) and that it involves deciding “who is going to look after that particular issue or project” (Cogen 6, 10 June 2016).
The fifth jewel. The sixth step is entitled, Implementing plan together. Both Alese and Alaric identified implementing the jointly determined action plan together as the next step in their necklace of collaboration with Alese adding, “And then we celebrate, or re-evaluate!” (Cogen 6, 10 June 2016).

The sixth jewel. The seventh step is entitled, Revise and evaluate action plan. Alese spoke of this step being an important step, especially when teachers and teacher aides need to engage in, “planning on the fly” (Cogen 4, 17 May 2016) as this provided an interim measure, permitting a small circling back within the necklace to support the teams as they were working. Alese commented that this was an important step, “because I just think, normally it doesn’t work. Then we have to come up with something!” (Cogen 6, 10 June 2016). Alaric agreed.

The seventh jewel. The eighth and final step in their necklace of collaboration is entitled, Review and celebrate success. Take note of what was unsuccessful. Alese pointed out that she felt it was important for teams to celebrate success, noting that she and Alaric do, sometimes, celebrate success, “Even if it is just that we both acknowledge that it worked and we are feeling good about it” (Cogen 4, 17 May 2016). Alaric agreed that it was important to celebrate success because, “Sometimes you need that bit after you have gone through all the hard stuff” (Cogen 4, 17 May 2016). Alese commented, “Yeah, you do. Because there is a lot of negativity and struggle and you have to be mindful of the good stuff, too” (Cogen 4, 17 May 2016).

4.4 Key elements of collaboration

In their jointly developed outlines team members explored what they understood about collaboration and represented these understandings in relation to collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. In dialogue around developing these outlines team members in each of the teams spoke of what they liked about their working relationship, including elements of their own working relationship in their outlines. Each of the four teams that completed an outline of collaboration were provided with the opportunity to member check their outline and their statements in October and early November 2016. No team member added or changed elements of their collaborative outline. Team members indicated that they were satisfied that the statements provided captured their understandings/explanations in relation to these outlines and their participation in the study.
Key elements of collaboration common to each of the outlines of collaboration are:

- collaboration needs to be entered into voluntarily and with an open mind;
- team members need time to get to know and trust each other;
- teams need to set aside/have time and space to meet and talk/plan;
- team members need to resolve conflict constructively and respect each other’s opinions;
- collaboration is supported by learning communication and teamwork skills;
- cogen supports equitable communication and problem-solving;
- teams need to make decisions by consensus;
- teams need to create action plans, co-ordinate with other team members and follow through on their allocated action plan task and revise plans as necessary;
- team members need to reflect together; and
- team members need to celebrate success together.

With the exception of the inclusion of cogen these ten key elements are similar to those identified as important for collaboration in literature related to teacher and school teams (e.g., Cramer, 2006; Friend & Cook, 2017; Macdonald, 2013; Murawski, 2010). Cogen is not mentioned as a communication or problem-solving process in this literature, however, a problem-solving process is identified as part of teamworking. According to Friend and Cook (2017), systematically and effectively employing a problem-solving process is central to collaboration (p. 105). For these teams, at the time of their participation in this research, cogen supported team problem-solving.

4.4.1 Waves of collaboration

From the perspective of the outlines of collaboration developed by these teams, collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams initially appears a stable, linear process beginning with being open to collaboration and ending with a celebration of success. However, a closer inspection of each team’s outline of collaboration contains aspects that circle back on each other indicating a fluid/dynamic aspect to collaboration within a teacher-teacher aide team. Team 6 illustrated this clearly depicting collaboration as a circle in their necklace entitled, Jewel of Collaborative Wisdom. I have represented the cyclic nature of the aspects of collaboration and collaboration itself as identified by the participants as waves on a beach (Figure 4.6). In this depiction of collaboration, engagement with the ten key elements of collaboration is, like the action of the waves on a beach, a
fluid dynamic process. Engagement with the elements involves moving forward and circling back, always in motion.

**Figure 4.6 The Waves of Collaboration**

In literature, collaboration has been referred to as a continuum (e.g., Dickinson, 2006; Emmens, 2016; Powell, 2013; Thomas, 1972). These continuums often start with cooperation and move forward to *true* collaboration with various discrete steps in between, such as coordination or mutual commitment, mutual responsibility. In their book *Transforming Schools: Creativity, Critical Reflection, Communication, Collaboration*, Jefferson and Anderson (2017) claimed that true collaboration is “the beneficial mutuality of a shared vision, and the engine for creativity and emergence” (p. 129). As the outlines of collaboration demonstrate mutual commitment and responsibility for the teams began with team members being open to collaboration. It was not necessarily something that team members set out to achieve, rather, it was something that was integrated into their work process; something that was necessary for collaboration to succeed.

Echoing Emmens (2016) idea of teaming – “teamwork on the fly” (p. 13) – participants in this current study indicated that collaboration is highly relational, and complex, and individuals need to consciously choose to collaborate if collaboration is to take place. It is worth noting here that, in their daily work, not all activities teachers and teacher aides participate in involve collaboration. For example, when team members are engaged in supporting a designated student activity the teacher may provide the aide with a plan for an activity and the aide my cooperate by setting up the activity for the student. Collaboration may have occurred earlier in work around
creating and supporting the plan and determining how the activity is to be set up. What the Waves of Collaboration represent is the team members coming together to collaborate on a particular activity; collaboration forming and reforming as the need or task arises. This is in keeping with Schrage’s (1995) comments that “Collaboration is a *purposive* relationship” [emphasis in original] (p. 29) and “Collaboration is a state of grace we switch into and out of as the moment and the task demand” (p. 33).

Trust and respect were identified as important elements of collaboration by teams in this study and in literature related to collaboration in teams. For teams in this study, trust and respect were earned over time. Therefore, I have placed trust and respect under the waves, repeated several times to indicate their occurrence over time. I placed them between the start and end of the collaboration indicating trust and respect building during the collaborative period. In their outlines of collaboration participants indicated that the building of trust and respect, indeed collaborating together, supported further collaboration. Team 5’s Tree of Collaboration is a good example of this. The idea that collaboration in these teams elicits further collaboration is supported by Schrage’s (1995) statement that, “Collaboration sometimes changes people in ways that make continued collaboration possible” (p. 165).

**4.4.2 The activity of collaboration**

Like the team members in this study, Schrage (1995) identified collaboration as dynamic and fluid. According to Schrage, “People and their collaborations are not static, inflexible machines – they are dynamic relationships that respond to changes in both environment and expectation” (p. 165). Changes can also occur because of tensions or contradictions within the activity of collaboration. Placing the team members’ key elements of collaboration in an activity system provides a different perspective on the activity of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams; one where tensions in the elements of the activity disrupt the flow of collaboration in the teams. In the activity system in Figure 4.7 I have illustrated the tensions/contradictions that could occur when the objective is for team members to collaborate on a project to support student learning.
Figure 4.7 Activity system of collaboration on a project in teacher-teacher aide teams

Note: Tensions are indicated by dotted lines

The key elements of collaboration identified in participant outlines of collaboration form part of the activity of collaboration in relation to the activity system components of rules, tools and division of labour. Tensions within these components are revealed when the elements of collaboration are considered in relation to findings from the literature review.

Rules. A literature review revealed that a lack of training for teachers around working with another adult in the classroom can lead to teacher stress and problems creating and maintaining the team (e.g., Thomas, 1991, 1992). It was also revealed that a lack of role clarity for teacher aides could lead to tension and stress, reducing the likelihood of effective collaboration (e.g., Morgan & Ashbaker, 2009; Thomas, 1991). Effective collaboration in the teams in the current study was also found to be related to the team members’ ability to “respect and trust each other’s knowledge, competence and experience” (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010, p. 91). These aspects of teamworking indicate the likelihood of tension in every aspect of the rules between what team members feel they should do, are capable of, and what happens in the classroom. This in turn creates tension between
the ability of the participants to engage with the tools of collaboration and to take on the roles needed to support collaboration. Tensions inhibiting participant engagement with the rules in turn inhibits the object of the activity – in this example activity, team member collaboration on a project to support student learning.

**Tools.** The literature review revealed that teachers and teacher aides have little or no time to meet, plan, reflect and provide feedback (e.g., Blatchford et al., 2004). Also, while team members may believe they have the necessary communication and teamwork skills for collaboration, they are often unable to articulate or demonstrate those skills (Friend, 2000; Lacey, 2001). Having the right tools to engage in the activity of collaboration is essential (Schrage, 1995). As Schrage (1995) bluntly puts it, “You don’t cut your steak with scissors. Tools must fit the task” (p. 59). Limited time to meet and the possibility that team members cannot demonstrate the necessary skills for collaboration reveal tensions within this component of the activity system in relation to the likelihood of the team members’ ability to engage in collaboration. Lacking the necessary tools, team members, arguably, cannot adhere to the rules of collaboration nor can they adequately support the roles necessary for their collaboration or, indeed, collaborate effectively on their project to support student learning.

**Division of labour.** The limited amount of time to meet, plan and reflect, as well as the challenges related to roles for both teachers and teacher aides revealed in the literature review indicate the prospect of tensions within the division of labour in relation to collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. As with the tensions related to rules and tools in collaboration, tensions within the division of labour component of the activity are likely to negatively impact the activity of collaboration between team members.

**Community.** Social hierarchical structures within schools and systems that do not support collaboration (e.g., lack of support for resolution of interpersonal differences) have been found to inhibit collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams (e.g., Rueda & Monzó, 2002). Such structures and systems within schools contribute to the tensions in each component of the activity of collaboration and can negatively impact on the ability of team members to achieve the object of their collaboration.

In Figure 4.7 I have not depicted tension between the team members and the object of the activity (collaboration on a project) because, as the outlines of collaboration indicate, team
members were open to collaboration and viewed themselves as teams working together with the mutual goals of supporting student learning. However, as the activity system clearly illustrates, being open to collaboration, wanting to collaborate, while an important component to the activity of collaboration, is not enough to ensure collaboration takes place.

The ten key elements of collaboration, when viewed through the lens of activity theory, reveal teachers and teacher aides face many obstacles to achieving collaboration. The outlines of collaboration developed by the team members in this study were their idea of what collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams should look like. What then is the reality of collaboration in these teams? What does collaboration really look like for them? – How do these team members collaborate given the many challenges to collaboration?

4.5 Summary and concluding comments

In this chapter I have presented a profile of the teams participating in this study and the outlines of collaboration developed by the four teams that completed the study. In these jointly developed outlines team members explored their understandings of what collaboration should be like and represented these understandings of collaboration in relation to teacher-teacher aide teams. For these team members, collaboration is dynamic and fluid occurring on an as needed basis depending on the task. Ten key elements of collaboration were identified as common to team member outlines of collaboration. In deference to team descriptions of collaboration as dynamic and cyclic, forming and reforming as team members engaged in collaboration around a particular task/activity, I depicted collaboration in these teams as waves of collaboration rather than a linear continuum of collaboration. Trust and respect were identified by team members as integral to collaboration, and as building over time, as team members engaged in collaboration.

Viewing team member collaboration from the perspective of an activity system with the object of collaborating on a project to support student needs revealed tensions in and between elements of the activity. Tensions were identified between the aspects of collaboration revealed in the literature review and the elements of collaboration identified as important in the team outlines of collaboration. Given that the challenges identified between the literature review findings and the idealised collaboration identified in the outlines of collaboration the question was posed as to what collaboration really looks like for the teams. The next chapter explores how team members in this study collaborated, revealing the problems teams encountered when operating as a team, the ways
they sought to mitigate those problems, and the different perspectives on collaboration in participant-developed concept drawings.
Chapter 5
The practice of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams

5.1 Overview

This chapter explores the factors affecting collaboration in the teams and discusses these in relation to the literature and the first research sub-question:

In what ways do the teachers and teacher aides collaborate in their teacher-teacher aide teams?

The chapter begins with a discussion of this study’s substantive findings in relation to the ways team members collaborate; the challenges they faced, how they sought to overcome those challenges and how the idea of culture expanded the concept of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. Following on from this discussion I explore the insights participant concept drawings revealed in relation to how the issues of power, status, respect, friendship and inclusivity influenced collaboration in the teams.

In my role of researcher as bricoleur (Lévi-Strauss, 1966), I have included participant-approved data of those participants who did not complete this study on the principle that the raw material, the elements collected from these teams, will enrich the stock of the data from the four teams that completed the study. In presenting the data I opted for a mix of dialogical formats drawn from observations, interviews and cogen sessions, as well as the reproduction of participant-generated material, for example, concept drawings in support of the findings. This supports my bricoleur approach to the research and the development of thick descriptions where both context and observed behaviour are explained (Geertz, 1973).

5.2 The knot of collaboration

Collaboration is the way that things get done together. I guess that it can be all different kinds of ways depending on what it is.

(Kate’s definition of collaboration, Interview 2, 25 February 2016)
In the previous chapter team-developed outlines of collaboration identified collaboration as fluid, dynamic and engaged in on an as needed basis. However, as indicated by Kate’s (teacher aide) definition of collaboration above, how individuals go about collaborating can vary. The variety of ways teachers and teacher aides collaborated in this study is a reflection of their working relationship, which Friend and Cook (2017) have identified as perhaps “the least understood and most complex of all the professional relationships” (p. 259).

Employing the lens of activity theory, Engeström (2010) offers one way of understanding why there are a variety of collaborative practices with his description of collaboration in teams as knotworking. According to Engeström, “In knotworking, collaboration between the partners is of vital importance, yet it takes shape without rigid, predetermined rules or a fixed central authority” (p. 20). In this study each team approached collaboration slightly differently and, like Engeström’s knotworking, collaboration took place without any rules/guidelines. One of the reasons for this is that teachers and teacher aides were assigned to teams, often knowing little about each other and having little or no training in working with another adult in the classroom or in collaboration.

5.2.1 Learning to work as a team

Most educators have not received training to work collaboratively and, therefore, are learning to work as a team at the same time they must operate as teams.

(Snell & Janney, 2010, p. 15)

Snell and Janney’s (2010) observation identifies difficulties facing new teacher-teacher aide teams. In this study only two teachers spoke of receiving training in relation to working with another adult (notably parents) in the classroom. No participant reported receiving training related to working collaboratively or specific training related to working with a teacher/teacher aide in the classroom. In literature on collaboration in schools devoting time to learning about each other’s backgrounds and experiences with collaborative teaming is a vital first step in developing team member relationships and assisting in building trust (e.g., Nevin et al., 2009). However, while team members acknowledged the importance of learning about each other before they began working together, no team members reported spending time at the start of their working relationship learning about each other’s background and experiences. Time to meet and plan, to problem-solve and build rapport was a concern for all teams participating in this study. This finding is consistent with research and literature relating to teacher-teacher aide working (e.g., Blatchford et al., 2009; Wilson
With no training in working collaboratively, no/limited time to meet and plan or even get to know each other, teachers and teacher aides spoke of how they were often assigned to new teams each year with the expectation that they would operate effectively, collaboratively, in the new team. The result is that they were often learning to work collaboratively while learning to work as a team.

Team members in eight teams in this study linked this challenge of learning to work collaboratively to a lack of school support for teacher-teacher aide teams. This is clearly illustrated by Alaric’s and Alese’s (teacher and teacher aide, Team 6) comments on school support during their first cogen session. Alaric mentioned that two or three years ago there had been a training period for teachers and teacher aides during non-contact days at the start of the year. Alaric explained:

… we would be put with our teachers and we had to write stuff, we both had to write out things and sit down and talk to each other and work out how we were going to work together. We don’t do that anymore.

(Cogen 1, 26 April 2016)

Alese responded asserting, “It is very much needed”. She explained:

It’s needed because the first year I was here the first question I asked was what are the roles of the teacher and the aide because I know how fundamentally important that relationship is, but here there isn’t anything. There’s no tool.

(Cogen 1, 26 April 2016)

Participants in this study reported that neither school supported teamworking by providing the kind of training days Alaric referred to, nor, at the time of this study, were teacher aides provided with paid time to meet and plan with teachers outside class hours. Teacher aides in this study reported how they often assisted teachers outside their paid hours, for example, coming in early or staying late, meeting on weekends and/or taking work home. This is in keeping with findings from the five-year study into the deployment of teaching assistants in the UK where schools routinely benefited from teaching assistants unpaid work hours when they arrived at school early or stayed late “in order to have valuable liaison time with teachers” (Webster et al., 2011, p. 9).
In literature and research on teacher-teacher aide teamworking training for teachers is often associated with working with another adult (e.g., French, 2001, Wallace et al., 2001) while training for teacher aides is often associated with professional development (e.g., Butt & Lowe, 2012, Jerwood, 1999). In this current study teachers and aides from both schools spoke of the benefit of joint professional development to their team. Fran (teacher, Team D) summed up the benefits of joint training stating simply, “It builds a better team”. This finding is consistent with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2000) report Working with teaching assistants: A good practice guide. According to this report joint training between teachers and teaching assistants “helps reinforce teamwork, and addresses the problem of some teachers’ lack of training in working with other adults. Joint training also enhances staff awareness of the improved skills that the training gives the TAs [teaching assistants]” (p. 36).

5.2.2 The impact of the classroom environment on collaboration

From the perspective of CHAT and activity systems analysis there is an understanding that activities are influenced by the environment in which they take place. Research has found that the physical environment, for example, the layout and architecture of the room, the furniture, acoustics, and team space and privacy, can have a profound influence on collaboration and teaming, fostering or inhibiting inter-member communication and higher levels of team cohesion (e.g., Brager et al., 2000; Sundstrom, De Meuse, & Futrell, 1990). In relation to collaboration, team members in this study spoke of their classroom environment, notably the physical classroom environment, as influencing how they felt and worked.

Six teams in this study identified issues with the classroom in which they worked. In Team 2 Harry (teacher) and Alaric (teacher aide) found their classroom small and hot. Alaric described it as “very claustrophobic” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015). In 2015 when I interviewed Ann and Jay (teacher and teacher aide Team C) and Karen and Marie (teacher and teacher aide Team B) these teams had small classrooms positioned between two larger classrooms. The small rooms were subject to the noise of the other classrooms, did not have air-conditioning, nor did the windows or doors have flyscreens. Karen stated, “In summer it can get very hot. Some of the time I will have to relocate, relocate to the next classroom. We’ll go somewhere where it is a bit cooler. We cope but sometimes it becomes unbearable” (Interview 1, 28 October 2015). Ann told the story of a long-bodied wasp flying into the classroom the day before her interview, distracting the students - interrupting “the focus of the classroom” – and said they were lucky
because they did not get mosquitoes like one of the other rooms (Interview 1, 4 November 2015). Asked if the heat in the room affected her Ann replied:

> Well, it does affect me quite a lot because, well, I guess I’m feeling how the kids are feeling … Sometimes you can be very, well, because you are hot, when anyone is hot, you are going to get a little bit easily annoyed. So, your tolerance is probably a little bit lower than what it should normally be. (Interview 1, 4 November 2015).

Team members also spoke of how they liked their classrooms and how the classroom environment supported their way of working. For example, Alaric (teacher aide) had his own desk in both Team 2 and Team 6. He reported that this provided him some autonomy and, having his own desk, meant that he could lay his hands on everything he needed to do his job (Interview 1, 20 November 2015). Seven teacher aides reported they did not have a desk, or space of their own, in the classroom for their work materials and/or personal items (e.g., handbag, lunch). Three aides identified the lack of space for their work materials and/or personal items as a problem in relation to teamworking referring to how uncomfortable it made them feel. In literature on teamworking, creating or setting aside a space for teacher aides to store their personal items and equipment has been linked to facilitating teamwork and fostering respect (e.g., Ruedel et al., 2002; Wallace, 2002).

In this study team members’ classroom environments influenced team member comfort and productivity. Well maintained rooms with air-conditioning and adequate storage space including a space for the aide to store his/her personal items and work material, were identified as creating environments conducive to greater productivity. This finding is comparable with similar research and literature related to the impact of the physical environment on work practices (e.g., Enmarker & Boman, 2004; Johnson & Johnson, 2013; Klitzman & Stellman, 1989; Thomas, 1992).

5.3 **School support for teacher-teacher aide collaboration**

The literature on teamworking and collaboration in schools is replete with the view that school support is necessary for effective teaming. One teacher in this study identified the need for school support in assisting with role identification for the teacher aide and three teams referred to the benefits of joint professional development that supported their classroom working, making it
easier for the teacher to plan and instigate changes in classroom instruction and activities. However, the support that the majority of the team members were interested in was simply keeping the team members together.

5.3.1 Keeping teams together

 Keeping teams together, particularly the teams that worked well together, was the aspect of school support that team members in this study most valued. There is some support for keeping teams together in literature on collaboration and teamworking. For example, John-Steiner (2000) argued that keeping teams together for longer periods of time helps avoid the conformity of groupthink and support creative collaboration. Keeping teacher-teacher aide teams together for a minimum of two years is considered beneficial to collaboration in the teams as this provides time for team members to build their collaborative relationship (e.g., Reuda & Monzó, 2002). An example of the beneficial impact of keeping team members together had on team collaboration in this current study can be seen in Erica and Kate’s (Team A’s) student testing activity.

5.3.2 Team A’s student testing activity

 Erica (teacher) and Kate (teacher aide) have worked together for over two years. Erica and Kate hold short meetings (approximately 10-15 minutes) in the classroom kitchen before school to discuss the day’s activities. Their engagement with organising and conducting a student literacy test was observed during the final observation of this team. At this meeting Erica spoke quickly, outlining the activities and explaining the literacy test that she would like the students to take that morning. Kate asked questions for clarification and Erica asked her opinion on the differentiation some students might require when taking the test. Kate offered her opinion on how she might modify the test for some students stating, “Will you be happy if…” Erica agreed with the modifications Kate suggested. They split the pile of test papers between them. Erica suggested, and Kate agreed, that they conduct the test during the outdoor play period. At the end of the meeting Erica asked Kate if she had everything she needed and Kate replied that she did.

 During the morning outdoor play period Erica and Kate sat with individual students and conducted the test while the other students played. Both Erica and Kate were interrupted by students either requesting assistance or requiring arbitration for some dispute with another student. At the end of the play period Kate gave her test sheets to Erica and they had a brief discussion
concerning the students who had missed out on being tested and when they might be able to complete the testing.

In this study every team identified time to talk, to problem-solve and build rapport was limited. However, working together for several years meant that Erica and Kate were familiar with each other’s ways of working, which resulted in more efficient communication as illustrated in this comment by Kate:

I know what she means. … this is my third year with [Erica] and when she puts something down there, if it is a new activity, I know what activity that is and where it is kept, so that helps.

(Interview 3, 23 March 2016)

Keeping this team together supported a team communication and meeting structure, a way of teamworking that they had developed together over time. It also eased Erica’s workload as Kate was familiar with what needed to be achieved, how Erica liked to work and how best to support Erica. Kate’s opinions were valued and Kate’s ideas were sought and welcomed. Erica’s and Kate’s collaboration, arguably, comes closer to the definition of collaboration in schools identified in Chapter 1. They entered into collaboration voluntarily, focused on mutual goals, regularly shared expertise in an atmosphere of trust, support and respect, had shared responsibility for outcomes and they shared resources. There was participant positive interdependence and, as the test activity demonstrates, there was participant parity in their collaboration.

Research by Fisher and Pleasants (2011) identified the salient factors in job satisfaction for paraeducators were “respect from colleagues, acknowledgment of their opinions about students, active team membership, and the existence of a collaborative team culture within a school” (p, 288). School support in keeping Team A together promoted job satisfaction for both Erica and Kate. For teacher aides in this study respect from the teacher they were teamed with and acknowledgement of their opinions was strongly supported in teams where team members were able to continue working together past the first year. In these teams, teachers and teacher aides spoke of their dread at the prospect of being separated from a team member with whom they had achieved good interpersonal communication, who was familiar with their way of working and with whom they had developed mutual and reciprocal respect and trust. In this study school support in keeping team members
together past the first year promoted teamworking and collaboration between the teacher and the teacher aide.

5.4 Interpersonal communication and collaboration

Communication is recognised as a vital part of effective teamwork in teacher-teacher aide teams (e.g., Pickett et al., 2007; Vincett et al., 2005) and central to collaboration in education teams (e.g., Cramer, 2006; Murawski, 2010). Skelton (1997) claimed that the importance of good communication skills for paraeducators and teachers cannot be over-emphasised for “The whole climate of interpersonal relationships in an education centre can be affected by an individual’s ability to communicate” (p. 89). As Slater (2004) argued, “…successful collaboration depends on the personal interaction of the participants” (para. 37). In this study interpersonal communication, communication between team members, was affected by; the limited time team members had for communication, the different methods of communication adopted by team members, and differences in interpersonal communication styles. This, in turn, affected the ways that team members collaborated. These problem areas are most vividly illustrated in the following narrative concerning teamworking in Team 5; Jessica and Alexa’s team.

5.4.1 The challenge of communication and roles for Team 5

Jessica (teacher) and Alexa (teacher aide) worked with six students with challenging behaviour in an Early Years class at Bayshore Special School. When they began participating in this study in early 2016 they had only been working together for approximately two months. Like other teams in this study, Jessica and Alexa had not discussed roles and responsibilities prior to working together. Also, like the majority of teachers in this study, Jessica relied on real-life experience as the primary source of knowledge for supervising a teacher aide. Jessica’s supervision of Alexa most closely resembled that of hands-off-laissez-faire (Morgan & Ashbaker, 2009). In this style of supervision the aide is perceived as a capable individual, someone who can be trusted “to see what needs to be done and make herself useful without too much guidance” (Morgan & Ashbaker, 2009, p. 10). However, Jessica also felt that she needed to provide Alexa with more direction, commenting, “The truth be known she needs more support” (Interview 1, 11 April 2016).

While Jessica did not share her lesson plans with Alexa she did hang up a weekly timetable and had short chats with Alexa about student activities, stating that she was open to Alexa’s
“amazing ideas” (Interview 1, 11 April 2016). Alexa agreed that they do have short chats about student activities but expressed concern that not knowing what is planned limits her ability to support Jessica commenting:

When I come in I have no idea what we are doing every day. I have so many skills and resources to offer. I did resources here for the school for a year… A lot of the stuff I’ve made, we could use. But, because I don’t know what’s happening from day to day or have no time allocated, I can’t really help with these resources. I cannot help her. I know that she does a lot of the classroom resources in her own time. So, I feel like I am not contributing as much because I am not helping in those areas.

(Interview 2, 13 May 2016)

Alexa found what she called “last minute discussing” (Interview 1, 11 April 2016) made her work difficult. Explaining last minute discussing Alexa said, “It’s when we make a change to the work with a student and we haven’t spoken about it enough so that we are on the same page” (Interview 1, 11 April 2016).

In this team, Jessica’s bus duty and Alexa’s second job working on the buses added to the challenge of time to communicate. Communication was also influenced by differences in communication styles. Jessica identified herself as having slower processing than Alexa commenting:

Like I said, I’ve got that slower processing and if you are not a delay person; if you are like, [snaps fingers] and you are right in there, then that is a really tricky situation. That’s like a block, isn’t it? Because you are coming from two different communication styles or even actions.

(Interview 1, 11 April 2016)

Each team member had a different understanding of collaboration. For Jessica, collaboration meant “working together for one purpose/same goal” (Interview 2, 13 May 2016). According to Alexa, “Collaboration is communicating and working as a team” (Interview 2, 13 May 2016). Both team members saw their role, and that of their other team member, as that of partner and each stepped-up to support the other. Jessica commented, “…we are definitely partners
in that room. We have to be! We have to work together as partners with that particular group of students” (Interview 1, 11 April 2016). They both agreed that the needs of the students come first and they both worked towards the same goal of improving student outcomes. Jessica and Alexa also indicated that they were open to collaboration (see their Tree of Collaboration, Chapter 4). Like other team members in this study each member of Team 5 spoke of the respect and consideration they have for each other as illustrated by Alexa’s comment:

If you don’t have respect you don’t have a team. I am like that way with [Jessica]. I have total respect for her position. And she has total respect for mine. She will say, “[Alexa] I learn so much from you”. And I will say, “[Jessica] I learn so much from you!” So, it is a really good team. It is only early days and we just [pause] we look across that room and smile!
(Interview 1, 11 April 2016)

Respect for your fellow team member and being open to collaboration have been identified as components of professional and ethical communication, fundamental to communication in collaboration (Friend & Cook 2017). As discussed in the previous chapter respect and being open to collaboration were common elements of collaboration for teams in this study. However, as Jessica indicated in relation to their outline of collaboration, “… there are a lot of steps and a lot of processes involved in collaboration. It is not an easy thing at all” (Interview 3, 3 June 2016). Figure 5.1 represents the tensions team members revealed as they explored their role in relation to collaboration in the team and how, during their dialogue within their cogen sessions, they came to understand the ways they collaborated, at that time.
Figure 5.1 Team roles and the activity of collaboration in Team 5

Object 1
Jessica’s understanding of collaboration in their team

Object 2
Alexa’s understanding of collaboration in their team

Object 3
Shared understanding of collaboration in their team

Tools
Personal communication skills and communication style
Chats with Alexa
Meeting space - quiet

Shared understanding of collaboration in their team as
Shared common goals
Insufficient communication to support collaboration they would like to have
Both respect and step up to support each other
Both open to collaboration

Division of Labour
Alexa is a partner who needs support
Students’ needs require a lot of Jessica’s attention
Jessica and Alexa step-up to support each other

Division of Labour
Jessica to provide direction/support and listen to Alexa’s ideas
Students’ require a lot of Alexa’s attention
Jessica and Alexa step-up to support each other

Figure 5.1 Tensions within the elements of the activity systems

Tension A - Team members know they need to work as partners but have no time to talk

Tension B - Jessica cannot give Alexa the support she needs as the students must come first and they demand so much of Jessica and Alexa’s time
Figure 5.1 depicts both the personal and interpersonal activity of Jessica’s and Alexa’s understanding of their role in relation to collaboration in their team. Each individual activity system represents the team member’s understanding of their role as expressed in their concept maps and interviews. In these activity systems the issues of time to communicate, a quiet place to talk, Alexa’s need for support, their different communication styles and the demands of the students with whom they work caused tensions or contradictions in Jessica’s and Alexa’s understanding of their role between what they feel they should do and what they were able to achieve. Tensions A, B and C indicate how tensions exist even within the elements of the activities mediating their understanding of their role. In the tension represented by the letter A the team members know they need to work as partners but find, by putting the needs of the students first, they have no time to talk. In the tension represented by the letter B time is also an issue as Jessica cannot give Alexa the support she needs due to the attention she must provide the students. The letter C reveals the tension between their personal communication styles that require more time to talk and lack of a quiet space to meet and plan, inhibiting the time available to talk. These tensions were discussed in their cogen sessions; represented as a cloud around Object 2 for each participant.

In their cogen sessions Jessica and Alexa discussed what they thought collaboration should be like (e.g., in their Tree of Collaboration), and the problems they face working as a team. The contradictions between what they wanted and what they were able to achieve prompted Jessica and Alexa to consider changing their work practices. Their discussions revealed their collaboration incorporated; having respect for each other, stepping-up to support the other team member, having a common goal and being open to collaboration. These aspects of collaboration are consistent with aspects of collaboration identified in the definition of collaboration in schools developed in Chapter 1. What most concerned Jessica and Alexa, and what did not support collaboration for this team, was the lack of time they had to communicate (see Chapter 6 for how this team sought to alleviate the challenge of time to communicate).

The definition of collaboration in schools developed in Chapter 1 identifies the need for regular sharing of expertise, which these team members did experience. Figure 5.2 represents collaboration in this team, at that time, as partners working towards the same goal of improved student outcomes. However, each team member is working predominantly on their own as they have limited time to meet and limited team communication.
5.5 The ways teams mitigated problematic teamworking

Like Team 5, for the majority of the teams in this study team members changed with each new school year. Each year they faced the challenge identified by Snell and Janney (2010) of learning to work as a team at the same time they needed to operate as a team. While working together some teams had found ways to ameliorate the tensions in their collaborative activity. This resulted in improved communication, engagement with the same goal through pre-planning and an expansion of teacher-teacher aide collaboration to include others outside the classroom. Figure 5.3 depicts the activity of teacher-teacher aide collaboration involving the rule of limited time to communicate along with the tools of communication styles and space to communicate. The shaded text boxes in Figure 5.3 identify the changes teams made to mitigate the challenges they faced in relation to the activity of collaboration. Arrows link the changes to the element of the activity system that was influenced by the change.
In Figure 5.3 seven teams minimised tensions in relation to communication styles and space to meet by adopting different methods of communication. These methods included texting, emailing and telephoning each other and meeting outside school hours for a coffee or meeting during school holidays. Karen (teacher) and Marie (teacher aide) from Team B changed Marie’s timetable, so that they would have more opportunities to communicate. In Team A, Erica (teacher) and Kate (teacher aide) engaged in pre-planning, which changed the division of labour, resulting in a reduction of workload for Erica and increased participation in the team for Kate. Erica identified pre-planning as discussing ideas for activities with Kate before she included them in her classroom planning and discussing how the activities were to unfold before the students engaged in those activities (Interview 1, 28 October 2015). Another way one team (Team 1) mitigated challenges to team collaboration was to change the idea of the binary grouping of teacher-teacher aide collaboration, introducing a cultural understanding of collaboration.
5.5.1 The impact of culture on collaboration

A particular finding to emerge from this study is the impact of culture on collaboration in teams. In Figure 5.3, amending the approach to collaboration to include Uwh’s (teacher) concept of culture was a way that Team 1 was able to minimise many of the challenges they faced when collaborating. Uwh identified himself as a New Zealand Maori. For Uwh, culture was in everything, the way he thought about, communicated and worked with students, parents, other staff and adults, and Bailey (teacher aide). In his only interview I asked Uwh what his background brought to his team relationship. Uwh told the story of his collaboration with an Indigenous man who attended the school to teach art, whom I will call teacher Z. Uwh spoke of how they had talked about “yarning circles and things like that” and how he had thought, “okay we’ll get into that” (Interview 1, 23 November 2015). He spoke of how he and teacher Z had worked with five “savvy street kids”, how they had built a yarning circle, and the positive changes this had made to the students and staff at the school as people were brought closer together. Uwh concluded by saying:

It worked. All that respect, all the traditions that I have with the boys, like a cup of tea with the boys. That’s the first thing I do with them, have a cup of tea. Not every morning but if they want to have a cup of tea and a sit down I know they want to offload. So that is one of the things my culture brought into it. I’ve brought it into my classroom. I have changed the way they do things.

(Interview 1, 23 November 2015)

Key aspects to Uwh’s cultural approach were the inclusion of food, of sitting down with a “cup of tea” (Interview 1, 23 November 2015); including everyone in collaboration, students, parents, other staff/aides/adults who entered his classroom; communication through stories, ideas and interests; and most of all, through respect. In this team, collaboration incorporated a sense of community, of respect to all. In speaking of respect Uwh stated:

It’s the respect we have for others back in New Zealand. It’s the same way I talk to the boys in the classroom. We don’t yell at all, ever, and we expect the same. We talk through this. We model this every day so that they understand, okay, they may have a bad day but I’m not going to yell at them.

(Interview 1, 23 November 2015)
The *we* he is referring to in the excerpt from his interview, is himself and Bailey. Bailey was brought up in New Zealand and this is his second year working with Uwh. Uwh stated that having this extra time to work with Bailey has “been really good because it has helped cement our relationship” (Interview 1, 23 November 2015). Uwh stated that Bailey “has always been part of the process. Every day. He will finish some of my sentences sometimes. If someone is doing something wrong we go, ‘Oooo’. We do it together” (Interview 1, 23 November 2015).

According to Uwh, a key component of working effectively with an aide was having a “shared vision” and “buy-in from not just parents but also the students and the other adults”, as well as being able to “talk quite often” (Interview 1, 23 November 2015). Uwh stated that having other adults in the classroom was “awesome!” as “I look at how we utilise their skills” (Interview 1, 23 November 2015). Uwh stated that he did not view Bailey as a teacher aide. He stated, “I don’t call my teacher aide a teacher aide. I call him or her another teacher” (Interview 1, 23 November 2015).

At the time of this study Bailey was in his last year of a Bachelor of Education in Primary Special Education. Bailey explained that Uwh was his mentor and that “he is the type of person I want to be when I get my degree” (Interview 1, 23 November 2015). When asked what he saw as his role within the team Bailey replied, “Colleague, support in the sense that if I am not here he is. We are almost in tandem” (Interview 1, 23 November 2015).

Uwh’s approach to collaboration adds the layer of culture onto the already complex dynamic of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. Uwh’s cultural approach, which included inclusivity and participation by all, changed how collaboration between teachers and teacher aides was understood in that classroom. In Figure 5.4 below I have represented this cultural approach to collaboration as a circle where the teacher and the aide, represented by the large shaded dots, form part of a *community* of collaboration involving other adults and students, represented as smaller dots, all working towards improved student outcomes in that classroom.
For more on Team 1 and how this approach to collaboration affected teamwork refer to the section on concept drawings in this chapter (Section 5.7).

5.6 Culture and communication

Referring to collaboration in multicultural environments, Salas and Gelfand (2013) note that, along with new perspectives and innovative solutions, “differences in culture and viewpoint can also lead to misunderstandings and interaction problems” (p. 735). In this study collaboration in two teams was influenced by culture. In Team 1 both Uwh and Bailey reported that Uwh’s cultural approach had positive benefits to their collaboration. However, in Team 2 Harry (teacher) reported a cultural perspective that initially made communication, and their collaboration, problematic for Harry. In this team Harry’s cultural background initially made interpersonal communication with an older person difficult. Harry identified himself as of Matabele descent from Zimbabwe and spoke of an important cultural aspect to communicating with people older than himself, stating:

Our culture has a respect for elders. So much so, that if there were aunties and uncles talking we wouldn’t talk. We wouldn’t put our thoughts in that conversation because it’s disrespectful. Respect is driven into us from a very young age.
(Interview 1, 20 November 2015)
When asked how this influenced his working relationship with Alaric (teacher aide), Harry commented:

It was quite difficult at first because I haven’t had someone as old as [Alaric] as a teacher aide. And you would kind of fall back into your old habits of not thinking as equal but thinking as, that kind of respectful, you know what I mean? I just have to pull myself out of it. It was quite tricky at the start. Now it is fine.
(Interview 1, 20 November 2015)

Harry’s cultural upbringing also influenced how he addressed Alaric. The concept of respect for an elder prompted Harry to place greater emphasis on Alaric’s experience and, like Uwh, Harry identified the aide’s title within the classroom as that of teacher.

In literature on teacher-teacher aide working, culture is an underrepresented area of study. In this literature the focus has been on culture in relation to school or classroom culture (e.g., Devecchi & Rouse, 2010; Groom, 2006) and teacher aides as cultural-brokers mediating between the teacher and the students (e.g., Chopra et al., 2004; Reuda & Monzó, 2002; Weiss, 1994). According to Harris (1996), “If one is not familiar with cultural differences it is likely that there will be lack of mutual goals, frustration, and disappointment” (p. 356). These data point to the importance of team members spending time learning about each other before they begin working as a team.

5.7 Concept drawings and collaboration

Another finding of this study is the insight on interpersonal relationships and collaboration in the teams demonstrated in participant concept drawings. In this section I discuss participant concept drawings in relation to the key elements of power, status and respect, inclusivity in collaboration (collaboration is in everything) and friendship and support (the value of friendship and support). In this study I use the term concept drawings in a broad sense meaning a concept represented by a drawing, a “representation by lines …sketch, plan or design, especially one made with pen, pencil or crayon” (Macquarie Encyclopedic Dictionary, 2011, p. 371).
The concept drawings discussed below were selected as they provide a cross-section of concept drawing styles and represent the findings in relation to the collective analysis of concept drawings in this study in relation to the theme of interpersonal relationships and collaboration.

5.7.1 Power, status, respect and Team 2

During their only interview Harry (teacher) and Alaric (teacher aide) from Team 2 created very different concept drawings. The guiding question for this first concept drawing was: What impedes and/or supports collaboration in your team? Harry chose to do a sketch (Figure 5.5) and Alaric chose to present a list (Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.5 Harry’s concept drawing from Interview 1

Harry explained that the teacher is the person on the left and the teacher aide is the person on the right with his hands chained. The little heads represent the students. The teacher and the teacher aide collaborate through communication, a sharing of ideas as represented by the joined thought bubbles. Harry explained the binary opposition of the teacher being free and the aide in chains stating, “I don’t like it that there’s a lot of rules in terms of the teacher aide can’t stay with the kids by themselves. Things like that take away their power” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015). Harry called these rules around teacher aides “red tape” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015).
spoke of his background influencing collaboration in the team in relation to issues of power and respect, as it affected his relationship with Alaric. In relation to power, Harry spoke of disliking the lack of authority given to teacher aides in the school. Harry explained that red tape referred to teacher aides not being allowed to supervise students on their own. For Harry this took away teacher aides’ power and increased his workload in that he often had to, for example, give up his own time to supervise students during breaks.

To provide Alaric with more power Harry spoke of the importance of asking Alaric about consequences for students stating, “I definitely feel that it needs to come from both of us because if it is just from one, as soon as I’m gone or I get pulled away then it goes to chaos” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015). Harry also shared the small office space in the classroom with Alaric. Harry commented that this benefited them both. Alaric gained more power by having his own desk in the office and, because Alaric keeps his desk organised, it is easy for both of them to locate required resources from Alaric’s desk. In relation to respect Harry spoke of his upbringing and his hesitation at putting his thoughts into the conversation of an elder and how he felt it is important that Alaric be called a teacher in the classroom, not only because this showed respect for his position as being older than Harry but, because calling him a teacher aide took away Alaric’s power in the classroom.

As can be seen in Alaric’s concept map in Figure 5.6 the issues of respect and red tape were also important for him. In Alaric’s list the items on the left represent factors that support collaboration and the item on the right represents an impediment to collaboration in their team.

Figure 5.6 Alaric’s first concept drawing
Alaric identified respect as a very important aspect of collaboration. Alaric spoke of his English grandfather who “instilled a lot of respect; to respect people and do the right thing” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015). In relation to respect and his work with Harry, Alaric remarked:

We respect each other and, because we respect each other, the students can see that and so that flows within the classroom. If you didn’t have that respect you wouldn’t have that collaboration.
(Interview 1, 20 November 2015)

Alaric stated that Harry showed him respect by treating him as an equal in the classroom. One of the ways Alaric was treated as an equal was that Alaric had a desk. For Alaric it meant there was a space set aside for his use and supplies. Alaric stated that he is “a little bit more organised than [Harry]” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015) and that having a desk improved his ability to work in the classroom as, “I can lay my hands on everything I need to do the job I want to” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015). Alaric identified being treated as an equal supported collaboration in their team in that Harry included him in discussions about student action plans and that they were both able to work towards the same goals. Alaric spoke of how treating him as an equal promoted friendship between them and this supported collaboration by making it easier to work with Harry. However, along with the support that being equal provided him, Alaric identified the lack of status of the aide explaining:

In a way we are equal but I am always aware that, maybe I am old school because of my age, because of the way I was brought up but, I’m always aware that, at the end of the day, what he says goes. He treats me as an equal and we work as equals. If there is a problem we can come together and talk about that problem. I’m always aware that, at the end of the day, I’m just a lowly aide, I’m at the bottom of the rung in the school.
(Interview 1, 20 November 2015)

In relation to status Alaric also spoke of teacher aide pay. In his concept drawing he has written “not pay” at the bottom of the list of the factors that support collaboration meaning that his level of pay did not support collaboration in their team. In relation to pay Alaric stated that he works two jobs to support his family and that they “do it really hard” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015) and that, “As much as I love this job, if I didn’t have a second job I couldn’t
afford to do this job” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015). Having to take on an extra job meant that he had less time to meet/plan/communicate with Harry, which in turn affected their interpersonal relationship and their ability to collaborate. Red tape, listed on the right of his concept drawing, also impeded collaboration with Harry. For Alaric red tape related to the lower status of the aide. Alaric spoke of this in relation to a red folder on student information explaining:

> What I used to do, at the start of the year, is get the red folders out and I’d say, well, this one’s got this problem and this one’s got this problem, this is how we could go about it but I can’t do that now. They don’t think that aides need to know that stuff.
> (Interview 1, 20 November 2015)

In discussions of their concept drawings Harry and Alaric revealed how power, respect and status influenced collaboration in their team. Depicted as an activity system (Figure 5.7) power, status and respect form part of the rules or guiding principles in relation to team member collaboration.

**Figure 5.7 Collaboration in the team as influenced by, power, status and respect**

![Figure 5.7 Collaboration in the team as influenced by, power, status and respect](image)

The dotted lines represent the tension created by the mediating elements of rules and division of labour in the activity of collaboration. In essence, the rules affected the roles and responsibilities of individual team members inhibiting the object of coloration between team
members. For example, Alaric’s limited power in relation to being able to supervise the students reduced their parity of participation, adding to Harry’s workload and inhibiting their collaborative working. In this activity system (Figure 5.7) I have depicted the teacher or the aide as the subject. This is because a lack of power, status and respect can affect collaboration for both teachers and teacher aides. An example of how this can influence collaboration for both teachers and aides is illustrated in the following comments by Fran and June (Team D) and Alese (Team 6).

Fran (teacher)

The teacher aide had been there a long time … Another teacher and I were both fresh out of Uni … and we didn’t do it the way that it’s always been done. We didn’t know as much as the previous teachers and we didn’t have that experience and we weren’t doing it the same. Just because you are doing something different it’s not necessarily worse. So, that was awkward … it’s that resistance.

(Interview 1, 4 November 2015)

June (teacher aide)

I would come in and I would never know what was going on. She would say, “Get the puzzles out. We’re doing puzzles”. So I would get the puzzles out … [what made it tough was] coming in and not knowing what was required. No planning. She never involved me. I came in and she already knew what she wanted to do and it was like, okay. I suppose I was not part of the team. I was just the ‘get things ready person’.

(Interview 1, 6 November 2015)

Alese (teacher)

This teacher aide also took on the role of the teacher with one student. She would not listen to me. … I don’t know what is different with [Alaric] but I think it is his experience. His experience is really helpful. But I have had another teacher aide who had the experience but she was not proactive. It was like having another student in the room.

(Interview 1, 14 April 2016)

Teacher aides seem to have this mindset, and they say it, and it is probably true, that we’re just aides, we’re not privy to that information, we’re on the lowest rung.
So, if someone believes that then, fundamentally, there is a bit of resentment there or uncomfortable feeling. But if the person, like, [Alaric] got an email and he was included it can make a difference. When [Alaric] got an email he said, “I am included in that!” and I could sense that he was really pleased about that. So, if he is feeling valued, if he is feeling respected, that his input is valued, then that is going to enable the conversation to flow better and for us to work better. (Interview 3, 10 June 2016)

As these team members’ comments illustrate, in this study, power, status and respect were issues that influenced collaborative working between teachers and teacher aides. As illustrated by Alese’s final comment, valuing an aide’s input was understood to improve both team communication and teamworking.

In research and literature around teacher-teacher aide working, hierarchical positions within the team have been associated with a lack of acknowledgement or undervaluing of the aide’s contribution (e.g., Bourke, 2008; Woolhouse, Dunne, & Goddard, 2009) and teachers being concerned about their own competency and unsure how to manage teacher aides (e.g., French, 1998; Jerwood, 1999; Thomas, 1991, 1992). Commenting on the lack of status of paraeducators, Reuda and Monzó (2002) wrote, “Power differences negatively impact the collaboration relationship and thus it is essential to minimize differences in authority that exist in the classroom” (p. 519). Cook and Friend (1991) and Slater (2004) have argued that for collaboration to succeed in schools between individuals of unequal status there needs to be both shared power and equality among stakeholders.

In this study, as illustrated by Harry’s and Alaric’s concept drawings, participant understandings of power affected how they worked together. This was most noticeable in teams where the aide associated his/her role as of low stature. In these teams the aide tended to be reticent about offering input. In line with the understanding of collaboration between individuals of unequal status noted by Cook and Friend (1991) and Slater (2004), teachers in this study minimised the negative consequences of power and status by sharing power and increasing equity. One of the ways teachers in this study achieved this was by making the relationship subordinate to the task. Examples of this can be seen in Uwh’s concept of culture in collaboration and in Erica and Kate’s (Team A) testing activity (above).
In this study lack of power or status for aides was also mitigated by the respect teachers had for the aide/s with whom they worked. Teachers in this study welcomed the input of the aides. For some teachers, like Aubry (Team 3), Ann (Team C), Fran (Team D) and Alese (Team 6), inclusion of the teacher aide’s ideas was perceived as an important part of a good teacher-teacher aide working relationship. For teachers like Uwh (Team 1), Harry (Team 2), Erica (Team A) and Karen (Team B), the teacher aide’s contribution was also a way of improving teamworking, student outcomes and reducing teacher workload. Harry illustrates the value of the teacher aide’s contribution with his statement that, “For me it takes a lot more than one teacher to raise a child; it takes a community to raise a child…” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015).

For some teachers lack of, or limited, contribution from a teacher aide created feelings of discomfort because it made teachers feel, as Erica stated, like “a dictator” (Interview 3, 23 March 2016). For the majority of the teacher aides in this study not putting their ideas forward was associated with their perception of their status within the team. For three teacher aides the sense of status also meant that they were afraid to say what was on their minds, to ask questions, express concerns or put forward their ideas. When teacher aides were supported by the teachers, as in the case of Alaric and Harry, teacher aides did, as Harry put it, “step up and take on more responsibility” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015) and teacher aides had the confidence to “talk about problems” (Alaric, Interview 1, 20 November 2015).

5.7.2 Collaboration is in everything

In the section above Harry’s comment about it taking a community to raise a child is reflected in the next two concept drawings. The first drawing (Figure 5.8) was developed by Lisandra, a teacher aide from Team 3 at Bayshore Special School.
When describing collaboration Lisandra spoke of the interconnectedness of collaboration and stated that collaboration starts from the universe with:

arrows coming to our planet and all of our planet coming together, then our country and our town and our class. So, it is like, like we all are connected and because we are all connected equally then we all need to be treated that way.

(Discussion occurring prior to commencement of Cogen 4, 8 December 2015.)

Lisandra worked as a childcare assistant for twenty-seven years and a teacher aide at Bayshore Special School for six years. Lisandra worked with two teachers, Aubry and Cos, and a Health and Therapy aide, Saige, to support students with high health needs. She described herself as a caring person, stating that she brings compassion, caring and sensibility to her role as an aide (Interview 1, 20 November 2015). Lisandra identified collaboration as a way of working that supports the students under their care. She spoke of collaboration as involving common sense and doing the right thing and that when working together, “We need to do what I believe to be the human thing” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015).
Lisandra’s concept of collaboration as an all-encompassing work ethic involving consideration for all is echoed in Uwh’s description of collaboration as represented by his concept drawing in Figure 5.9 below. In contrast to Lisandra, Uwh produced a complex drawing with interconnecting components all involved in the creation of success for all. In what I have called a web of collaboration the elements of collaboration extend well past the binary collaboration between teacher and teacher aide stretching out into the wider community.

Figure 5.9 Uwh’s web of collaboration

Note: Uwh’s and Bailey’s real names have been replaced in this diagram with the pseudonyms used for these team members in this study. Uwh and Bailey’s class designation has also been removed to preserve anonymity.

As indicated by the circled comment in the lower left hand side of this concept drawing this is only the start of what Uwh viewed as the influences on collaboration in their team. In the section on communication, the words, Connectedness, Community as a whole and Beyond the walls
indicate how his understanding of collaboration in the classroom extended beyond the binary identification of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. In Uwh’s concept drawing the key elements to collaboration in their team are; communication, consistency, adults, buy-in, culture and relationships. Uwh stated that these elements support success in their classroom. In the elements of *adults, buy-in and culture* Uwh included words from the Maori language representing his understanding of how these elements affect success in their classroom. Table 5.1 presents his English translations of these words from a meeting I had with Uwh during his lunch break (17 May 2016).

**Table 5.1 Uwh’s translations and comments on the Maori words he employed in his concept drawing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maori words in Uwh’s concept map</th>
<th>Element of the map in which the word/s is/are located</th>
<th>English translation and comments on their meanings provided by Uwh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awhinatia and Awhi</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>It is all forms of being able to help, helpfulness. That's everything to do with it. Awhi means to care, Ar means to help. It's just to help. But Awhinatia means the broad picture of helping; broad picture of helpfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tautuko</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>To support. You’ll hear orators, great orators or people that talk or encourage others in a big gathering. Tautuko is a huge word in New Zealand. If you say you are going to Tautuko it is in all its forms of support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ko wai</td>
<td>Adults and Culture</td>
<td>It means who. Who is part of that, you know, which adults?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kia kaha Kia maia</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Be strong, be courageous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kia manawanui</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Stout-hearted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matua</td>
<td>Buy-in</td>
<td>The buy-in. That's the parents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In his interview Uwh expressed the idea that culture was a part of everything that related to collaboration in their team. However, in his concept drawing Uwh positioned culture as an element within collaboration in their team. When I asked him about this he explained that, while culture is in everything related to collaboration in their team he also understood that it was present in other areas, such as in “subtribes”. He identified these subtribes as student groups and/or staff who form cliques due to, for example, their interest in computers. Uwh explained that culture also brought
with it new learning and an element of the unknown as there was always more to learn and more people to learn it from, hence his addition of Ko wai in this section.

With shades of activity theory where activity is historically evolving, constantly moving and driven by communal motives (Engeström 2000), Uwh and Lisandra portrayed collaboration in their teams as being influenced by everything in their environment, an environment that extended well beyond the school grounds. For these team members collaboration was not simply a matter of finding time to communicate or having a space to communicate. Rather, it was about the myriad of outside influences that could, and did, impact collaboration in their team. In activity systems analysis these influences are often identified as systemic influences on activities as they affect the overall activity; each element of the activity system modifying participant engagement with that activity (Figure 5.10).

**Figure 5.10 Inclusive collaboration**

In Figure 5.10 the inclusivity of this type of collaboration is depicted as an activity system with the object of student success/care because, for Uwh and Lisandra, collaboration in their classroom was not about how team members worked to assist students but, rather, how everyone worked towards achieving the best outcome for students and other participating members alike.
5.7.3 The value of support and friendship

In this study all team members spoke of trust, respect and support when describing positive team relationships. Eight of the ten teams participating in this study identified friendship with their team member supported collaboration in the team. The two concept drawings below (Figure 5.11 & Figure 5.12) illustrate how friendship and support were expressed in concept drawings. Figure 5.11 is Erica’s first concept drawing. In this drawing she depicts what supports collaboration in their team.

Figure 5.11 Erica’s first concept drawing

![Figure 5.11 Erica’s first concept drawing](image)

Erica (teacher Team A) stated that her upbringing brought with it the idea of friendship, the valuing of friendship. What satisfies her most about working with Kate (teacher aide) is their friendship and that friendship is “definitely a big thing” when it comes to working with an aide (Interview 1, 28 October 2015). In her concept map above Erica drew herself on the left hand side
of the picture and Kate on the right hand side of the picture, their hands reaching out to each other. The words surrounding the team members relate to aspects of teamworking that support collaboration in their team. Erica stated that teamwork, friendship and valuing each other were what supported collaboration and what made working with Kate so rewarding. She underlined *Our* in *Our Class* in the concept drawing because, “It’s not my classroom it is our classroom” (Interview 1, 28 October 2015).

Kate stated that she saw Erica as her friend and that friendship supports their collaboration because it means they care for each other and support each other. Kate spoke of their communication and how they send friendly texts which support their teamworking. Kate stated the text might be:

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just like on a friendly basis too, oh PS today’s the day that we’ve got to provide morning tea in the staff room. You know, don’t forget to bring something.
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(Interview 1, 28 October 2015)

In Team 6 Alese (teacher) and Alaric (teacher aide) did not identify their relationship as that of friends. They did speak however, of the importance of being friendly and how being friendly towards each other supported collaboration in their team. In Alese’s concept drawing below she has depicted herself and Alaric holding hands in the top right hand side of the drawing (Figure 5.12).

**Figure 5.12 Alese’s first concept drawing**
Indicating the importance placed on being supportive, Alese began her drawing stating, “First of all I have myself and my teacher aide holding hands and being supportive of each other” (Interview 1, 14 April 2016). Alese stated that their communication, that is, listening and being proactive, and assisting each other, aided collaboration in their team. Alese provided an example of how their communication resulted in a positive adjustment to the way they were working with a student, explaining how Alaric had pointed out an aspect of an activity on time that was confusing a student. Alese stated:

He was engaged, he observed and he gave me feedback. I observed, I listened, I considered. It made sense so I gave feedback to him that, yes that was good, thanks. He wasn’t on his high horse, nor was I, we were learning from each other. (Interview 1, 14 April 2016)

Alese spoke of how she valued Alaric’s experience and his humility, how he observed how she did things and “adapted to that” (Interview 1, 14 April 2016). Alese related how they called each other by their first names stating that this was “a bit more open, more friendly. It puts us more on a level with the kids. It gives a less authoritarian presence” (Interview 2, 10 May 2016). Referring to the importance of creating a supportive relationship right from the start Alese stated:

If you can’t start that partnership from day one you are going to have problems from day one. And those problems will get worse and worse as the year goes on. It won’t get better. I have been in those situations. (Interview 3, 10 June 2016)

Erica’s and Alese’s concept drawings above demonstrate the valuing of support and friendship revealed by team members in this study. When discussing friendship in their teams, team members spoke of friendship making it easier to work together and how friendly team members were more likely to provide assistance, offer advice and support, thus, supporting collaboration between team members.

In literature on teamworking friendship has been both supported and opposed as a contributing factor to positive teamworking and collaboration. Supporting the idea of friendship in teacher teams Schwartz et al., (2002) wrote of friendship aiding team members’ ability to be flexible and to compromise and recommended that “teams should be encouraged to develop a
friendship as well as a partnership to increase job satisfaction and help cope with problems that may arise” (p. 18). In relation to teacher-teacher aide teams, Stivers and Cramer’s (2015) research involving special education teachers and paraeducators found that the team members “value relationships characterised by compatibility … and coordination of effort” (p. 27). In literature opposing the idea of friendship between team members friendship has been associated with conflict avoidance and an inability to create and enforce team norms and a focus on relationships, instead of purpose (Kain, 2006, p. 55). It has also been associated with leading to friction and stress within the team (Thomas, 1992, Vincett et al., 2005). However, in this study team members reported that friction or stress were ameliorated because of the friendship they have with each other. Team members in this study claimed friendship relieved stress because they were able to communicate their concerns to another/other friendly team member/s. Martin’s (2010) reference to the vital importance of maintaining a “spirit of friendship” (p. 98) when communicating with team members so that the positive intent of the speaker is reflected and tension and discord are eased lends support to these claims. Team members also reported that friendship brought them closer together, as Lisandra from Team 3 stated, “when there is a friendship there is a likeness of mind” (Interview 1, 20 November 2015).

5.8 Summary and concluding comments

In this chapter I explored collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams in light of the sub-question: In what ways do the teachers and teacher aides collaborate in their teacher-teacher aide teams? I noted that in teams in this study collaboration was understood and employed in different ways. I posited that one reason for this is that teachers and aides were often assigned a team but given no time to learn about each other, with the result that they were often learning to work collaboratively while learning to work as a team.

The ways team members in this study collaborated were found to be influenced/determined by the teamworking challenges they faced and the support they received from the school and from each other. The physical classroom environments influenced team member comfort and productivity, affecting the ways they worked. Having a space for teacher aides to store their personal items and equipment supported teamwork and fostered respect in the teams. School support in keeping teams together beyond the first year was found to encourage collaboration, providing time to build collaborative relationships and improve communication.
Communication was identified in the literature review as a vital component of effective teamwork and central to collaboration. In this study interpersonal communication was affected by; the limited time team members had for communication, the different methods of communication adopted by team members, differences in interpersonal communication styles, and differences in cultural understandings. This, in turn, affected the ways that team members collaborated including; limiting communication (e.g., Team 5), expanding communication (e.g., Team A) and changing the approach to communication (e.g., Team 1).

In this study team members revealed they collaborated by:

- focusing on the task together, sharing common goals, resources and responsibility for outcomes;
- increasing participant parity with teacher support/encouragement of increased participation by the teacher aide;
- expanding collaboration in the team to include others, e.g., parents and other members of the community;
- respecting and supporting each other;
- forming friendships that encouraged caring for each other, making work together easier, more rewarding and less stressful; and
- finding ways around the challenge of limited time to meet and plan by incorporating different ways to meet and talk, such as texting and emailing.

With a little imagination, and borrowing ideas from Engeström (2010) and Uwh, a new picture of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams emerges as a web of knots of different sizes and shapes sustained by interconnected /interwoven threads representing Tautuko (all forms of support).

In Chapter 6 I discuss the findings on team participation in cogen in relation to the second sub-question: What happened to the quality and the nature of communication between teachers and teacher aides when teacher-teacher aide teams used cogenerative dialoguing?
Chapter 6
Cogenerative dialoguing and teacher-teacher aide teams

6.1 Overview

In this chapter I explore cogen in this study and team member engagement with cogen, addressing the second research sub-question: What happened to the quality and the nature of communication between teachers and teacher aides when teacher-teacher aide teams used cogenerative dialoguing?

I begin with a discussion on how cogen was employed in this study including its use to support reflection on collaboration, my role in the cogen sessions, food in the cogen sessions and the related challenges of time and, what Roth and el Kadri (2016) referred to as, a recipe for cogen. I follow this discussion with an exploration of teacher-teacher aide experiences with cogen. This section draws on narratives of Team 5 (Jessica and Alexa) and Team A (Erica and Kate) and discusses what happened when participating teams used cogenerative dialoguing. This discussion is supported by comments from members of other teams, including teams that completed four or less cogen sessions. The section concludes with a discussion on the unique aspects of Uwh’s and Bailey’s (Team 1) experience with cogen involving Uwh’s concept of culture and Uwh and Bailey’s hands on approach to learning. Uwh’s and Bailey’s comments offer insight into a different approach to cogen and raise questions about how cogen might be introduced and employed in schools. Finally, I present the chapter summary and concluding comments in relation to teacher-teacher aide experience with cogen.

6.2 Cogen in this study

As explained in Chapter 3, cogen was employed as a tool in this study to obtain a joint perspective of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams, as well as to support an understanding of teacher-teacher aide collaboration, through equitable participant dialogues. The focus of the content of the cogen sessions was on supporting team member reflection on collaboration. The focus of the research was to understand what teacher-teacher aide teams identify as collaboration and how they put that into practice.
6.2.1 Cogen and team reflection

Reflection on work practices has long been identified as critical for teachers, notably in relation to improving work practice (Marcos, Sanchez, & Tillema, 2011; Potter & Richardson 1999). However, there has been little attention given to teacher aides and reflection on work practices (Potter & Richardson, 1999). Cogen sessions in this study offered both team members an equitable forum for examination of and reflection on their collaborative working where team members might more clearly understand and define their work practices and the roles and responsibilities assumed as part of these practices. The cogen sessions also provided participants with time to engage in joint planning and feedback, activities these teams often miss out on (Blatchford et al., 2009). Discussion on collaboration facilitated critical reflection on the assumptions that underpin their collaborative working relationships and, for some teams in this study, those reflections brought about new and/or revised forms of social life/team interaction. This approach also offered insight into a little-explored perspective on collaboration in schools, a teacher-teacher aide team perspective, as team members jointly reflected on their work practices.

6.2.2 My Role

To support team member understanding of cogen I provided team members with information on cogen and dialogic strategies selected to support cogen (see Time and a recipe for cogen below). I saw my role more as guaranteeing procedural purity (Eldon & Levin, 1991); more as a facilitator than an active participant. Keen to hear team member reflections and their understanding of collaboration I encouraged them to talk, letting them choose issues/problems they wanted to dialogue. However, as my research interest is team collaboration I encouraged participants to discuss collaboration, notably their collaboration.

6.2.3 Food and cogen

On hearing Uwh’s suggestion that discussions are enhanced by the sharing of food I provided food in the form of juice and snacks for the team members during their cogen sessions. Sharing food as part of a cogenerative dialogue is not without precedent. Wassell, Martin and Scantlebury (2013) related that their cogen sessions “normally include snacks, drinks, or lunch to make the atmosphere more comfortable and casual” (p. 761). When Uwh spoke of including food in the cogen sessions, I initially thought of participant comfort. I viewed the inclusion of food
during the hour-long cogen sessions as part of my ongoing commitment to participant beneficence. However, when Uwh spoke of how he interacted with others I came to understand that the inclusion of food in cogen could represent more than comfort.

For Uwh, sharing food was part of building a relationship with the other person/people with whom you talk. Throughout his interview, Uwh spoke frequently of the importance of building that relationship with others and how, in building that relationship with his students and other adults in the classroom, he shares his food. Therefore, the idea of sharing food during cogen sessions in this study evolved beyond creating a comfortable, casual atmosphere to include assisting participants to create/build a co-generative relationship within their cogen space.

Having decided on my approach to exploring collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams with the support of the dialogic process of cogen I encountered two challenges. The first challenge concerned time. The second necessitated offering participants a recipe for cogen (Roth & el Kadri, 2016) that could engender a cogenerative dialoguing approach, as well as satisfy team member working requirements where teachers and teacher aides often have limited time to meet and plan (Jerwood, 1999; Wilson & Bedford, 2008).

6.2.4 Time and a recipe for cogen

The necessity of having to conduct research around the summer school holidays meant there would be a reduction in the time available for cogen sessions. Given that teachers and teacher aides are likely to have limited time to meet and plan, I was aware that it may be difficult for the teams to find the time to engage in numerous cogen sessions. I was also aware that team members who agreed to participate in this study would likely be new to the dialogic approach of cogen and that limited time to cogen could affect their ability to engage with this dialogic process. Therefore, to encourage participant engagement with cogen, the recipe for cogen I offered participants would necessarily be different from those employed by researchers who could work with participants over time and engage in multiple cogen sessions (e.g., Jackson’s [2010] two-year study and Elmesky and Tobin’s [2005] report on five years of study). To mitigate the challenge of time I realised I would need to assist participants to step into their cogen space. I did this in two ways. The first was to encourage participants to begin their cogen sessions by taking turns to talk about what was top of mind for them.
When discussing a design for dialogue in schools, Senge et al. (2012) suggested opening the session with a *check-in*. According to Senge et al., “This means giving every participant an opportunity to simply speak for a moment about what he or she is thinking, is feeling or has noticed …When everyone knows that they will have some air time, people tend to relax” (p. 118). Alese (teacher, Team 6) captured participant experience with top of mind in this study when she stated, “It just helps you to focus. They say that a problem shared is a problem halved. So, yes, it can help settle you and help you focus” (Interview 3, 10 June 2016).

The second way I sought to assist participants to step into their cogen space was to provide them with information on dialogic strategies to support cogen. This led to my second challenge, the search for a recipe for cogen that could encourage Bohm’s (1996) idea of dialogue (see p. 12) and what Roth and el Kadri (2016) identify as “making sense in a context that does away with privileging some voices” (p. 313) in a short space of time.

Unlike its antecedent, democratic dialoguing, there is a lack of any formalised dialogic strategies employed in cogenerative dialoguing sessions with different research articles reporting different strategies or recipes for cogen. As Tobin (2014) stated, “Cogen can be structured in numerous ways and can have a vast array of resources to support the activity” (p. 54). Roth and el Kadri (2016) offered an explanation for this with their statement:

>Cogenerative dialoguing … is both a concrete praxis and an ideal, always happening, and always in-the-making and therefore under development. There are no general recipes that would address the needs of every situation. Rather, cogenerative dialoguing is a form of *experience* [emphasis in original]… (p. 326)

I began the recipe for cogen by focusing on the one ingredient that is consistent across the literature; the creation of an equal playing field where oppression of any form is rejected (e.g., Bayne, 2007; Emdin & Lehner, 2006; Pitts, 2007; Roth & el Kadri, 2016; Roth, Lawless, & Tobin, 2000; Stith, 2007). In the literature around cogen the creation of this equitable environment is frequently encouraged through the use of a set of heuristics or protocols. These protocols have been described as a “checklist of rules for the cogenerative dialogue” (Stith, 2007, p. 59), “a framework to begin and fine-tune interactions” (Roth, Tobin, & Zimmermann, 2002, p. 23) and “a model whose characteristics are contingent on the context of the social spaces to which it is applied” (Tobin, 2014, p. 62). With the understanding that each team would likely have different practices
already in place for their meetings I saw a benefit in encouraging team members to create cogen protocols that would suit their team’s meeting space. Therefore, participant-generated protocols became the first ingredient in the recipe for cogen in this study.

To assist with further ingredients that could suit the limited time these team members had to meet, I considered Tobin’s (2014) claim that two essential requisites must be present in order for an activity to be a cogenerative dialogue. The first is, “that the social interactions that occur should be dialogic, featuring focus, synchrony, and entrainment” (p. 54) and the second is radical listening. To meet Tobin’s first essential requisite for the activity of cogen, I explored the communication strategies of dialogic listening and reframing with the team members.

**Dialogic listening.** In dialogue, meaning or understanding is collaboratively constructed, emerging through the participants (Stewart, Zediker, & Witteborn, 2012). Stewart et al. (2012) applied the term dialogic listening to describe a technique that focuses on the process of communication, the meanings that are constructed between the speaker and the listener. Penman (2014) referred to dialogic listening as “a prerequisite for dialogue” (para. 1), declaring that “dialogic listening orients participants to their joint activity where each participant’s understanding is seen as a co-constructed process” (para 3). Hinting at the possibility of synchrony and entrainment, Helin (2013) argued that dialogic listening is a shared activity that fosters a focusing-in on the conversation and “can create a feeling of an ‘us’” (p. 224). According to Helin when individuals engage in dialogic listening the creation of a “we-ness” can open up such a dwelling space that “makes it possible to not only study ‘stories told’ about social phenomena, but also inquire into the present moment of lived experience in the making” (pp. 225-226). Dialogic listening, therefore, offered a natural choice as an ingredient in the recipe for cogen as it promised all the ingredients Tobin (2014) identified as essential for the activity of cogenerative dialoguing, including an aspect of radical listening – the listener striving to fully understand the speaker’s viewpoint (Hau, 2014).

To aid in understanding dialogic listening, participants in this study were provided with information on what Stewart et al. (2012) referred to as the “nuts and bolts of dialogic listening” (p. 201); a “focus on ‘ours’” and “encouraging as nexting” (p. 202). Stewart et al. explained that in focusing on ours participants need to listen in to the dialogue, as much as you would look in to something. Stewart et al. proposed encouraging as nexting as a way to put into action the basic attitude of sculpting mutual meanings in dialogic listening. They explained encouraging as nexting
as paraphrase-plus consisting of paraphrase and nexting. According to Stewart et al., paraphrase involves a restatement of the speaker’s meaning “in your own verbal or nonverbal talk” (p. 202) followed by a verification check. Nexting follows the paraphrase and is the individual’s response to the question, “Now what?” or “What next?” thus building/sculpting the meaning between the participants.

The inclusion of dialogic listening in the recipe for cogen therefore presented a promising way to encourage the dialogic interactions featuring focus, synchrony and entrainment, which Tobin (2014) identified as essential requisites for cogen. An advantage in the use of dialogic listening is that the strategies of focus on ours and paraphrase plus/nexting offer a way to initiate a co-generative atmosphere – an atmosphere of expansive learning (Lee & Roth, 2003) – in a short space of time. Karen (teacher, Team B) summed up participant response to dialogic listening commenting that it was able to be employed quickly – “We only practised it a few times and we were able to do it” (Interview 3, 23 March 2016) – and that dialogic listening helped them achieve more from the cogen sessions. Karen stated she liked employing dialogic listening because “it’s the productivity that comes out of it” (Interview 3, 23 March 2016).

To complement, expand and support the dialogic environment initiated with dialogic listening I included the strategy of reframing as part of the recipe for cogen I offered participants.

Reframing. From my philosophical standpoint, reframing supported my epistemological perspective of subjectivism where knowledge is constructed, hermeneutic in intent, and incorporates individual, cultural and structural representations of reality (Walsh & Downe, 2006). Reframing also appealed to my feminist ethic of care and critical perspective of power relations for I saw in reframing a way for tensions to be eased, perspectives to be explored and understood (team sense-making) and an opening for creativity and play. Like Norris (2012), I believe that play has an important role in the enabling creation and co-creation of ideas both in education and in the wider working world. My own experiences with reframing led me to agree with Edmondson (2012) that in providing an alternate cognitive frame, individuals are more likely to formulate new strategies and engage in innovative approaches to difficult situations.

At the heart of reframing or revisualisation is the concept of a frame. A frame can be understood as a perspective or viewpoint that an individual employs in an effort to make sense of events (Klein, Moon, & Hoffman, 2006). A frame is shaped by our past experiences, our personal
history, and the social environment in which we live (Edmondson, 2012). From this sense-making perspective, reframing or revisualising a frame involves a shift in perspective, allowing new assumptions/expectations/understandings to apply to the event or situation from which the initial frame was developed (Gregson, 2014; Klein et al., 2006). Stewart et al. (2012) maintained that reframing was a way to encourage participants to provide as full as possible response to the issue under discussion, as well as providing participants with a new perspective on the issue.

In relation to cogen, reframing presented a way to promote synchrony and entrainment as participants developed different perspectives on their work activities. To assist team members in this study to engage with reframing team members were asked to employ metaphors, where they could, to express their feelings/issues surrounding problems they faced. Metaphors can encourage reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1995), as well as assist in clarifying an individual’s beliefs and assumptions, express thoughts/feelings that are difficult to put into words and provide a model for future action (Stivers & Cramer, 2015, p. 31). Reframing a situation, event, or feeling presented participants with an opportunity to improve understanding of the other’s viewpoint, a perspective vital to radical listening, the final ingredient for cogen in this study.

**Radical listening.** Tobin’s (2014) final essential element for cogen is radical listening. According to Hsu (2014), the aim of radical listening is to fully understand the speaker’s standpoint, identifying key components of their statement and finding possibilities in the adoption of their ideas (p. 74). Echoing both the valuing of difference in reframing and the we-ness of dialogic listening, Alexakos and Pierwola (2013) stated that the aim in radical listening:

> is not necessarily to arrive at a consensus in voice of those involved but to arrive to a consensus in our understanding of differences. In the process, by being radical listeners we develop and change ourselves. By understanding and clarifying difference ‘I’ changes into ‘we’. (p. 42)

Like dialogic listening, radical listening asks the listener to focus in on what the speaker is saying, inviting and welcoming the voice of the other. According to Alexakos and Pierwola (2013) radical listening, “asks the listeners to build on what the speaker is saying and help her/him in a constructive manner rather than placing their own voice over the other and attacking what the other is saying” (p. 42).
To assist participants to engage with radical listening in this study I proposed three guidelines for radical listening. The three guidelines were: be aware of your inner voice and listen beyond it, listen for the essence of what another is saying, and aim to fully understand the other participants’ standpoints without attempting to change them (make any comments, interpretations, suggestions or comparisons) or injecting an alternative standpoint (Eisenberg & Bach, 2014; Hsu, 2014).

The inclusion of radical listening in the recipe for cogen appealed to my feminist ethic of care (see p. 69) in relation to supporting and welcoming the voice of the other. It also appealed to my philosophical paradigm of social constructionism, where construction of knowledge occurs through conversation and making things, whether physical or mental constructs, as I sought a joint/team understanding of collaboration. In this study, radical listening presented a way to make the cogen spaces more inclusive, encourage a lessening of tensions between differing viewpoints and a positive way to encourage open dialogue around the complex topic of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams.

The idea of not interrupting, listening for the essence of what the other is saying – suspending your inner voice to really listen – proved challenging for most participants. One possible reason for this is that radical listening was the last strategy offered to participants. With only one or two sessions to explore this strategy as part of their team dialogue participants did not have a lot of time to fully engage with radical listening. However, radical listening was well received by participants. Jessica summed up participant experience with radical listening when she commented that she likes radical listening:

because it makes me stop, on a personal level. Like really stop and … because I am always thinking of what’s next? What have I got to do? I use filters probably quite a lot because people take different times to talk and I might be going, “Come on!” (Laughing) Get to the point! So, I think I need to be able to, in a range of life areas, be able to quiet those filters sometimes and really hear what the other person is saying. So, for me, that is my first step.

(Interview 3, 3 June 2016)

As noted earlier, there are many strategies that support cogenerative dialogues. The strategies I outlined above are those I proposed to participants during their cogen sessions.
selected these particular strategies because they support Tobin’s (2014) essential requisites for cogen and offered a scaffolded approach to cogen for participants who do not have much time to engage with traditional cogen approaches where participants learn about cogen through dialogic sessions conducted over many months/years.

6.2.5 Cogen sessions

The creation of the protocols for cogen during the first cogen session provided structure for participants to mutually understand ways to participate in this new dialogue space. The three communication strategies of dialogic listening, reframing and radical listening were discussed in subsequent cogen sessions where participants were encouraged to explore these strategies through dialogue and team problem-solving. The members of the eight teams who participated in these latter sessions were invited to add communication strategies of their choosing into their cogen sessions. The strategy of active listening was introduced and discussed by members of five teams during cogen sessions however, it was not adopted by any team. No other strategies were discussed by team members.

6.3 Teacher-teacher aide teams’ experiences with cogen

What follows is an insight into team experiences in relation to the challenges of time, status and cogen in the classroom, which were common to the four teams that completed the study. The narratives of Team 5 and Team A explore the challenges team members faced working with cogen and how they employed cogen in their classrooms. Team 1’s (Uwh and Bailey’s) experience with cogen offering a different perspective of cogen concludes the discussion on team member experiences with cogen.

6.3.1 Jessica and Alexa’s experience with cogen

In this section, I discuss Team 5’s experience with cogen. I begin with the protocols Jessica and Alexa created for their cogen sessions. I follow this with participant comments on the communication strategies employed in cogen sessions and the problems associated with cogen for this team.
Protocols for cogen. The following team protocols were developed by Jessica and Alexa during cogen session one (29 April 2016), and revised in cogen session two (6 May 2016). On completion of their protocols team members in all teams were asked how they were going to ensure participating members would adhere to these protocols. The phrases following each of Team 5’s protocols are their cues to ensuring adherence to that protocol.

1. All listen attentively, courteously and openly to ideas expressed
   Eye contact

2. Members will refrain from side conversations
   Topic in centre of table

3. Demonstrate the capacity for change
   Make goals and reflect next time

Like the majority of the other teams, Jessica and Alexa named their protocols, rules. They identified the three rules above as being of particular relevance to their team situation. Their first rule, *All listen attentively, courteously and openly to ideas*, expressed the importance of communication (Cogen 2, 6 May 2016) and demonstrating good listening skills (Cogen 1, 29 April 2016) for these team members. Jessica and Alexa indicated that a key element in listening attentively and courteously was *not* interrupting the speaker. Alexa spoke of the importance of “actually listening to what the other person is asking or wanting” (Cogen 2, 6 May 2016) and Jessica identified interrupting as being discourteous stating:

> I would never do that. I wouldn’t interrupt somebody. I think it is rude, personally. (Laughing) I don’t mind if somebody interrupts me. I think it is fine but if you are on a bit of a spiel I think that you sometimes need to get it out so let it out. So, let her get it out and then, when there is a gap, that’s better than hang on a minute.
> (Cogen 2, 6 May 2016)

Not interrupting the speaker was identified as important by all participating teams. However, interrupting or overlapping talk did occur between team members in almost every cogen session, most notably when team members got excited about the topic under discussion. This contradiction in the activity of team cogens requires further explanation. Therefore, I will discuss
the issue of interrupting or overlapping talk before continuing with an overview of Jessica and Alexa’s other rules.

**Interrupting – its effect on cogen sessions.** At the conclusion of each cogen session, when team members revisited their rules, team members from all the teams participating in cogen sessions agreed that they had, for the most part, adhered to their rules, including any rules pertaining to interrupting. Jessica and Alexa’s response to the question of whether their rules were followed in Cogen 5 offers an example of how team members responded when questioned about their adherence to team rules.

Jessica: I think we did. We did eye contact, we listened attentively, we had the topic there. We refrained, mostly, from side conversations (*Laughter*). We both demonstrated

Alexa: (*Interrupting*) We are getting better!

Jessica: Make goals and reflect next time.

(Cogen 5, 27 May 2016)

Strictly speaking, team members in every team had interrupted each other at some point during their cogen sessions yet no one, including myself, felt that the team rules had been broken. I believe there are two reasons for this. Firstly, my experience of the cogen sessions with participants in this study leads me to agree with Erica, the teacher from Team A, when she wrote, “I think we interrupted because we were so engaged and it was fun. It was a safe environment” (Comment Erica wrote on her copy of the outline of Team A’s participation in the study, 4 November 2016). Secondly, I believe that the interruptions or overlapping talk did not disrupt the thrust of the topic under discussion. Rather, they added to the discussion – ratifying the speaker’s words being incorporated into the ideas under construction between the team members and/or providing emotional involvement/support or encouragement. An example of this can be seen in the following excerpt from Jessica and Alexa’s fifth cogen session concerning a visual designed to assist both of them to support a student’s positive behaviour.

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10 The visual was originally intended as part of a behaviour strategy for Alexa to use on the bus with a student but, by the time this excerpt of the discussion took place, the behaviour strategy had become a whole of class approach including both teacher and teacher aide coordinating their approach to managing student behaviour.
Jessica: So, I made some more but I wanted to check with you whether you wanted those, as well.

We can add wait to it. I don’t think I have wait. I have added wash hands, eat. So, if you want the same

Alexa: (Interrupting) Oh, I love those! That would save so much time and

Jessica: (Interrupting) And I haven’t got ‘wait’. So, we will add ‘wait’ to it.

Alexa: Yeah, great!

Jessica: And then we can use it as well as a bus one.

(Cogen 5, 27 May 2016)

In relation to interrupting or overlapping talk, Norrick (2012) argued, “So long as listener responses add to the story in progress and support its overall trajectory, the multi-unit turn remains in progress and the main speaker continues to hold the floor” (p. 568). While Norrick is referring here to storytelling, I see a correlation between listener responses in Norrick’s multi-unit turn and the listener responses and the interrupting and overlapping talk in team cogen sessions. In each of the nine teams participating in cogen sessions these listener responses permitted a progression of the topic, and/or supported a focus on the dialogue and idea/s under construction. Thus, the apparent contradiction pertaining to participant rules and interruptions in cogen sessions can be explained as interruptions within cogen sessions were not perceived as having negative intent therefore their rules pertaining to interruptions were not broken.

Jessica and Alexa’s first rule of All listen attentively, courteously and openly to ideas expressed encompassed a concern to avoid negative, unwanted interruptions and provide encouragement to focus-in on the dialogue. To avoid unwanted interruptions Jessica and Alexa identified, and employed, eye contact, as a way to encourage the observation of this first rule.

Jessica and Alexa identified rule two, Members will refrain from side conversations, as being relevant to their team because they can go “on a journey sometimes” (Jessica’s comment Cogen 1, 29 April 2016). Alexa agreed, adding: “We haven’t got time to go off discussion!” (Cogen 1, 29 April 2016). However, even these off topic discussions were related and contributed to the central topic of discussion as noted by a comment Jessica made in Cogen 5 (27 May 2016), “I think that is great, and I am not going off topic because it is related to what you said but, I am glad you brought it up …”.
For their third and final rule, *Demonstrate the capacity for change*, Jessica and Alexa identified a need to be flexible enough to change an approach or action plan decision when needed. Jessica stated, “You have to have goals and then you would have to reflect on the goals and go, How did you go last time? What did we do?” (Cogen 2, 6 May 2016). As was the case in cogen sessions with the other teams, the team protocols or rules were read out by one of the team members at the beginning of each cogen session and reviewed at the conclusion of the session. As with other team members in this study Jessica and Alexa stated they did not wish to delete or amend any rules.

Like the other team members, Jessica and Alexa identified their rules as important to their cogen. Jessica explained that their rules kept them focused and on topic, provided “a safe place for collaboration”, helped keep them accountable and aided in avoiding miscommunication (Interview 3, 3 June 2016). Alexa explained that they used the rules every time they “cogened”, that they acted as guidelines and they needed to be used as they “show the other person that they, the other person, is important to you” (Interview 3, 3 June 2016).

As illustrated by the narrative of Jessica and Alexa’s experience with cogen protocols, team members developed protocols to suit their teamwork. Interruptions were perceived as having positive intent as they progressed the topic and/or supported the ideas under construction. Also, team members viewed protocols as important to the creation of their cogen space, supporting team dialogue and team member participation.

**What cogen meant for team members.** In their second interview, after participating in two cogen sessions, both team members were asked what cogen meant for them. Jessica had participated in four cogen sessions the previous year with a different teacher aide (Team 4). Speaking from this broader experience with cogen, Jessica presented a picture of cogen as a process that supports cogenerativity (Willis, 2016) where dialogic exchange fostered in cogens produced changes in the way participants felt and acted away from the cogen space. Explaining what cogen meant to her, Jessica pointed to cogen as proactive, revealing cogenerativity as positive changes where participants are supported, able to share problems and feel valued. She commented:

I think that cogen really tries to establish that relationship so that everyone feels valued in that room. You put a problem out on the table and, even though it might initially be tough, try and share it out. It can be tough to do this when you are so used to doing it on your own, particularly for teachers. And this is not about
someone not being as qualified. It is just about someone believing I am so used to doing this myself; it is just easier that way. It is actually not. It is actually easier if you can share it. But it takes practice and it takes a rethinking of the way you do things. So, I am going to put, a problem shared is a problem halved and everyone feels valued. That is really what it means to me.
(Interview 2, 13 May 2016)

Alese, (teacher Team 6), shared this opinion of cogen as a proactive, declaring it a positive way of dealing with problems between team members. Mentioning a difficult relationship she had experienced with a teacher aide the previous year Alese commented, “…I do believe if I’d had some of this knowledge and my teacher aide has this knowledge and took it on-board that it could have solved a lot of problems” (Interview 2, 13 May 2016).

Alexa had only participated in two cogen sessions when she was asked what cogen meant to her. At this time Alexa identified cogen as being about improving her work relationship with Jessica so that they could provide greater support for their students, commenting:

It means success for our students because it means that we will do whatever we can to be the best at our jobs to work with them as a team. Just to work together in such a small area, I think it is going to benefit us greatly.
(Interview 2, 13 May 2016)

After completing six cogen sessions Alexa alluded to the cogenerativity experienced in this team when she spoke of cogen as supporting their relationship commenting:

It has really improved greatly with the cogen. I can really notice a difference with [Jessica] too. She might say the same thing. It is really funny, but she is much more relaxed and it is really nice. You can tell, I think, since we started the cogen, and we just laugh. I don’t know. I don’t know if she’s learned to trust me more too or, I am not sure, but it is working really well. It has just changed a lot of things. I think it has made us both think about what we are doing and it’s made us respect each other’s views and respect each other’s input. It’s made a difference. I have really enjoyed it.
(Interview 3, 3 June 2016)
In this same interview Alexa also indicated that engagement with cogen could support team relationships school-wide, commenting:

…if you had this as a basis to work from, I think it would save a lot of problems or stop a lot of problems. I think it should be school-wide. I think it is something that everybody should have the opportunity to do.

Both Jessica and Alexa regarded cogen as beneficial, from the perspective of improving student outcomes and teamwork for Jessica to improving communication between the team members and potentially easing work problems school-wide for Alexa. These sentiments were echoed by team members who had participated in four or more cogen sessions.

In her final interview Jessica provided insight into how cogenerativity had transformed their team relationship stating that they were “more prepared to take risks now than we were” (Interview 3, 3 June 2016), that, “We probably do feel safe now, since cogen” (Interview 3) and that “We are starting to feel trust” (Interview 3, 3 June 2016). When asked how she envisioned using cogen in their team Jessica replied, “Mini-gens in the class using student codes. That is how I see it most, to be honest” (Interview 2, 13 May 2016). Mini-gens (Willis, 2016; Willis, Kretschmann, Lewis & Montes, 2014) refers to having brief cogens – cogens on the fly. Hinting at mini-gens Alexa explained she envisioned “regular weekly or even twice weekly [short cogen meetings of] fifteen minutes” (Interview 2, 13 May 2016).

In their final cogen session I asked team members what they thought of their experience with cogen. All team members stated that they had enjoyed their cogen sessions. The following comments by Alexa and Jessica illustrate sentiments common to team member responses including time to sit and talk, pleasure in each other’s company, and a greater understanding of themselves and their team member.

Alexa commented:

It has given us time to reflect with each other, too. Just a little bit of time to sit. We just don’t get it do we [Jessica]? So this has been really precious to me because we have had a bit of a laugh, we have been able to sit and talk. To just not have the
children there so we can talk [Jessica: Yes] (Laughter) So it has made a lot of difference!
(Cogen 6, 3 June 2016)

Jessica commented:

It has given us some strategies, too. As I was saying before about the filters, I think it has given me some more self-awareness about things that you maybe don’t notice about yourself, necessarily, you know, and even about the other person who you are working with.
(Cogen 6, 3 June 2016)

Like other teams that had completed the outline of collaboration Jessica and Alexa found that building their collaborative outline had enabled team members to consider how they collaborated and how they might collaborate in the future. For Jessica, participation in cogen in this study assisted them to trust each other more and made them more prepared to take risks (Interview 3, 3 June 2016). However, as Roth and el Kadri (2016) remarked, cogen is not, “an unproblematic panacea” (p. 326).

**Challenges to practising cogen in the classroom.** Roth and el Kadri (2016) observed that, “As in any project that involves collective emancipatory interest, it is necessary to work through issues …” (p. 326). In Jessica and Alexa’s team, team members faced issues related to differences in communication styles and in finding time to talk, to engage in cogen together. While their engagement in cogen had assisted in mitigating the issue of different communication styles, time to cogen – the time necessary to support their differences – presented their greatest obstacle to practise cogen in their classroom. Time to talk, to cogen, was a problem common to all teams. The importance of the issue of time for Team 5 was clearly illustrated in their second concept drawings illustrating the support/impediments to using cogen in their team (see Figure 6.1).
Jessica drew the clock face above commenting, “The overarching problem that we all have is time … we can’t really take five minutes to think about ourselves, even though there are issues that, maybe, we could try and cogen” (Interview 2, 13 May 2016). Jessica chose to depict a clock face displaying three o’clock, the time the school day ends, denoting the end of the time she and Alexa have together. Alexa described her drawing as an “hourglass that has just run out of time”, stating, “I am happy with everything but there is just no time” (Interview 2, 13 May 2016).

In Figure 6.2 the issue of time to cogen for Jessica and Alexa is considered in the context of the school environment – encompassing interpersonal and community planes of activity.
The activity system on the left reflects Jessica and Alexa’s participation in the hour long cogen sessions during this research project. Both saw value in engaging in cogen and wanted to continue this in their classroom, however, they had limited time to meet and no space to speak privately (central activity system). This created tensions in the activity around their use of cogen and their ability to practise cogen in the classroom environment. As part of the school environment their work, their practice of cogen in the classroom, was also influenced by what I have identified simply as schooling requirements.

These schooling requirements are depicted as the object and outcome of the activity of practical school working (activity system to the right in Figure 6.2). Roth et al. (2000) argued that current understandings of schooling are dominated by a psychology that “seeks to make people comply with existing conditions and thereby always supports the status quo and existing power relations …” (para. 5). This has particular relevance to the practice of cogen as cogen is not conducted as a traditional meeting nor, with its focus on equity between members, does this dialogue approach support existing power relations. This difference in approach to meeting style presented a contradiction in relation to the way meetings were understood and how cogen meetings were practised for both Jessica and Alexa.
Jessica and Alexa were not alone in experiencing this contradiction. When I visited Bayshore Special School on 23 June 2016 to collect participant feedback on interview data, Alese (teacher, Team 6) spoke to me about the difference between cogen and school meetings; the difference in atmosphere and sense of achievement. For Alese, cogen sessions were more comfortable, more productive than traditional meetings. She expressed a desire for all meetings to be cogen meetings. Harry (teacher, Team 2) shared this sentiment commenting, “From what we have come up with, imagine a whole group, a department who did this and being able to add more, more ideas, more experiences!” (Cogen 2, 4 December 2015).

Jessica alluded to another challenge teams face when she spoke of how teachers are used to “doing it on your own” (Interview 2, 25 February 2016) and that while the sharing of a problem, as in the cogen sessions, can make things easier, “it takes practice and it takes a rethinking of the way you do things” (Interview 2, 25 February 2016). This practice and rethinking formed part of the tension between the activity of cogen in the classroom and what I have called the outcome of schooling requirements; requirements underpinned by what Roth et al. (2000) have identified as the dominant psychology in schooling where conformity and status quo are supported.

The tension relating to schooling requirements encompassed a structural aspect, as well as a physiological aspect in relation to practising cogen in the classroom. Each school is required to fulfil curriculum and student requirements and these requirements also influence overall schooling requirements. The hours Jessica and Alexa worked, the students they worked with, the space and time they had available to meet and the curriculum requirements their students needed to achieve were all influenced by the school environment in which they worked. This environment created tensions for Jessica and Alexa in relation to the practice of cogen in the classroom, as cogen was not part of the status quo. It was not the usual way of working for teachers and teacher aides in either school. For Jessica and Alexa, as with all teams who chose to include cogen as part of their teamworking, new ways needed to be found that would permit such an approach in their school setting. Jessica and Alexa’s solution was to incorporate elements of the communication strategies explored in cogens during the research project, use codes for student names so they could talk in front of the students (as they had limited privacy) and keep their cogens short – mini-gens.

Countering the tensions associated with practising cogen in their classroom was the cogenerativity team members’ engagement with cogen had engendered. Like the other teams that completed this study, Team 5’s participation in cogen had provided more than just a time to talk and
reflect on their work practices. Team members experienced cogenerativity. In this team they were able to expand the feelings of support, from being able to share problems and feel valued in cogen, to achieve greater trust and feelings of safety in their classroom working relationship. Erica and Kate (Team A) also experienced cogenerativity, but in a different way. The following section explores their experience with cogen.

6.3.2 Erica and Kate’s experience with cogen

In this team both team members understood cogen as a way of working together, but each viewed this way of working differently. Erica (teacher) regarded cogen as collaborative working explaining, “Cogen is working together, cooperatively. It is collaboratively working together to solve a problem” (Interview 3, 23 March 2016). Kate (teacher aide) regarded cogen as strategies, commenting, “To me, it’s the word given to a group of strategies or ways for people to work together and solve things” (Interview 3, 23 March 2016). Differences in ways of working initially presented challenges for this team.

The challenge of role in working with cogen for Team A. Working together, joint working, to create these protocols during their first cogen session initially presented a challenge for these team members. This was Erica and Kate’s first exposure to the idea of equity between participants, teacher and teacher aide, within a cogenerative dialoguing space. Given the task of jointly developing their cogen protocols Erica took the lead, as she did in their class planning, and Kate initially hesitated to contribute. Their notes on protocols (Figures 6.3 & 6.4) indicate the lead Erica took and Kate’s reticence.
Figure 6.3 Erica’s notes on cogen protocols

1. Everyone contributes equally invite them to contribute.
2. Trust each other and don’t fear criticism.
3. Listen carefully to each other and value each other’s opinions.
4. Stay focused.
5. One topic at a time.

Figure 6.4 Kate’s notes on cogen protocols

Create a symbol for when other person would like to add something.

The change from enforcing a rule whereby every participant had to contribute equally to inviting each participant to contribute is reflected in Kate’s notes (Figure 6.3). This approach is consistent with Tobin’s (2014) depiction of participation in cogen where participants are invited to contribute in “encouraging and nonthreatening ways” (p. 53) and can be considered active participants in cogen “even if they are silent” (p. 53). A similar approach was taken for Team A’s second rule – Trust each other. These amendments encouraged joint ownership of their rules and, through this nonthreatening approach, encouraged an atmosphere of openness and respect in the dialogic interactions in their future cogen sessions in this study. However, the challenge of achieving consensus was not the only challenge these team members faced when creating their cogen protocols.

Viewed as an activity focusing-in on the interpersonal plane of sociocultural analysis, Team A’s first cogen session can be explored from the perspective of the challenges participants faced when attempting to jointly create their cogen protocols (Figure 6.5).
A review of the research and literature around teacher-teacher aide working revealed that there are inherent power differences between teachers and teacher aides and that these differences can negatively impact the team members’ collaborative relationship (Reuda & Monzó, 2002). In my research project participant understandings of power/status influenced how the team members worked together. This was most noticeable in teams where the aide associated role with status.

In Team A, Kate explained her role stating, “I see my role as a teacher aide as different to the teacher so I am not really going to question or change what they say” (Interview 3, 23 March 2016). Erica understood Kate as having a mindset of just following what Erica tells her to do commenting, “I guess, all along she has always thought that her role is just to follow what I tell her she needs to do. That’s her mindset” (Interview 3, 23 March 2016). This difference in understanding of roles created tension in Team A’s first cogen session in relation to their joint development of cogen protocols. Erica was keen for Kate to contribute and Kate was initially reticent. Kate’s understanding of her role as equitable participant was at odds with her traditional role of not questioning or changing what Erica said. Each participant writing their own protocols and then jointly discussing them also presented tensions for Kate as this was not how she and Erica usually worked together.
There was also tension for Erica in relation to the joint development of the cogen protocols. As a teacher, Erica’s conduct is influenced by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, providing her with guidelines relating to professional engagement involving joint working. Erica’s role of leader within the team presented contradictions for Erica between the idea of team member equity, as represented by the guidelines relating to professional engagement, and her traditional leadership role in her teacher-teacher aide working relationship with Kate. However, as their discussion unfolded these tensions eased for both team members.

Tensions were eased for Erica and Kate as discussion turned to developing their protocols based on how they work together and Erica handed some control, in the form of being the one to write down the protocols, over to Kate. Erica reminded Kate of how she contributes in their classroom and, during a discussion on the protocols as they relate to their team, Erica handed her note paper over to Kate saying, “Will you write that for me?” Discussion turned to passing the baton and Erica said, “It’s a team! It’s a relay!” (Cogen 1, 11 November 2015). Kate had identified herself as “a list person” (Interview 2, 25 February 2016), comfortable with making lists. Giving Kate the role of writing the protocols not only permitted Kate more control, more power within the activity, but made Kate more comfortable as she took on the role of listing the protocols. Kate’s additions to the list can be seen in what became protocols five and six on Erica’s note paper in Figure 6.1. Both Erica and Kate spoke of the protocols in connection with their working relationship and both referred to how they listen to each other and value and trust each other. Discussion of the protocols in light of their working relationship led to an opening-up of the discussion and to mutual agreement on their team’s cogen protocols.

Friendship. Laughter and fun were a large part of the cogen sessions for all teams. Reviewing the transcripts for the seven cogen sessions with Team A, I noted 180 instances of the word laughter or laughing as Erica and Kate shared stories of their work together and teased each other. Shown below are extracts from Cogens 1 and 2 that illustrate the gentle teasing the team members engaged in and the consideration these team members showed for each other.

Cogen 1 (11 November 2015) – in reference to whole class planning

Erica: You don’t want to plan, too?
Kate: No! (Laughter)
Erica: I am happy for you to plan if you want to. *(Laughter)*

Cogen 2 (15 February 2016) – in reference to their relationship

Erica: She even orders my lunch when I am not even there! *(Laughter)*

Kate: I didn’t want you to be hungry! *(Laughter)*

.....

Kate: She has a mountain of experience. I feel I can ask her anything and she will know the answer or who I need to go and see. She is organised and she is always here before me and she is always here when I leave *(Laughter)*. My children think that she lives at school. *(Erica: whispering – I do!)* *(Laughter)* And she is a happy, nice approachable person.

Erica: Aww, thank you *(Kate)*.

In Stivers and Cramer’s (2015) research into teacher-paraeducator relationships in 67 teams the most common metaphors employed by team members were those that conveyed the idea of compatibility and complementary working such as “peanut butter and jelly”, “two peas in a pod” and “matching puzzle pieces” *(Stivers & Cramer, 2015, p. 32)*. In Team A compatibility and complementary working were evident throughout the research project but were most notable during the cogen sessions, as indicated by the team member comments above. Compatibility and complementary working could also be seen in other teams in this study in their identification of team roles. The most common response was *partner* with *equals* and *friends* the second most common response. Like Erica and Kate, other team members worked closely together. Like Erica and Kate other teams had close relationships involving talking and meeting each other outside school hours. As with the other teams, Erica and Kate’s experience with cogen allowed them to look closely at their relationship and reflect on their teamworking. Their dialogues during cogen revealed what supported their collaboration and the airing of the tensions around their teamworking resulted in changes in the ways they worked, as illustrated by their final comments concerning cogen.

**What cogen meant for Erica and Kate.** As the cogen sessions progressed so did the opening-up of their communication and an increase in Kate’s participation in their dialogue. In their final interviews Erica and Kate were asked how they felt about using cogen. Erica stated:
I actually really enjoy it because I like to get that feedback. … I guess it makes me feel like we are both contributing to our classroom. I don’t want to be the person who is a dictator and tells her exactly what has to happen. It wouldn’t be very enjoyable to come into a classroom like that. So, feeling wise, I like the fact that we’re talking, we’re solving problems, we’re both having input and we both feel like we are being valued.

(Interview 3, 23 March 2016)

Erica found that learning about cogen changed the way she and Kate collaborated, incorporating an intentional openness on the part of the aide and the teacher, as illustrated in Erica’s statement below.

So, I see that we work fully, a little bit more closely in discussing those issues and I guess, again our collaboration is like, not being afraid to say something. You know, if we are not sure that something is not going to work and being open about it. I reckon we were a pretty good team in the first place but I do think that we are now talking a lot more. When I say a lot more it is more like differently, more conscious, like running with the metaphor.

(Interview 3, 23 March 2016).

Erica also stated in the same interview, “we are now talking a lot more” and that while she has always asked Kate what she thinks, “I am asking her even more now”. Erica indicated that this was a plus for their team because she felt it gave Kate more ownership of the classroom. Erica also said that engaging with cogen had given Kate the confidence to say “I don’t understand, or Where are you going? What do you mean?” (Interview 3, 23 March 2016).

When asked about how she felt about using cogen Kate stated, “I feel happy to use cogen. I can see exactly how it can help” (Interview 3, 23 March 2016). Kate stated she was “Definitely contributing more” (Interview 3, 23 March 2016) but postulated that this might be because Erica was more aware of a need to ask her opinion more often. Kate commented, “I can’t say that she never asked my opinion before but, perhaps, she might be more conscious of that now” (Interview 3, 23 March 2016).
The cogenerativity Erica and Kate experienced came about through their understanding of what they could achieve together in their cogen sessions and how Kate could support Erica. Like Kate, the other teacher aides of the teams that completed the study identified their experience with their team member in cogen as giving them openings to increase their support for that team member. All the teacher aides in this study spoke of how they were keen to increase their support of the teacher with whom they worked. As expressed in Jessica and Erica’s comments, cogen opened a way for teachers to receive more support and to build trust and respect in their teams.

In the following section I discuss Uwh and Bailey’s (Team 1) experience with cogen where culture and a preference for hands on learning presented a different approach to cogen.

6.4 Cogen, culture and hands on learners

With the understanding that the field of education is characterised by diversity (Roth & el Kadri, 2016), I sought a way to encourage and support different perspectives, beliefs and ideas through team participation in cogen. Like Roth and el Kadri (2016), I understand cogen as a processes of bricolage and métissage; a practice that supports an eclectic building/creating and a mixing/intermingling of difference. This type of support was evident in the narratives above as team members faced and overcame challenges in relation to difference in communication approaches, and the issues of status and how to engage with cogen in their classrooms. However, Uwh and Bailey’s experience with cogen identified other differences that presented a challenge for cogen in this study and, possibly, the practice of cogen in schools.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Uwh’s concept of collaboration was influenced by his understanding of culture. In this understanding any person who could contribute to the goals of the classroom (for staff and students alike) become part of an extended family, part of the shared vision, in his web of collaboration. When Uwh participated in cogen with Bailey, Uwh also brought to cogen the dialogic concepts associated with his understanding of culture. One of those concepts was the sharing of food (see food and cogen above). Another concept was a need to take more time with cogens. As discussed earlier in this chapter, I was aware at the start of this research project of the likelihood that participants would have limited time to cogen and had proposed a recipe for cogen aimed at encouraging a prompt up-take of cogenerative concepts. However, while Uwh expressed an interest in the dialogic strategies, so much so that he included them in his communication strategies with students, the cogen sessions we had were never long enough for
Uwh. In their fourth and final cogen Uwh stated that I had given them a lot of “terminology” but he needed more time to explore and really engage with the idea of cogen. He suggested cogen sessions that last “half a day” (Cogen 4, 8 December 2015). For Uwh, the kind of in-depth understanding of another’s viewpoint in cogen required dialogue at a slower pace, over a longer period of time. Uwh and Bailey’s approach to communication meant that their cogens became a métissage of communication approaches (incorporating storytelling, as well as, for example, dialogic listening) and influenced how cogens were conducted in other teams (e.g., the sharing of food during cogen sessions).

Literature and research around cogen has focused a great deal on differences in relation to status (e.g., Jackson, 2010; LaVan, 2005; Pitts, 2007) and how cogen supports inclusivity (e.g., Cornwell & Orbe, 1999, Higgins & Bonne, 2014) and very little on cogen in relation to cultural understanding as regards engagement with, and participation in, cogen. Norrick (2012) provided some insight into how culture might affect participation in cogen in his work on listening practices as part of English conversation. Norrick observed differences in Japanese and USA English listening practices where Japanese listeners provided a higher number of listener responses than USA listeners. Norrick posited that this was due to differences in cultural understandings of listening practices in relation to both involvement and politeness. The strategies I had proposed to encourage participants’ prompt up-take of cogen, while permitting an acceptance of difference and supporting inclusivity, provided limited support for process of dialogue Uwh favoured. In their four cogen sessions Uwh and Bailey did not discuss radical listening. It is possible that radical listening may have provided an opening for the different approach to dialogue Uwh brought to the cogen sessions. However, Uwh’s approach to cogen raises questions such as, Does cogen itself – this type/structure of dialogue – support or hinder cultural difference in speaking and listening practices? Are the protocols created to encourage equity and inclusivity in cogen supportive of cultural differences in speaking and listening practices?

Uwh and Bailey identified with a learning style that raises questions in relation to participant up-take of cogen. In their fourth and final cogen (Cogen 4, 8 December 2015), Uwh and Bailey spoke about how they envisaged cogen unfolding for individuals like themselves. Both Uwh and Bailey indicated they like to be doing during the cogen sessions. Uwh stated he liked to use his mobile phone to take pictures and Bailey spoke of how he liked to write lists and how he has to be doing because watching a video or being told about something would put him to sleep. Uwh indicated he felt the same way. Referring to his learning style, Bailey said, “I’ve got to have things
to do, things to write down and things to do with … It has got to be hands on” (Cogen 4, 8 December 2016). With reference to an activity they had just been working on Bailey commented, “Yeah. Hands on minds on. It’s a lot of how we learn. Because this is constructing right here. My hands are on. I am constructing it. I am developing it. If it was just visual it wouldn’t work”.

When I asked how cogen sessions might be amended to suit hands on learners Bailey suggested drawing then stated:

> Or before you introduced us to cogen you went straight to this step. You said, show me how to solve a problem and once they have done it (Uwh: Yeah) you revisit it and go okay before I showed you all those steps this is what you did, now here is the same problem again. How would you do it?

(Cogen 4, 8 December 2015)

Unfortunately, we were unable to continue Uwh and Bailey’s cogen sessions and develop their ideas further as this team split up in the new year. However, their comments raise interesting questions about the inclusive nature of cogen. Questions such as: How are different approaches to learning catered for in cogen? and Are some dialogic strategies more suited to particular learning approaches? From a teaching perspective I understand the importance of incorporating various strategies to cater for different learning approaches. In relation to cogen I understood cogen would involve dialogic construction, not physical construction. Uwh and Bailey’s experience offers new insights into how cogen might be introduced to individuals identifying with a hands on learning approach and, possibly, a different way to explore collaboration in the teams, for their hands on perspective raises the question of how different learning styles might influence collaborative practice between teachers and teacher aides.

### 6.5 Summary and concluding comments

In this study I have employed cogen as a tool as part of the methodology to gather data and deeper understandings in order to explore collaboration as practised in teacher-teacher aide teams. Cogen sessions provided a way for team members to focus and reflect on their own collaborative practices. These reflections influenced their collaboration practices and the development of changes in the way they worked, including changes in team communication. This chapter has looked closer at team member engagement with cogen exploring the sub-question, What happened
to the quality and the nature of communication between teachers and teacher aides when teacher-teacher aide teams used cogenerative dialoguing?

It was found that team members faced challenges within their cognes, such as differences in communication styles, and when they attempted to engage in cogen in the classroom. Prominent among those challenges was the issue of time to cogen. Other challenges experienced by team members included: a lack of place/space to cogen, day-to-day work requirements and the traditional approach to work relationships and meetings that encourage what Roth et al. (2000) identified as the psychology of supporting “the status quo and existing power relations” (para. 5). The transformation of team communication and planning structures was recursively tied to the challenges team members uncovered in their cogen session. I posited that the fact that team members made changes to their teamworking was, possibly, the result of the positive emotions engendered from participation in the new cogen experience.

Consistent throughout the teams that completed the study was a sense of cogenerativity where the feelings of trust/respect/support generated in cogen sessions were transferred to their classroom working relationships. To demonstrate this I presented evidence of cogenerativity within the teams through participant comments about their new teamworking relationships. Due to the short duration of this study, the longer-term transformative potential engendered from participation in cogen in the form of cogenerativity is unknown. However, each team completing the study referred to how cogen had influenced their team communications and had given them an appreciation and understanding of their team member’s perspective.

In exploring teacher-teacher aide experience with cogen I am reminded of Creswell’s (2013) comment about qualitative studies having questions rather than endings (p. 52). Uwh’s cultural perspective with the inclusion of storytelling over longer periods of time and Uwh and Bailey’s preference for hands on learning in cogen raised questions about how cogen embraces/supports culture and different learning approaches.

In the following chapter I look closer at the aspects of emotion and difference when I unpack the final sub-question in relation to collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams – How can CHAT be used to conceptualise the affordances and challenges of cogenerative dialoguing for understanding and explaining collaborative teacher-teacher aide teaming?
Chapter 7
CHAT and the affordances and challenges of cogen

7.1 Overview

In this chapter I discuss CHAT and its relevance in relation to cogenerative dialoguing and collaboration in this study addressing the final sub-question: How can CHAT be used to conceptualise the affordances and challenges of cogenerative dialoguing for understanding and explaining collaborative teacher-teacher aide teaming?

Exploring this question I begin the discussion in this chapter with an overview of CHAT, how it was employed in this study and its value in an exploration of collaboration, particularly, in relation to cogen. Following this I discuss the role of cogen as a tool within the activity of team cogen sessions and how participant understandings of teamwork were made visible through the lens of activity theory. I explain how dialogue within cogen occurred within a zone of proximal development where participants engaged in a teaching/learning interrelationship, building their knowledge and understanding of collaboration in their team. Next I discuss the affordances of cogen for understanding collaboration in the teams. This discussion draws attention to the role of play, emotion and humour – important, yet under explored, aspects of communication – in relation to collaboration.

In the following section I discuss the challenges of cogen in relation to understanding collaboration in the teams. I begin with a discussion on the challenge of understanding cogen – a challenge of particular relevance to teacher aides. I also explore the challenge of different perspectives on collaboration, notably the influence of cultural perspectives. To support the exploration of participant perspectives I employed a framework developed by Engeström, Kajamaa, Lahtinen and Sannino (2015) designed to identify types of collaborative action. In conceptualising collaboration as collaborative action within this framework collaboration is not understood as the linear stage process King (2010) portrayed where individuals move from cooperation to true collaboration. Rather, collaboration is understood as a fluid process determined by the object of the activity (e.g., the task) and may include elements of cooperation as part of the team members’ collaboration, and hybridisation of different modes of collaboration (as participants revealed in their cogen sessions). According to Engeström et al. (2015), “no single type of collaboration may be viable in a pure form. Ideal types do not remain ideal under the pressures of life” (pp. 108-109).
This is in keeping with the way participants in this study explained and demonstrated their collaborative practice. Within Engeström et al.’s (2015) framework collaborative action can be understood as dynamic, moving between heterogeneous and unified objects, and mediated by cultural tools and signs that range from the stable and task-oriented to the fluid and possibility-oriented. With this perspective CHAT can be understood as supporting the conceptualisation of both the affordances and challenges of cogen for understanding and explaining collaborative teacher-teacher aide teaming.

7.2 CHAT in this study

Activity system as a unit of analysis calls for complementarity of the system view and the subject’s view. The analyst constructs the activity system as if looking at it from above. At the same time, the analyst must select a subject, a member (or better yet, multiple different members) of the local activity, through whose eyes and interpretations the activity is constructed. This dialectic between the systemic and subjective-partisan views brings the researcher into a dialogical relationship with the local activity under investigation.

(Engeström & Miettinen, 2007, p. 10)

As noted in Chapter 3, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), often simply called activity theory, is a theoretical perspective on human development that involves a consideration of the interconnected relationship of an individual with their environment (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Engeström and Miettinen’s (2007) statement above reveals how this interconnected relationship is uncovered in an activity system analysis as the researcher constructs the activity system from the perspective of the participant/s. Through the lens of activity theory activities are dynamic entities, always changing and developing, driven by participants’ actions in their effort to achieve the object of the activity (Kuutti, 1995). Internal influences, such as a participants’ skills, and external influences, such as changes in the environment, can create a contradiction or unfit within and between the elements of the activity system, appearing as obstacles, conflicts, gaps or obstacles in the activity system (Gedera, 2016; Kuutti, 1995). A central tenet of activity theory is that contradictions or tensions are inevitable in any activity system and these contradictions or tensions are useful tools of analysis (Foot, 2001). Contradictions or tensions can change participant perspectives as participants attempt to reorganise or re-mediate the activity system in an effort to resolve the contradictions or tensions within that system (Engeström, 1999). In this study
participant cogen sessions often became the forum for reorganising and re-mediating the activity of teacher-teacher aide communication and teamworking as team members sought to overcome challenges they identified in their team’s working.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter participants’ discussion on collaboration in their cogen sessions supported reflection on how they collaborate and assisted team members to discuss/plan future-oriented actions. Teams that completed six or seven cogen sessions took the essential elements of cogen, what I identified as cogenerativity, into their teamworking and communications. CHAT permitted an insight into how understandings of collaboration in the teams developed and changed as team members reflected on collaboration and teamworking in their cogen sessions.

Like Stith and Roth (2008), I employed an activity theoretical approach because I wanted to “focus on the activity occurring and avoid ‘getting in the heads’ of the participants and making assumptions about their behavior” (p. 155). Like them, I also had the intention of including the participants as much as possible in an exploration of the practice of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. According to Anderson and Stillman (2013), “CHAT views learning as necessarily situated within consequential social, cultural, and historical contexts – contexts wherein relations between subject (i.e., learner) and community are mediated by artifacts and rules, and wherein participants negotiate the distribution of tasks, powers, and responsibilities” (pp. 13-14). Employing CHAT permitted a highlighting of mediating features within both individual and joint team member local activity. In relation to team member cogen sessions, using activity systems analysis permitted an exploration of the connections between team members’ talk about teamworking and their practice of teamworking. A focus on activity permitted an exploration of a situation, a team centred situation, rather than individual perspectives. In a study focusing on joint activity CHAT proved an invaluable tool to help explore and understand a team approach to collaboration and cogen.

7.2.1 The value of activity systems analysis in exploring collaboration

In my research activity systems analysis has been utilised as a data presentation and analysis tool to assist in understanding the complexities of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. I understand it is not possible to replicate any workplace perfectly, however, becoming aware of activity systems provided a frame of reference for that workplace. CHAT provided a way to
analyse that system and find out who is there and, perhaps, what is expected of those participating in that work area. As a framework for analysis and conceptualisation, activity systems analysis provided opportunities to find systemic implications, including how insight into teacher-teacher aide collaborative practices may inform school collaborative practices, for example, keeping team members together to assist team building and collaboration (see Chapter 5). It also facilitated understanding of systemic tensions and contradictions, such as ways in which hierarchical structures impact collaborative practices (see Chapters 5 & 6). Simply put, by employing CHAT I demonstrated and exposed a gap between what is being stated about teacher-teacher aide collaboration/communication/working and what collaboration looks like/how collaboration occurs at the chalkface. This has implications for teams, schools, parents and society in general.

By employing an activity theoretical perspective I have endeavoured to make visible team members’ everyday practices of collaboration. In research aimed at describing and understanding human activity in real-world situations, such as collaborative practices in teacher-teacher aide teams, the use of activity systems analysis presents a way to make “credible systemic inferences and [draw] coherent theoretical implications” (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 49). A closer look at cogen from the perspective of activity theory offers an examination of both systemic inferences and theoretical implications through a consideration of feelings and humour within cogen. Therefore, the value of activity systems analysis to this study is that it supports working with a manageable unit of analysis within a social context (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) (i.e., team activity in a school) and, from that analysis, the making of inferences across the system of teamworking, as well as the identification of theoretical implications in relation to the activity of collaboration in the teams.

7.2.2 CHAT and cogen

In an Activity Theory (AT) based study, researchers attend to both the individual elements of the AT model and to perceptions participants have of tensions between elements. Of all the elements analysed, it is arguably the element of tools that plays the most central role in investigations.
(Pohio, 2016, p. 153)

In this study I have employed cogen as a tool for data collection. In this chapter I position cogen as a tool within the activity of the team cogen sessions to support consideration of how CHAT can be used to conceptualise affordances and challenges of cogen to understand and explain
teacher-teacher aide collaboration. From an activity theoretical stance, positioning cogen as a tool within the activity system of a cogen session gives cogen, as Pohio (2016) indicates, a central role in an investigation. As the concept of tools is a key component of activity theory it is important to understand what the concept of tools means in relation to activity theory and, hence, to cogen in this study.

Activity theory has its origins in the work of Vygotsky around the idea that the relationship between an individual (the subject in an activity) and object (goal or motive of the activity) is mediated through the use of tools, thus, shaping the action within the activity (Mwanza, 2001). This idea of mediation with tools, “breaks down the Cartesian walls that isolate the individual mind from culture and society” (Plakitsi, 2013, p. 2). Early on in the development of activity theory Vygotsky identified two main types of tools, physical or technical tools and psychological or conceptual tools (Pohio, 2016). Physical or technical tools support participants “to bring about change to items in the environment” (Pohio, 2016, p. 153). Examples of physical tools within the activity of a cogen session are the pens and paper that participants used to create their outlines of collaboration. Psychological or conceptual tools influence behaviour (Mwanza, 2001) and can include social others (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010), school culture (Pohio, 2016), and language (Cole & Engeström, 1993). In the cogen sessions in this study an example of conceptual tools are the dialogic strategies employed to support the co-generation of ideas. Figure 7.1 depicts the activity of a cogen session in this study where cogen is a tool employed to support team member dialogue around cogen and provide data on, and an understanding of, collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams.

**Figure 7.1 An activity system representing cogen in this study**
The darkened sub-triangle subjects-tools-object represents the actions within the activity system of cogen. The tools of cogen, both physical and cognitive, act as resources for the subjects, mediating the action in the activity of cogen. No one cogen session was like the other. As team members participated in cogen sessions their understanding of the dialogic strategies grew, as did their understanding of collaboration and their own teamworking. In activity-theoretical terms participant understandings underwent transformations as “activity systems travel through zones of proximal development” (Engeström, 1999). Figure 7.2 represents this movement through the activity of cogen sessions.

**Figure 7.2 Visibilisation of participant understandings of teamworking in cogen sessions**

![Diagram of Zone of Proximal Development](image)

Adapted from *The zone of proximal development*, Engeström (1999, p. 67).

**The zone of proximal development.** The zone of proximal development (ZPD) “is where the interpersonal and intrapersonal activities blend and fuse and no longer exist as different entities” (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 19). ZPD is a term arguably familiar to many teachers. It is often referred to as a pedagogical tool and employed as a justification for instructional strategies (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 18). However, from an activity-theoretical perspective, ZPD “is a conceptual tool for understanding the complexities involved in human activity while individuals engage in meaning making processes and interact with the environment” (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 19). Engeström (1999) refers to ZPD as “a terrain of constant ambivalence, struggle, and surprise” (p. 90). Figure 7.2 illustrates this. Shaped as cloud, the zone of proximal development
occurs between team member engagement with cogen and the resulting activities after participant engagement with cogen as different teams responded differently to cogen sessions.

Pohio (2016) argued that the concept of the ZPD has a similar concept to that of scaffolding where knowledge is built progressively, extending the learner in manageable steps (p. 155). Participants’ engagement with cogen, their dialogues around collaboration and teamworking, was where this building of knowledge took place. As expressed in Figure 7.2, the building of knowledge sometimes results in changes. In cogen sessions, these changes occurred around participant understanding of teamworking. An example of a change in the understanding of teamworking occurred in Team B where, in discussions on collaboration during their cogen sessions, Karen (teacher) and Marie (teacher aide) came to understand that their teamworking would be supported if they had more time together. This resulted in a change in Marie’s timetable. An example of a situation where there was no change in understanding of teamworking occurred in Team 1. In this team, discussions on collaboration revealed Uwh’s (teacher) understanding of culture and collaboration and an approach to teamworking that already suited their needs. However, Team 1 did not complete the study and more engagement with cogen and dialogue between Uwh and Bailey (teacher aide) may have led to changes in their understanding of teamworking.

Influencing the building of knowledge in the ZPD were other aspects of the activity system of cogen. During cogen sessions participants discussed their understandings of collaboration around teamworking. They reflected on their work practices and past experiences of collaboration. They also engaged in dialogue about problems they faced and created action plans for future working. From an activity theoretical perspective the outcomes from the cogen sessions were attained through mediated actions involving the subjects (participants), tools, rules, division of labour and community associated with activity system. Both the object and the outcome of each cogenenerative activity were locally relevant in that they addressed concerns relevant to each participating team. However, participant activity during and around cogen sessions revealed contradictions and/or tensions in participant mediated actions.

From an activity theoretical perspective the goal is not to free the activity system from these contradictions or tensions, rather, it is to “embrace them as seeds of change” (Roth et al., 2000, p. 64). Roth et al., (2000) maintained that discussion in cogens “is not simply to understand but an explicated effort to increase the action potential for the participants towards learning” (p. 64). In
ZPD learning is a conjoined practice where participants are both learners and teachers; what Grimmett (2014) identifies as obuchenie – a “dialectical interrelationship of teaching and learning” (p. 11). Therefore, the dialogues during cogen sessions did not just reveal what collaboration looked like in the teams but supported the development of an understanding of collaboration in their team for team members. The exposure of contradictions and tensions in previously held understandings motivated participants to develop new understandings of collaboration, realise new possibilities of collaboration and potentially new ways of working.

What an activity system analysis of participant cogen sessions permitted was an exploration of the factors that influenced the building of knowledge around team collaboration. These influences could be seen in the tensions and contradictions that occurred within cogen sessions, exposed in the ZPD as Engeström’s (1999) terrain of struggle and surprise, leading to participant changes in understanding and, in some cases, to changes in teamworking. From this perspective cogen sessions can be understood as active environments, supporting obuchenie where each participant learnt from the other, building an understanding of collaboration together, rather than environments that focused on merely the accumulation of knowledge about collaboration. This is one of the ways CHAT was employed to conceptualise the affordances of cogen for understanding collaborative teacher-teacher aide teaming.

7.3 The affordances of cogen in relation to understanding collaboration

Perceiving cogen as an environment where learning is a conjoined practice permits participants and researcher alike to gain a broader perspective of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. As discussed in earlier chapters the equitable forum for dialogue created by cogen supported the airing of different understandings/perspectives by team members. Cogen sessions also created a different space for team discussions; a space outside their usual meeting areas within the classroom; a zone of proximal development where ideas around collaboration could be explored and team members could step outside their usual roles.

7.3.1 Play and emotions

Grimmett (2014) likened the learning in ZPD to playing a game, a learning game (p. 14) where participants can take on different roles depending on the requirements of the game. According to Grimmett:
The ‘game’ will not continue to function unless it is actively taken up by and negotiated with other participants – who each bring their own unique ideas, emotions and experiences to the game. The game/ZPD (for example, working on a problem that some participants do not have the necessary knowledge to be able to solve alone) allows the participants to pretend to be who they currently are not … Each participant shares responsibility for keeping everyone ‘in the game’ – involved in the process of solving the problem, and developing the required motivation and knowledge to act beyond what they can currently do as individuals – otherwise, the game/ZPD ceases to function effectively. (p. 14)

Like a game, the atmosphere in cogen sessions in this study was frequently light-hearted and playful/fun. In this play team members listened intently to each other, for as Norris (2012) explained, “Play requires a deep listening to the moment, accessing the present need and responding accordingly” (p. 312).

Sprague and Parsons (2012) argued that “creativity is enhanced through sharing dialogic spaces” (p. 397), and Norris (2012) argued that “play is a disposition towards a task that fosters thresholds of possibilities, from which fresh ideas emerge” (p. 300). In this game environment of ZPD in cogen new and creative ideas emerged and participants were able to step away from the hierarchically differentiated, situated roles of teacher and teacher aide to, as Grimmett (2014) explained, “pretend to be who they currently are not” (p. 14) as each team member equally contributed her/his ideas to the game. Echoing Grimmett’s depiction of ZPD as a game Norris described his use of ZPD with students as a move away from the traditional focus on cognitive ability in ZPD towards the “creation of inter and intrapersonal dispositions, systematically removing obstacles and building steppingstones to play” (p. 310). What Grimmett and Norris depict is an inclusive environment where hegemony is removed and opportunities for dialogue and creativity/innovation prevail. This was the environment revealed in cogen sessions in this study.

The literature review revealed that collaborative relationships between teachers and teacher aides are negatively impacted by power differences (e.g., Bourke & Carrington, 2007; Reuda & Monzó, 2002; Vincent et al., 2005). Also, teacher aides speaking up to ensure their recognition on the team can present challenges given their perceived lack of status within the school and the team (e.g., Fisher & Pleasants, 2011; Lacey, 2001; O’Brien & Garner, 2001; Watkinson, 2003). By co-creating the learning game environment, where team members shared and built on each other’s
ideas and understandings about collaboration, both teachers and teacher aides were empowered. Thus, the game environment supported joint contribution to the dialogue around collaboration. An example of this is team member contributions to the outlines of collaboration in Chapter 4.

Joint understandings of collaboration and the empowerment of team members, particularly the teacher aides, to speak up and contribute to the dialogue around collaboration were essential components of the cogen sessions and integral to the exploration of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams in this study. The attainment of team/joint understandings of collaboration was one of the reasons cogen was selected for this study. Another reason cogen was selected was the opportunity cogen offered for team member reflection on their work practices. Reflecting on teamwork in cogen sessions was akin to the reflective teamwork described by Vincent et al. (2005) where team member self-esteem is enhanced “through opportunities to have their feelings and perspectives accepted unconditionally by the other” (p. 52). Vincent et al. defined acceptance in reflective teamwork as “the right of any individual to have their own unique thoughts and feelings in a given situation” (p. 52). In cogen sessions acceptance within the game in ZPD was supported by participant developed protocols or rules and participant engagement with the dialogic strategies, notably dialogic listening and radical listening.

The ideas of play, self-esteem and feelings indicate the important role emotions have in our interaction with others in the workplace; how they are “integral to what people do and know in the workplace” (Roth, 2007, p. 41). According to Roth (2007):

Our performances at work are mediated by how we feel – we all know that good days and bad days influence our working lives. What we do, how we do it, and how much we want to do it, are part of how well we perform the tasks that we face, and therefore the knowledge that we exhibit and thereby make available to others. (p. 41)

Reflecting on what cogen means to her Jessica (teacher, Team 5) illustrated the importance of emotions and the influence of cogen explaining, “But, people don’t feel valued and that is why they move on or that is why their wellbeing goes down, if they don’t feel they mean something. I think that cogen really tries to establish that relationship so that everyone feels valued in that room” (Interview 2, 13 May 2016). Jessica expressed the idea that, when supported by cogen protocols, cogen is, “a safe place for collaboration” (Interview 3, 3 June 2016).
7.3.2 Emotion and CHAT

Including a consideration of emotion within the framework of CHAT is a recent development in activity theory, (Roth, 2007; Stetsenko, 2005). In his study on emotion related to mathematical activities at work Roth (2007) contended that emotion is integral to practical action in two ways. Firstly, an individual’s emotional state informs her/his practical reasoning and practical actions. Secondly, her/his practical actions are “generally directed toward positive emotional valence” (p. 44). According to Roth, “People consciously participate in certain activity systems over others and frame goals that have a higher probability of success, and therefore a higher emotional valence” (p. 45). Within activity theory understanding of emotion lies in practical action:

by means of which persons nonconsciously make emotions and emotional states available to others. These others may, in their own actions, produce and reproduce the same or similar emotions, leading – through the process of entrainment – to the production of a collective emotion.

(Roth, 2007, p. 46)

In cogen sessions in this current study emotion can be seen as integral to participant engagement within cogen. Erica supporting Kate (teacher and teacher aide, Team A) as she struggled with the idea of developing the protocols together and Jessica and Alexa (teacher and teacher aide, Team 5) excitedly building their outline of collaboration together are examples of this, as is the collective emotions associated with the cогенеративity participants engaged in away from the cogen space.

When I began my exploration of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams I started with the understanding that collaboration was a practical activity that could be framed by CHAT where knowledge is articulated in terms of concrete practical actions (Roth, 2007). A literature review had revealed collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams predominantly concerns roles and responsibilities and communication. Thus, I expected to explore these in relation to the practical actions of team planning, mutual goals and sharing of resources as identified in the definition of collaboration outlined in Chapter 1. However, as Roth (2007) discovered in his study into work at a salmon hatchery, I came to realise the fundamental importance of emotion in relation to team member practical actions. The concept drawings participants created (e.g., Saige’s rainbow), the way team members sought friendship in their teamwork relationships and sought to resolve issues
related to time to meet and status are examples of this. These actions can be understood as
approaches that support higher emotional valence in relation to, for example, ease of
communication and understanding, easier/friendlier more supportive relationships and a greater
chance of success of their mutual/shared goals.

The emotional aspects related to collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams is not widely
reported in research. In research on teacher-teacher aide working hints as to the effect of emotion
on collaboration can be found in references to the positive effects of teacher aides on teachers. In
Blatchford et al.’s (2009) study on the impact of support staff in schools “one of the most notable
results” (p. 123) from the study was “the positive effect of support staff on teachers” (p. 123) in
relation to decreasing workload, decreasing teacher stress and bringing “about the pleasure of a
good working relationship, making the job easier and a reduction of pressure” (p. 123). In their
study on collaboration in teacher-teaching assistant teams in the UK, Devecchi and Rouse (2010)
referred to the “emotional and personal support aspect of TA’s [teaching assistants’] work in
relation to teachers” (p. 123). Devecchi and Rouse put forward the idea that “the human aspect of
the collaboration was pivotal in building a relationship in which the presence of a TA [teaching
assistant] did not undermine the teacher’s professional authority and competence” (p. 96). While
acknowledging the impact of emotion on teamworking relationships these studies would seem to
have missed the role emotion plays in collaboration for both team members. In this current
study teachers and teacher aides each sought higher emotional valence in their work together – not just
stress release or the pleasure of a good working relationship but the synergy of planning and
achieving mutual goals together, achieving more together than they would have achieved working
separately. The enthusiasm and excitement participants demonstrated during their cogen sessions
as they discussed their work and problem-solved together opened the door to further discussion and
avenues for more opportunities to improve their teamworking. As Jefferson and Anderson (2017)
suggested collaboration, like play, “is an emotional and intellectual scaffold for learning and
growth” (p. 134).

From an activity theoretical perspective the participants’ activities were oriented towards
individual and collective motives and their choice of goal-directed actions was oriented towards
achieving this higher emotional valence. According to Roth (2007), “Emotional states therefore
shape the nature of practical action as it unfolds, by contribution to the determination of the next
operation” (p. 59). An emotional state that was central to cogen for participants in this current
study was that of enjoyment, of humour and laughter.
### 7.3.3 Humour and collaboration

Humour has been recognised as “a lubricant for social life” (Dziegielewski, Jacinto, Laudadio, & Legg-Rodriguez, 2003). According to Norris (2012), “‘Work’ places and schools need play and flexibility so that those who dwell in such places find them humane. To be human is to have humor, the ability to laugh. It defines us as a species” (p. 304). However, humour is an aspect of interpersonal communication that is seldom referred to in connection with collaboration in schools. Dziegielewski et al. (2003) argued that humour’s role in communication is overlooked and that “…humour is generally not fully recognized as a critical tool for use in the professional setting” (p. 75).

In literature around school working humour has been identified as a personal quality that teacher aides bring to their job (Bourke, 2008; Farrell et al., 1999), as valuable for teachers working with students with special needs (Shaddock et al., 2007), and as a key element in building and maintaining positive relationships with students (Groom, 2006). Humour has been identified as a way of reducing tension in teacher-paraprofessional teams (Devlin, 2008). In relation to collaboration in schools James et al. (2007) identify humour as important to working relationships in schools however, they do not say how or why it is important. In the current study the majority of team members identified humour as valuable in supporting team membership and easing differences between team members.

Like Dziegielewski et al. (2003), I found little research supporting the use of humour as an integral component of team relationships. So, I was not looking at humour in relation to collaboration when I began data collection. However, when coding the data I realised humour had an important role in cogen and in relation to collaboration in each of the teams. Dziegielewski et al. identified two essential elements of humour; laughter and smiling. In this study laughter and smiling were present in every interaction between team members. According to Martin (2007), “laughter can be a signal of friendliness and playful intentions.” (p. 9) and “laughter may serve an important biosocial function of coupling together the positive emotions of members of a group and thereby coordinating their activities” (p. 10). The idea of positive emotions, notably what Roth (2007) identified as positive emotional valence, offered a way that humour’s role in collaboration in these teams could be understood and its influence on the activity of teamwork.
In this study humour took different forms and had various influences on team relationships. Humour was a way of helping team members bond as indicated in this comment by Fran (teacher, Team D):

I love being part of the team. Personally, I know I need to feel valued and I do, and it can be fun and we have lots of laughs when there is horrendous things happening we can have a good laugh, and we learn from each other.
(Interview 1, 4 November 2015)

Humour as laughter was identified as assisting in easing tension as noted in this comment by Jay (teacher aide, Team C):

The teacher next door makes us laugh when we need to and that really helps. It breaks the ice and settles everything down. “Okay, this is just what we do. Let’s get on with it.” So, the humour is so important. (Interview 1, 3 November 2015)

Humour was a way team members indicated that they get along, such as this statement by Karen (teacher, Team B), “We get along very well. We laugh a lot” (Interview 1, 28 October 2015) and in the small asides between team members in cogen sessions as in this segment between Kate and Erica (teacher aide and teacher, Team A) during Cogen 2 (15 February 2016).

Kate: She has a mountain of experience. I feel I can ask her anything and she will know the answer or who I need to go and see. She is organised and she is always here before me and she is always here when I leave (Laughter). My children think that she lives at school.
(Erica: whispering – I do!) (Laughter) And she is a happy, nice approachable person.

Erica: Aww, thank you [Kate].

Humour was also employed by team members as a way of providing the teacher aide with more status within the team as when Alese (teacher) and Alaric (teacher aide) from Team 6 were discussing the location of fake money for a math activity during Observation 1 (26 April 2016). Alese could not find the fake money that Alaric had created for the activity. Alaric took over setting up the activity to allow Alese time to search for the money. As she searched, Alese told the students, “I am going to get in trouble!” Alaric replied, “Yeah, that took me three days!”
finding the money Alese exclaimed, “Look what I found! That was close!” Alaric identified humour as an integral part of their work relationship with laughter happening “most of the time, yes, except when we are having trouble with a particular student” (Interview 2, 17 May 2016). Alaric stated that Alese “is really bubbly and happy and laughing” (Interview 1, 19 April 2016) and that it is, “a good situation to work in” (Interview 1, 19 April 2016).

In interviews and observations humour was a way team members eased tension and supported their relationship. As Johnson and Johnson (2013) asserted, “Humor is an important influence on the effectiveness of group communication. Humor tends to promote cohesiveness and reduce tension in groups” (p. 158). However, as Martin (2007) warned, humour “can also be a method of communicating disagreement, enforcing norms, excluding individuals, and emphasizing divisions between groups” (p. 364). Looking at humour from the perspective of emotional valence, participants seeking higher emotional valence, presented a way to place emphasis on understanding humour as an element influencing an activity rather than any attempt to guess at an individual’s motives. Humour’s role in team member collaboration in this study is best illustrated through a closer look at humour in team member cogen sessions.

**Humour in cogen.** Schrage (1995) argued that “collaboration is a relationship with a dynamic fundamentally different from ordinary communication” (p. 34) and that “We don’t just collaborate with people; we also collaborate with the patterns and symbols people create” (p. 34). Schrage was referring to music lyrics and diagrams, however, in this study humour in cogen created a different dynamic, making cogens different from their usual meeting styles and the patterns and symbols, the images and messages participants employed as part of the humour changed the activity they were engaged in. For example, during their first cogen Jessica (teacher) and Alexa (teacher aide) from Team 5 were discussing the problem of having time and space to meet. It was mooted that they might have to cogen the problem. Jessica agreed and then the discussion took a different turn when Alexa introduced the image of them trying to cogen, locked in the store room, as the following excerpt reveals.

Jessica: Exactly

Alexa: We can lock ourselves in the store room (*Laughter*)

Jessica: Say to the kids

Alexa: (*Interrupting*) We will be back in a minute, time out for teachers!

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Jessica: *(over the top of Alexa)* Free for all! *(Laughter)*

Alexa: Yes, I know. *(Laughing)* Okay.

*(Cogen 1, 29 April 2016)*

Both Jessica and Alexa wanted to have time to meet and plan but, as explained in Chapter 5, their work with the students was very demanding and, as they both put the needs of the students first, this left them with almost no time to meet. The lack of time to meet and plan together created stress, particularly, for Alexa. In this cogen session the humour created by the image of them locked in the store room while the children engaged in a free for all outside eased the tension in the discussion around meetings. With the tension eased both spoke about their concern over how to fit meeting time around supporting the students. Out of this discussion came the idea of developing their own code, ways of talking about concerns relating to the students without the students being aware of what they were talking about. From an activity theoretical perspective humour changed the dynamic of the activity of working out how they were going to hold meetings. Easing the tension with humour opened up the discussion introducing participant *feelings* about holding meetings with students present, thereby identifying previously concealed tensions inherent in the problem of holding meetings. With these tensions aired, and the mood lightened by humour, participants came up with a creative solution of introducing codes.

When humour is understood as a method of supporting emotional valence within the activities in cogen the role of humour in collaboration can be understood, not only as a way to ease tension in a relationship or promote cohesiveness in the team, but as an integral component of collaboration; changing both the dynamic of the dialogue and the outcome of the actions participants choose. Humour can be understood as supporting the play, self-esteem and feelings of participants in the ZPD of cogen. Participant comments about how good it felt to be involved in the activities, such as problem-solving, in their cogen sessions and how much more productive the sessions were than their usual meetings revealed how engaged participants became in cogen. As Roth (2007) explained, when individuals are engaged in something they find interesting and enjoyable emotions of enjoyment and motivation are produced and reproduced (p. 47). Hence, humour contributed to the cognegativity participants took away from the cogen sessions and opened the door to creative, innovative solutions through the actions individuals took to support higher emotional valence. However, as Roth and el Kadri (2016) suggested, cogen is not an
unproblematic panacea (p. 326). In this study the challenges of cogen related to understanding the concept of cogen and the different perspectives of collaboration revealed in cogen.

7.4 The challenges of cogen in relation to understanding collaboration in this study

In this study two key issues affected participant understanding of and involvement in cogen sessions. These issues, these challenges of cogen for participants, in turn challenged my understanding of collaboration for teams in this study and necessitated a search for an alternative way to frame collaborative activity. The first of these issues involved the name cogenerative dialoguing. The second issue involved the dichotomy created between participant beliefs/understandings of teamworking and collaboration and the structure of cogen with its protocols and focus on equity.

7.4.1 Understanding the name cogenerative dialoguing

In their article *Dialogue about dialogue*, Geelan, Gilmer and Martin (2006) explored the “friendliness” of the term cogenerative dialogue. Geelan argued that such labels may be difficult for a layperson. When I approached school staff to participate in this study my initial concern that the language, the very size of this seven-syllable term could possibly alienate potential participants became compounded by the realisation that most school staff I approached had never heard of the term cogenerative dialoguing. Only one senior staff member from one school, Angelwood Primary School, indicated any knowledge of cogenerative dialoguing. I found that the idea of cogenerative dialoguing often met with interest from senior staff and teachers, but not from teacher aides. The following comment from Erica (teacher, Team A) illustrates teacher response to the idea of cogen, “When you first spoke about it I had never heard of it before. It was a new thing, sounded interesting. So, I thought, oh yeah, we could give that a try” (Interview 2, 25 February 2016).

Teacher aides reported that the term cogenerative dialoguing initially made them feel “slightly overwhelmed”, (Kate, Team A, Interview 2, 25 February 2016) and that cogenerative dialoguing would be “challenging” (Alaric, Team 2, Cogen 4, 8 December 2015). Reflecting on their introduction to cogen Karen and Marie (teacher and teacher aide, Team B) informed me that, while Karen had been excited about the prospect of participating in cogenerative dialoguing, Marie had not and Karen had to encourage her to participate (Cogen 7, 22 March 2016). Marie explained
she initially felt cogen sounded like it would be too hard to do, expressing a lack of confidence in her ability to engage with cogenerative dialoguing (Cogen 7, 22 March 2016). However, participation in and engagement with cogen alleviated discomfort with the term and, for the teacher aides, any lack of confidence in their ability to engage with cogen as illustrated by the following comments made during their final interviews:

I feel more confident than I did in the beginning. … At first I thought, oh no, but I really thoroughly enjoyed it. … So, I do feel happier about it. I do feel more confident and I can really just see us doing this in our planning time together.  
(Marie, Interview 3, 23 March 2016).

I have come out of these meetings and I feel good for the day. It does, it does something to you. I don’t know what but it does.  
(Alaric, Interview 3, 10 June 2016).

I feel happy to use cogen. I can see exactly how it can help.  
(Kate, Interview 3, 23 March 2016).

From an activity theoretical perspective the concern over what cogen was, and whether they could participate, created tensions in the activities (e.g., developing cogen protocols) in the early cogen sessions, initially inhibiting joint, equitable, contribution to the dialogue and object of the activity. An example of this can be seen in Kate’s (teacher aide, Team A) hesitation and reticence during the development of their team protocols during their first cogen session (see Chapter 6). I had understood cogen to be supportive of equity and sought to include cogen in this study as a way of encouraging and supporting different perspectives on team collaboration. I had not anticipated that teacher aides’ would be concerned over what cogen was, or concerned over their ability to participate. This raises questions as to the accessibility of cogen and how such a term can be made friendlier.

In this study, explaining that the term cogenerative dialoguing means co-generating ideas did not completely assuage concern over their ability to participate for teacher aides or make them more comfortable with the term, as was the case with Gilmer and Martin’s students (Geelan et al., 2006). In this current study, it was often the teacher’s engagement with the principles of equity in cogen that encouraged the teacher aide’s participation as with the example of Erica and Kate’s
(teacher and teacher aide, Team A) protocol activity in Cogen 1. The teacher aides were invited to participate, empowered to speak up and contribute their ideas to the discussions. Thus, joint participation was supported and joint ideas on collaboration were developed. Alaric (teacher aide, Team 6) illustrates how cogen supported this cohesiveness commenting, “I reckon we are getting better outcomes … Before cogen the collaboration of teacher-teacher aide is there but it is not cohesive. I think cogen makes it more cohesive and you become more the one than the two” (Interview 3, 10 June 2016).

Exploring the activities within cogen sessions through the lens of activity theory highlighted the tensions within both mental and physical enactments of the activity and the ways that participants sought to ease those tensions. Even though the teachers often initiated the joint participation, empowering the teacher aides, through the lens of activity theory collaboration between the team members can be understood as a reciprocal process, each supporting the other (albeit in different ways), transforming both the team members and the object of the activity.

7.4.2 Different perspectives and the need for a different framework to understand collaboration

Collaboration is often treated as a uniform phenomenon for which we need to find universal laws and prescriptions.
(Engeström et al., 2015, p. 92).

My initial understanding of collaboration was as a uniform phenomenon as described by Engeström et al. (2015). In seeking to find out how teacher-teacher aide team members collaborate I thought to find procedures, set activities of collaboration, such as those identified in the definition of collaboration revealed in Chapter 1, being employed across the teams. While a literature review had revealed that a teacher-teacher aide team relationship was possibly the “least understood and most complex of all professional relationships” (Friend & Cook, 2017, p. 259) it also revealed similar challenges and patterns of collaboration across different school teams. For example, there is overall agreement in published literature and research that collaboration involves the sharing of mutual goals and that this is the same across school teams no matter the difference in, for example, gender, work areas, and team sizes. Thus, I expected communication, the ideas about communication and the methods the team members employed to communicate, to share their mutual goals, would in all likelihood have a similar structure across the different teams in this
study. However, like Engeström et al. (2015), I found that “collaboration is not uniform” (p. 92). This was most evident in the concept of culture and collaboration during cogen sessions.

As discussed in earlier chapters two teachers in this study incorporated their understanding of culture into their communication with the teacher aide. The cultural perspectives/beliefs of Harry (teacher, Team 2) and Uwh (teacher, Team 1) influenced the way they communicated with the teacher aide in their team and created a dichotomy for Harry and Uwh between their cultural understandings of working with, collaborating with, their other team member and the protocols and equity focus within cogen sessions.

In Team 2 Harry was younger than Alaric (teacher aide) and this presented a problem for Harry in relation to communication with Alaric. Harry spoke of how he struggled with his cultural understanding that the young do not put their thoughts into the conversation of the elders, how this made him reticent in his communication with Alaric and how he has had to work to overcome this reticence (Interview 1, 20 November 2015). In Team 1, Uwh’s understanding of collaboration involving respect for the other did not let him see Bailey as a teacher aide. As Uwh explained:

It’s the respect we have for others back in New Zealand …Whichever adult comes into the classroom, whether they are a volunteer or a teacher aide, there is another adult there who can help change the lives of the students. That’s how I look at it. I don’t see [Bailey] as a teacher aide.
(Interview 1, 23 November 2015).

Cogen, where the focus is on equity and parity of participation (Stith, 2007), offered a challenge for Harry as Alaric was older than Harry. This also presented a challenge for Alaric as he was not as comfortable taking a lead role. Alaric, described as sensitive, kind, and more of a “sit back person” who does not cross boundaries (Alese’s comments Interview 2, 10 May 2016) had to take on a more active role in initial cogen sessions with Harry. An example of this is his lead role in writing the team’s cogen protocols during their first cogen session. However, as happened in other teams, Harry and Alaric’s engagement with discussion around ideas developed during their cogen sessions resulted in greater involvement in the cogen sessions and excitement in what they were able to achieve together.
Uwh (teacher, Team 1) described himself as “a talker” (Interview 1, 23 November 2015). He told stories that were entertaining, as well as illustrative of his ideas during his interview and the team cogen sessions. Uwh jokingly commented, “Everyone knows if you give me a microphone I am on there for a while!” (Interview 1, 23 November 2015). As discussed in Chapter 6, cogen sessions were never long enough for Uwh. Bailey (teacher aide) described himself as “very reserved and quiet” commenting, “I will let people talk and I will add in then” (Interview 1, 23 November 2015). Bailey liked to take notes and Uwh and Bailey wanted hands on activities during cogen (Cogen 4, 8 December 2015). This team had developed a way of working that incorporated Uwh’s idea of culture. These team members found the process of cogen, where participants engage in dialogue to co-construct knowledge and shared understandings (LaVan, 2005), challenging. Instead, they turned the cogen sessions upside down, telling stories, drawing plans and pictures.

In each of these teams the teacher’s understanding of culture influenced their participation in cogen and their communication with the teacher aide with whom they worked and the teacher aide’s natural reticence initially limited their participation in the cogen sessions. Analysis of the activities the team members undertook within their cogen sessions revealed tensions and/or contradictions within the activity and how the team members sought to overcome them. This analysis revealed issues within cogen activities, such as status and problems related to communication and planning, but offered little in the way of positioning cultural influences on team collaboration. To resolve this I turned to Engeström et al.’s (2015) “framework for identifying types of collaborative action in face-to-face encounters” (p. 108).

7.5 A different framework to understand collaboration

Drawn from activity theory Engeström et al.’s (2015) framework provides a way to understand a form of collaboration through an examination of it alongside other parallel forms of collaboration positioned along the axes of object and instrumentality. The nature of the object and the type of instrumentality utilised in the activity form the foundational concepts of this framework. According to Engeström et al. (2015), “The concept of object refers to the object-orientatedness of human activity; the concept of instrumentality refers to the mediation of human activity by cultural tools and signs” [emphasis in original] (p. 93). The framework also contains four additional elements Engeström et al. related to collaboration in face-to-face teams; coordination, cooperation, reflective communication and carnivalisation (p. 100). According to Engeström et al., coordination refers to team member interaction being regulated by a script, a usual or set way of
communicating/working that encompasses participant roles and order of actions where each team member pursues their own object. *Cooperation* refers to team members focusing on a shared problem or task (temporarily unified object) where the usual way of working is suspended to support the search for a solution. And *reflective communication* refers to team members focus on the shared object and their interaction, “questioning and revising the script” (Engeström et al., 2015, p. 100).

Engeström et al. (2015) referred to *carnivalisation* as a mode of collaboration that goes beyond cooperation and reflective communication; as something akin to Bakhtin’s concept of carnivalisation where hierarchical structure and inequalities are suspended. Kajamaa and Lahtinen (2016) described Bakhtin’s concept of carnivalisation as where “all distance between people is suspended and everyone is an active participant ‘living in it’. The structure, customary order, etiquette, authority and socio-hierarchical positions of the actors get shifted and renewed” (p. 190). According to Kajamaa and Lahtinen (2016), “Carnivalisation emerges when the standard script falls apart and the actors start to construct unexpected meanings for the activity and create innovative solutions for the conflict of motives, which leads to new mode of collaboration” (p. 188).

Carnivalisation moves beyond the three types of collaboration (coordination, cooperation and reflective communication) usually identified in activity-theoretical studies of collaboration (Engeström et al., 2015). It is in relation to carnivalisation that the idea of culture, as it influenced cogen sessions, can be explored to expand understanding around collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. Figure 7.3 illustrates the framework in relation to Uwh and Bailey’s cogen sessions.
Adapted from Engeström et al.’s (2015) framework for identifying types of collaborative action in face-to-face encounters (p. 108).

The axes of the diagram (Figure 7.3) represent the concepts of instrumentality and object. In literature around managing teacher aides (e.g., Birkett, 2004) collaboration is related to coordination as teachers aim to support and manage “their” aides. Each team member has a role and communication is linked to the object each is to achieve. Initially the object is heterogeneous, however, the heterogeneity is hidden by their scripted way of working (managing and being managed) that the participants follow, linking coordination to the idea of collaboration within these teams. In cooperation this managerial script is suspended as objects/objectives unite and team members focus on the shared problem or task. Each of the teams in this study demonstrated cooperation in their work practices, in their collaboration.

Reflective communication was integral to the dialogic strategies employed in the cogen sessions. Guided by their protocols and influenced by the dialogic strategies, team members did not
just suspend their usual way of communicating they questioned it as tensions and contradictions were revealed and team members sought to solve problems and explore their teamwork practice.

Carnivalisation offers an explanation for what happened in cogen when Uwh and Bailey engaged in problem-solving activities and spoke of their teamwork. Engeström et al. (2015) explained that “In carnalization, as the script falls apart, the concealed heterogeneity of objects becomes visible and is playfully developed by means of some open-ended and fluid instrumentality” (p. 107). In Uwh and Bailey’s case this was the pictures and plans they drew, their hands on activities and the way story took on a prominent role. The material artifacts they produced were inextricably entwined with their stories and recollections and, on occasion, with their future-oriented action plans. They did not follow the dialogic strategies introduced as part of cogen. As each team member told stories, illustrating their ideas, the heterogeneity of the objects of the activity became visible and their humour, interruptions and drawings expanded their ideas.

For teams like Harry and Alaric’s, reflective communication achieved in cogen provided a stepping stone to carnivalisation. In activity theoretical terms the food and drink and the dialogic strategies in their cogen sessions functioned as an effective instrumentality, initiating and supporting episodes of carnivalisation. For other teams, such as Erica and Kate’s (Team A), Jessica and Alexa’s (Team 5) and Karen and Marie’s (Team B), episodes of carnivalisation (such as observed when they created their outlines of collaboration) loosened up their usual way of working, providing a stepping stone to increased focus on cooperation and reflective communication.

Although different perspectives presented a challenge in relation to employing cogen to assist in developing an understanding of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams, the framework for identifying types of collaborative action presented a way – offered a language – to understand differences in collaborative practices. In Chapter 4, team member outlines of collaboration revealed the dynamic nature of collaboration. What the analysis of collaboration in relation to cogen sessions in this chapter revealed was how team members moved through the different episodes of collaboration. Thus, a picture of collaboration in these teams emerges as dynamic, cyclic where team members return to activities again and again during their collaboration, and fluid as they move through different episodes of collaboration at different times. The early definition of collaboration in Chapter 1 can now be expanded to include collaboration as a style of interaction that is cyclic, moving through different elements or episodes of collaboration that includes coordination, cooperation, reflective communication and carnivalisation.
7.6 Summary and concluding comments

In this chapter I discussed CHAT and its relevance in relation to cogenerative dialoguing and collaboration in this study addressing the final sub-question: How can CHAT be used to conceptualise the affordances and challenges of cogenerative dialoguing for understanding and explaining collaborative teacher-teacher aide teaming?

I began this chapter with an overview of CHAT, how it was employed in this study and its value in an exploration of collaboration, particularly, in relation to cogen. I followed this with a discussion on the role of cogen as a tool within the activity of team cogen sessions in this study. I explained how dialogue within cogen can be understood as having occurred within a zone of proximal development where participants engaged in a teaching/learning interrelationship. Thus, cogen sessions can be understood as active environments where participants built on their knowledge and understanding of collaboration in their team.

Next I discussed the affordances of cogen for understanding collaboration in the teams. In this discussion I drew attention to the role of play, emotion and humour in team cogen sessions and the relationship of these aspects of communication to team collaboration. I identified play occurred as a learning game in the zone of proximal development in cogen and explained that, in co-creating the learning game, participants were empowered to share ideas and build on each other’s ideas and understandings about collaboration. The concept of emotion was shown to influence individual and collective motives and choice of actions as participants sought higher emotional valence. Humour was identified as an emotional state that was central to cogen and an important aspect of team collaboration. In cogen humour encouraged a different dynamic where play was supported and creative solutions developed and emotions of enjoyment and motivation were produced and reproduced as participants chose actions that supported higher emotional valence. Humour contributed to and supported the cogenerativity participants took from their cogen sessions. It also supported an easing of tensions, team bonding, teamwork and teacher aide status within the teams.

In exploring the challenges of cogen in relation to understanding and explaining collaboration I focused on the challenges of understanding cogen and of different perspectives on collaboration. Understanding cogen was a particular concern for teacher aides, affecting their initial participation in cogen sessions. This was reflected in tensions within the activity systems of cogen
sessions. An analysis of how the tensions were eased revealed how collaboration between team members can be understood as a reciprocal process where each supports the other, transforming both team members and the object of the activity.

The exploration of different perspectives on collaboration focused on cultural perspectives and was supported by the use of a framework developed by Engeström et al. (2015) that identifies types of collaborative action. The example of Uwh and Bailey’s cogen sessions reflected the different approach this team had to collaboration during cogen and shone a light on how team members move through episodes of collaborative action. Collaboration was revealed as dynamic, cyclic, where team members return to activities again and again during their collaboration, and fluid as they move through different episodes of collaboration at different times. Thus, through the lens of activity theory the affordances and challenges of cogen for understanding and explaining collaborative teacher-teacher aide teaming were made apparent.

In the following chapter I discuss the conclusions and recommendations from this study and my reflections on the study process.
Chapter 8
Conclusions, recommendations and reflections

8.1 Overview

The world has become far too complex and interrelated for individuals to succeed without collaborative skills.
(Tamm & Luyet, 2005, p. 4)

Why collaboration now? Not only because we don’t really have a choice – but because it’s the best choice we’ve got.
(Schrage, 1995, p. 5)

As the comments by Tamm and Luyet (2005) and Schrage (1995) suggest the subject of collaboration in schools is both significant and topical. In this study I have explored collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams as revealed in personal interviews, concept drawings, team observations and cogenerative dialoguing sessions. Individual perspectives on collaboration (e.g., interviews) and joint perspectives on collaboration (e.g., the outlines of collaboration) have supported an in-depth exploration of collaboration in participating teacher-teacher aide teams. A literature review revealed the complex nature of these teams and collaboration, as well as the many work related challenges team members face both individually and as a team.

The findings from this study reveal that collaboration influences and is influenced by the activities of the team members as they work to complete tasks designed to support student learning in their classroom. The emphasis on collaboration as a task based/focused activity that team members step into and out of as the need arises offers an answer to Friend and Cooks’ (2017) query (see Section 1.4) concerning how teachers and paraeducators balance collaboration with their roles as supervisor and supervised. Focusing on a task teacher-teacher aide team members did, like the collaborative researchers Stewart (1996) referred to, empower each individual through the rotation of the leadership as appropriate to the task and the individual who freely took on responsibilities in keeping with their own strengths and abilities (p. 23). While all team members agreed that the teacher is ultimately responsible for the classroom teachers shared the responsibility, in relation to collaboration on a task, with the teacher aide, thus permitting the co-existence of collaboration within the traditional role of supervisor and supervised. For teams in this study, coming together to
collaborate on a task, stepping into and out of collaboration, did not diminish the teacher’s position as supervisor, rather it permitted occasions of shared responsibility and shared, decentralised decision making that eased the workload for teachers. Drawing on the capabilities of both team members collaboration between team members on shared tasks offered a way to enhance their relationship and promote improved outcomes for the team members and their students.

The findings from this study highlight the complex, dynamic and fluid nature of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams and reveal that collaboration in these teams begins with individuals being open to collaboration, voluntarily seeking to collaborate. Whether through friendship, the need to solve a problem, or because of a cultural perspective on teamworking, team members in this study challenged the scripted hierarchical supervisor-supervised practice of teacher-teacher aide working. A new picture of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams emerged as a web of knots of different sizes and shapes, as team members collaborated on different tasks, knots that are sustained by interconnected /interwoven threads representing (to borrow a word from Uwh), Tautuko (all forms of support). The findings from this study reveal that for some teams, such as those in this study, collaboration is not only possible it is an invaluable style of interaction that supports both teachers and teacher aides.

This study contributes to emerging understandings around collaboration in schools and informs directions for future research in the field of collaboration in schools and teacher-teacher aide teams. The results of this study suggest ways in which schools and pre-service course providers may employ/take account of the insights provided on teacher-teacher aide collaboration in this study. In this final chapter I present a summary of the findings, and discuss the implications of these findings in relation to teacher-teacher aide teamworking and further research. Finally, I present my reflections on this research project and my journey on the path to my present understanding of collaboration.

8.2 Summary of findings

The guiding question for this research project was: How do teachers and teacher aides collaborate? In seeking to answer this question this research focused on team member communication and activity. The findings revealed that collaboration was informal, occurring on an as needed basis and driven by the tasks at hand. Data analysis revealed the dynamic and fluid
nature of collaboration in these teams – a collaboration that ranged across interpersonal interactions, including coordination, cooperation and carnivalisation.

In much of the literature around collaboration, coordination and cooperation are not identified as collaborative working. Rather, they are portrayed as stepping stones or stages to collaboration (e.g., Cramer, 2006; Dickinson, 2006; King, 2010; Little, 1990). Carnivalisation, a “new form of collaboration that destabilizes or breaks the standard script which defines the proceeding of the activity and the actors’ roles” (Kajamaa & Lahtinen, 2016, pp. 190-191), does not feature in these linear or staged models of collaboration in teamworking. In these models true collaboration is often depicted as akin to integration, for example, Dickinson’s (2006) concept of true collaboration as a handshake where “it is difficult to tell where one hand stops and the other starts” (p. 58). John-Steiner (2000) revealed the process of this integration in her comment, “Generative ideas emerge from joint thinking, from significant conversations, and from sustained, shared struggles to achieve new insights by partners in thought” (p. 3).

At first glance the messiness and destabilisation of carnivalisation appears to offer little to support a position as a new form of collaboration. However, as Tamm and Luyet (2005) argued, the world has become more complex and interrelated. Historical, linear or staged models of collaboration with a standard script of steps or procedures to achieving collaboration may need to be revised to include a more dynamic, divergent and flexible form of collaboration: carnivalisation.

In her book, Creative Collaboration, John-Steiner (2000) identified herself as a member of “a growing community of scholars who view learning and thinking as a social process” (p. 3). According to John-Steiner, this community of scholars “share a recognition that in our changing world, traditional concepts are overturned at an increasing rate, habitual modes of work are transformed, and new organizational forms are established in offices and factories” (p. 3). This sentiment is echoed by Fullan (2016) in relation to changes in education where schools become collaboratives (p. 61). According to Fullan, in this model of schooling students become “leaders in learning amongst themselves” (p. 261) learning in communities and with teachers. The idea of collaborative communities changes the traditional top down approach to teaching and learning, bringing the idea of collaboration in Fullan’s collaboratives closer to the idea of carnivalisation as collaboration.
In Kajamaa and Lahtinen’s (2016) understanding of carnivalisation, “the emergence and development of carnivalization calls for role changes of the actors involved as well as qualitative shifts in interaction” (p. 191). In teacher-teacher aide teams in this study participant teamworking veered away from the traditional supervisor-supervised role of teacher-teacher aide teams. Team members had developed friendships to support their teamworking, incorporated alternative methods of communication to keep in touch both in and out of school hours, met to plan and help each other outside school hours and, in some teams, included humour and aspects from their background (e.g., Lisandra’s worldview where collaboration is in everything) and culture in the creation of their own collaborative practice. With no preparation for working specifically with a teacher or teacher aide in the classroom nor preparation for collaboration, little or no in-school time to meet and plan, and little or no support for collaboration for their team from the schools, participants in this study had evolved different approaches to collaboration in their teams, approaches that, at times, aligned with a collaborative approach I have associated with carnivalisation as depicted by Engeström et al. (2015) and Kajamaa and Lahtinen.

In presenting findings from this study I have emphasised similarities in the ways team members collaborated at Angelwood Primary School and Bayshore Special School however, this should not be taken to mean collaboration was identical in the teams or in the schools. Making generalisations about collaboration in these teams does not do justice to the complexity of their collaborative relationships as it distorts the fine details inherent in the collaborative relationship/approach of each team. It is also important to remember that participating team members belonged to their own sub-cultures, for example, religion, gender, teachers, teacher aides, Prep, Senior Secondary and, therefore, their interests and their participation in collaborative practice were not always identical. However, in relation to the teams that participated in this study, it is fair to make the following claims about collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams:

- collaboration needs to be entered into voluntarily;
- the nature of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams is dynamic, fluid, highly dependent on the task at hand, and ranged across a number of relational interactions (i.e., cooperating, coordinating and carnivalisation);
- the physical environment (e.g., room temperature) can influence team members’ feelings of comfort and ability to collaborate;
- providing teacher aides with a desk and/or place to store their work materials and personal items can support teacher aide feelings of comfort, being valued, and the teacher
aide’s ability to support the teacher/s and students and, hence, their collaboration with the teacher;

- collaboration can be supported through friendship and humour between team members;
- collaboration can be promoted through school support in keeping teams together past the first year and the provision of joint professional development;
- different cultural perspectives on communication and ways of working can influence how team members understand and practise collaboration; and
- not having time to meet and plan, to reflect, share experiences and ideas, and problem solve can impede successful teamworking and team collaboration.

In summary, how teams in this study collaborated was influenced by the various perceptions of collaboration, the resources available for collaboration (e.g., time and space to meet and plan), and the support they received from the school. These findings amend the definition of collaboration developed in Chapter 1. A new definition of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams in schools reveals collaboration as a style of interaction that is: entered into voluntarily; incorporates a focus on mutual goals, a sharing of expertise, responsibility for outcomes, resources and rewards; incorporates participant positive interdependence; supported by friendship and humour; and cyclic in nature, moving through different elements or episodes of collaboration that include coordination, cooperation, reflective communication, and carnivalisation.

8.2.1 Summary of findings in relation to cogen

I did not set out to prove that cogen would work with teacher-teacher aide teams or that cogen could become a tool in the toolbox of teacher-teacher aide collaborative practice. However, team members who participated in cogen sessions all reported that engagement with cogen had positively influenced their work practices and that co-generative elements within cogen, what I have identified as cogenativity, will continue to play a part in their team discussions. Participant engagement with cogen offered opportunities for team members to explore, reflect and gain greater insight into their work practises. Engagement with cogen also provided participants with a method of problem-solving and what Uwh called “terminology” (Cogen 4, 8 December 2015), referring to the language and ideas around cogen and collaboration discussed during the cogen sessions. That engagement with cogen produced positive outcomes for participants in this study is consistent with literature and research involving cogenerative dialoguing. For example, Bondi (2013) explained that the many positive outcomes for cogenerative dialoguing suggest that this dialogic process is
indeed “a powerful opportunity for improving educational practice” (p. 8). Bondi was referring here to education practice in relation to learning and teaching. Noting the positive benefits to their team relationship, including the building of respect and trust amongst team members, findings from this study revealed cogen has the potential to be just as powerful an opportunity for improving teamworking and collaborative practice in teacher-teacher aide teams.

8.3 Implications and recommendations

In this exploratory study into collaboration data were obtained from ten teams from two public schools where collaboration varied between teams and across schools. While limited recommendations can be made based on the findings, these findings, when considered with other literature on collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams and schools, can guide thinking and future research about collaboration and teamworking in teacher-teacher aide teams. Implications and recommendations for collaboration in schools around teacher-teacher aide teamworking and collaboration are discussed under the three subheadings, Initial support for collaboration, Ongoing support for collaboration – Towards the collaborative culture, and Cogen, teamworking and collaboration.

8.3.1 Initial support for collaboration

The finding that collaboration is voluntary is consistent with literature and research relating to collaboration in general and to working and collaborating in schools (e.g., Edmondson, 2012; Friend, 2000; Fullan, 2016; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Griffiths, 2010; Lacey, 2001; Slater, 2004). In this literature collaboration must be voluntary. It cannot be forced. According to Slater (2004), successful collaboration that resulted in school improvement was voluntary, “while collaborative activity that was imposed by others often resulted in participants expressing feelings of frustration, betrayal, uselessness, cynicism, disappointment, pain and anger” (para. 28). In this study all participants recognised the need to be open to collaboration if team members are to engage in collaborative practice, no matter the form collaboration took in the teams. This study supports Slater’s (2004) finding in relation to collaboration in schools that “Collaboration comes out of relationships” (para. 31) and that these relationships need to be built. There are two aspects of this that have implications for collaborative working in schools in relation to teacher-teacher aide teams. The first aspect relates to new teams and the value and importance of having time to learn about
each other – time to build the team. The second aspect relates to preparation to work with another adult in the classroom, and the idea of inclusivity in collaboration.

**Time to build the team.** In this study collaborative practices were informal and determined by the task at hand. Thus, teachers and teacher aides needed to be both open to collaboration and flexible, collaborating when, where and how they could, depending on the time and resources available to them. It was evident from this study that voluntarily entering into collaboration and being able to adapt the collaboration necessary for the tasks they needed to perform would have been supported if participants could have engaged in the essential first step of learning about each other instead of, as Snell and Janney (2010) observed, “learning to work as a team at the same time they must operate as a team” (p. 15). Taking time to get to know each other and construct a frame of understanding in relation to, for example, classroom behaviour management prepares team members for the task ahead.

As illustrated by findings from this study, leaving team members to team on the fly may result in team members placing greater emphasis on their individual roles and responsibilities, even though they share mutual goals. In relation to constructing a frame of understanding around collaboration within an organisation, Edmondson (2012) claimed that “it cannot be overstated that people tend to focus on their own tasks, failing to give adequate attention to how their tasks fit into the larger picture of the collective enterprise” (p. 84). Arguably, Edmondson’s claim is equally applicable to members of teacher-teacher aide teams. Supporting teacher-teacher aide teams by providing time for new team members to get to know each other offers a way for team members to begin their working relationship with an understanding of how their roles and responsibilities fit into the larger picture of teamworking within their classroom and, by extension, within the school. Therefore, a recommendation from this study is that school administrators provide opportunities at the beginning of the school year for team building between teachers and teacher aides, particularly those in new teams, so that team members can get to know each other, determine roles and responsibilities, and plan their teamworking.

**Training, inclusivity and collaboration.** In this study team members reported they had not received training in relation to working with a teacher aide (for teachers) or a teacher (for teacher aides) in the classroom. That teachers have not received training in working with another adult in the classroom and that this can have negative consequences for effective working with a teacher aide is a well-documented finding in literature and research around teacher-teacher aide working
(e.g., Blatchford et al., 2012; Chopra et al., 2011; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001). That an aide may also benefit from such training appears to have been ignored.

In much of the literature on training in relation to teacher-teacher aide teamworking the focus is on training for the teacher to supervise the teacher aide. However, if schools are to progress, as Marx (2014) asserted, into the future where the world is exponentially changing and “status quo has become a one-way ticket to obsolescence” (p. 6) then there is a need to ensure both teacher and teacher aide receive, not just training in relation to working with another adult in the classroom but, training in collaborative working with another adult in the classroom. As Marx argued, “It’s becoming obvious that we can’t afford to relegate talented professionals in any field to isolation in the trenches” (p. 5).

Marx (2014) is not alone in his call for inclusivity to support the future directions of organisations such as schools. Griffiths (2010) referred to the need for what she envisioned as a “web of collective action” (p. 393) where each individual has a say. Quicke (2000) referred to a need for “democratic collaboration” [emphasis in original] (p. 299) in the ‘new times’. As noted earlier, Fullan (2016) identified the need for “collaborative work cultures” (p. 108) and the need for schools to become effective networks or “collaboratives” (p. 261). In partnership with Rincón-Gallardo, Fullan identified eight essential features of effective networks that include “flat power structures”, “connecting outwards to learn from others” and “forming new partnerships among students, teachers, families, and communities” (Rincón-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016, p. 10). As the comments from Marx, Griffiths, Quicke, and Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan suggest, the idea that collaboration, notably inclusive collaborative working, is vital to future work practices is a pervasive theme in the literature around the future of working in organisations, including schools. The implications of the value of collaboration to schools and the problems associated with a lack of training for teachers and teacher aides in relation to working with another adult in the classroom are of particular relevance to pre-service course providers. Considered in light of the importance of collaboration to future of work practices, and the significance of inclusivity to collaboration, it makes eminent sense to ensure that both teachers and teacher aides receive training in relation to collaboratively working with another adult in the classroom.

8.3.2 Ongoing support for collaboration – Towards the collaborative culture

In collaborative work we learn from each other by teaching what we know; we engage in mutual appropriation.
As John-Steiner’s (2000) comment suggests, having time to learn from each other, time to communicate with each other is an important aspect of collaborative work. However, team members in this study all reported there was often limited or no time to talk and plan together. In three teams, team members met on a regular basis before or after school, however, teacher aides were not paid for this time. In three other teams teacher aides could not meet with teachers before or after school due to work commitments related to their second job or to other duties they needed to perform such as bus duty. In this study meetings between teachers and teacher aides often occurred on an *ad hoc* basis during lesson transitions, meal breaks and/or before or after school hours. That the lack of time for meetings can have a negative impact on teamwork is well documented in literature and research on teacher-teacher aide working (e.g., Blatchford et al., 2004; Howard & Ford, 2007; Lee, 2002; Reuda & Monzó, 2002). In research concerning teacher aide working (e.g., Blatchford et al., 2004; Butt, 2014) these findings have been linked to the deployment of teacher aides in schools and recommendations for new models of teacher aide deployment have been put forward, for example, the Teacher Assistant As Facilitator (TAAF) model (Butt, 2014) involving both team members planning together. Given the move towards schools as more collaborative environments where, as Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) explained, the trend will be to have a more flattened power structure, I believe there is another way to help resolve the issue of time to meet. I suggest that team members themselves can assist schools in finding resolutions to the problems of time to meet.

In their individual teams, team members in this study sought to mitigate the problem of lack of time to meet and plan through the use of technology (e.g., text messages and emails) and contact outside school hours. There are, undoubtedly, a multitude of ways team members in different schools have employed in an attempt to mitigate the problems associated with a lack of time to meet. As befitting the focus on collaboration in this study my recommendation is that team members collaborate with school administrators and other teacher-teacher aide teams to find creative ways to support time for teacher-teacher aide team members to meet. I also recommend that team members and schools share their challenges and successes around meeting times with other teams both within and between schools so that this important issue is not left to team members to deal with in isolation. Such collective action has the potential to benefit teams and schools as they learn from the experience of others.
Keeping teams together. In literature and research on teamworking, keeping team members together past the first year (e.g., Reuda & Monzó, 2002) and joint professional development/training (e.g., DfES, 2000) have been identified as supporting effective teamworking and collaboration. The implications for keeping team members together as revealed in this current study is that team members have time to build their team, to learn about each other, establish roles and responsibilities and build trust and respect for each other. The implication for joint professional development/training is that team members can build their team and employ the strategies learnt at the training session more effectively. Therefore, I recommend that schools support teacher-teacher aide teams by keeping them together past the first year and ensuring, whenever possible, that team members participate in joint professional development/training.

8.3.3 Cogen, teamworking and collaboration

Schools and colleges will need to attract diverse, talented members of the team as both excellent educators and role models. Preparation and professional development programs at all levels should address diversity and inclusion. Culturally sensitive communication, including language, expressions, and listening, should be treated as essential in building understanding within the school or colleges and throughout the community. … Deliberate efforts to get diverse people involved in thinking about the future should become part of normal operations. (Marx, 2014, p. 75)

Collaboration can only succeed through successful communication between all participants. (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, p. 136)

Marx’s (2014) and Jefferson and Anderson’s (2017) comments reflect the need for inclusion and the importance of communication in collaboration for schools and, by extension, teacher-teacher aide teams. Earlier I referred to the importance of having time to get to know each other and to meet and plan. In this section I discuss implications and recommendations around cogen.

In this study the findings reveal that cogen was as an approach to team communication that supported inclusion, team building, joint/team dialogue, problem-solving and planning. However, there was more to cogen in this study. Tobin (2014) wrote that cogen was created “as an activity
that could serve instructional improvement, teacher education, evaluation, and research” (p. 52). In this research cogen served as a method of data collection, an equitable approach to supporting joint team member understandings around collaboration in their team. Also, participant engagement with cogen led to team members discussing instructional improvement (e.g., how to better support students in an upcoming activity), teacher and teacher aide education (e.g., improving interpersonal communication) and evaluation (e.g., team members reflecting and evaluating their work practices). The implications of teacher-teacher aide engagement with cogen in relation to effective teamworking are substantial. By engaging in cogen team members can bolster their effectiveness in the classroom, creating a more productive, efficient work environment. Engaging with cogen can also support team building, communication between team members, the creation of a shared understanding, and team members’ ability to problem-solve.

John-Steiner (2000) argued that successful collaborative endeavours require “more than enthusiasm for brain-storming and synergy” (p. xvii). According to John-Steiner, “One of the greatest challenges is establishing trust. In a trusting environment, radical ideas are respectfully considered, opportunities for full participation are guaranteed, and peers and co-workers, as well as leaders, are influential in creative outcomes” (p. xvii). An implication from participant experience with cogen in this study is that engagement with cogen can also assist team members in building trust and respect and full participation by both team members.

Given the many positive implications engagement with cogen might offer teacher-teacher aide teams it would be reasonable to expect a recommendation that schools support teacher-teacher aide teams by supporting training in cogen. However, like mandating collaboration, arbitrarily imposing training in cogen on school staff can result in a rejection of the praxis of cogen (Roth, 2006). Also, care would have to be taken to ensure differences in cultural understandings of teamworking were taken into consideration and a recipe for cogen adapted to suit what Uwh and Bailey identified as the learning styles, as well as the teamworking requirements of each team. This presents challenges for schools and for teams attempting to engage with cogen. Therefore, while the findings from this study indicate that cogen be recommended for teacher-teacher aide teams this recommendation must be considered in the light of the challenges to implementing cogen.

In this study team members that completed four or more cogen sessions often became enthusiastic supporters of cogen, engaging others in a dialogue about the benefits of cogen and encouraging other team members to participate in the study. Engagement with cogen also
supported cogenerativity (Willis, 2016) were the environment of their cogen sessions changed the way participants acted and felt away from their cogen space, taking the ideas of cogen out into their working with others. Therefore, I recommend that schools keen to gain the benefit of cogen provide information on cogen to staff and training in cogen for those teams who, like the teams in this study, are open to the idea of cogen. Thus, cogen could be gradually introduced into the school and interest in, and the benefits from, cogen enhanced through participation.

8.4 Suggestions for future research directions

As this exploratory study reveals, coming to understand teamworking is not a swift or simple process. It requires knowledge and awareness of various aspects that influence teamworking such as: school organisational arrangements; history, notably school history and participants’ backgrounds, including team experiences; cultural backgrounds of individual teachers and teacher aides; communication skills, particularly oral skills; humour; play; status; culture; and identity. As an exploratory study, with investigation focused solely on teacher-teacher aide teams, this study was not designed to do justice to the all aspects of teamworking or the interconnected nature of the school community and collaboration in these teams. Follow-up research involving in-depth analyses of teamworking and team member interactions with other individuals, such as students, parents, school administrators and mentoring teachers and teacher aides, would extend the practical insights gained from this study; shedding more light on teamworking and collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams and in schools.

The findings from this study draw attention to the interest and possible benefits to teacher-teacher aide teams from participation in cogen. Research that explores teacher-teacher aide experience with cogen over an extended period of time (e.g., two or more years) would assist in filling a gap in research around cogen in schools and provide an analysis of the role cogen could play in developing and supporting teamworking and collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. Also, including individuals who interact with the team members, for example, parents, in team cogen sessions would contribute alternative perspectives on collaboration and cogen in relation to these teams, further enhancing findings from this research.

Finally, further research that includes teams from different school sites, such as independent schools and small schools, as well as teacher-teacher aide teams from different areas of the school,
for example, a library teacher-teacher aide team or a physical education teacher-teacher aide team, would contribute alternative team perspectives to future research findings.

8.5 Reflections

When I made the decision to begin this study I did so with the naïve expectation that I would, at the completion of my journey, have the information and understanding of collaboration to write a small book on the tips and tricks for successful collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams. Consistent with much of the literature and research around collaboration, I understood collaboration to mean effective teamworking. Having experienced both good and bad teamworking and many top-down reforms that seemed to make teamworking harder, I felt there should be a simple step-by-step guide that team members could employ themselves to improve their teamworking; their collaboration. As I explored collaboration with the help of participants in this current study I came to realise how complex the issue of collaboration is for these teams. I will write that book, but now it will contain more than simple tips and tricks to collaboration because collaboration, as revealed in this study, is a great deal more than effective teamwork. As Schrage (1995) argued, “Collaboration isn’t necessarily teamwork; and teamwork certainly isn’t collaboration” (p. xv).

Journal. Throughout the course of this research project I have kept a journal, which grew to several volumes! In this journal I recorded my thoughts, observations, and emerging questions relating to the unfolding of the research. I noted and explored ideas relating to these thoughts, observations and questions. The journal contains a variety of images, photographs of activity systems explored on a home blackboard and cartoons I developed depicting my story as a researcher. Also included are copies of emails I received pertaining to my research, for example, emails from participants relating to questions on meeting times and emails from school principals/staff relating to timetable arrangements and changes. The journal entries reveal the progress of the research process, the dramas of arranging time to talk to participants, and the unfolding of and refocusing of activity systems. Journal entries provided a guide in this thesis for both data analysis and writing. The journal entries also assisted in keeping track of events, and the progress and process of the research, permitting reflection and, often, a more succinct analysis of events when combined with a review of the other collected data.

Cogen. One of the most interesting and enjoyable aspects of my journey in this research project has been the exploration of teacher-teacher aide experiences with cogenerative dialoguing.
When I began this study I regarded cogen as an ethical approach to eliciting joint perspectives that could support participant beneficence. Given the short duration of this study I did not anticipate that cogen would make the impact it did on team members. I also did not anticipate how much I would really enjoy the cogen sessions. We all had so much fun! It was common for participants to remark that time just flew in the cogen sessions and that attending cogen sessions made them feel good. They made me feel good too!

Reviewing my journal and listening to the tape recordings of our cogen sessions I tried to determine what had made these sessions so enjoyable. I came to the conclusion that it was the inclusive learning environment created in the ZPD of the cogen sessions where learning about teamwork and collaboration was akin to a game, a learning game, where each participant supported and empowered the other and creativity blossomed as witnessed by participants’ outlines of collaboration. As explained in Chapter 6, I had thought that the dialogic strategy of reframing might encourage creativity, a playing with ideas and an easing of possible tensions. I had not envisioned the dialogue in cogen would take on that role and more. The activity of the learning game created an environment so full of synergy, so enjoyable. In my role as facilitator I wondered, initially, if cogens should not be more serious and if I should not do more to keep them on track. However, I soon realised that the most interesting, informative and enjoyable discussions around teamwork and collaboration occurred when team members were fully engaged in the dialogue and that team members were most engaged when they were playing with ideas, interrupting each other, telling stories, joking, and teasing each other. It was in these periods of what I came to understand as carnivalisation, where participants changed the dialogic strategies and engaged in cogen their way – played the game their way – that the joint perspectives I was seeking were developed, creativity blossomed and we had fun.

I had anticipated that the recipe for cogen involving dialogic listening, reframing and radical listening would support participant buy-in and uptake of the concepts of cogen and it is my understanding that this did happen. This was an important consideration in selecting those dialogic strategies. I had also anticipated that participants might wish to add other dialogic strategies or even reject the dialogic strategies I had selected in favour of strategies more suited to their way of working. However, no team added to or rejected any of the dialogic strategies. What each team did, however, was amend the strategies. This was something I had not anticipated. Participants made the recipe for cogen employed in this study their own by adopting or rejecting elements within the dialogic strategies. In each team participants spoke of what they liked and did not like about the
dialogic strategies and each participant chose elements within the strategies that they claimed would suit/enhance their own communication style. It is possible that if team members had engaged with more than six or seven cogen sessions that greater experimentation with the dialogic strategies may have changed this outcome. However, I understood and accepted the changes participants made, as part of my ethical concern for participant beneficence and, as in keeping with my commitment to Guba and Lincoln’s (1989) ontological and educative authenticity.

**Bricoleur.** In my role as bricoleur I engaged in elements of what Rogers’ (2012) identified as interpretive and narrative bricolage approaches. Taking an interpretive approach I understand research as an interactive process shaped by both my personal history and participants’ personal history and that “knowledge is never free from subjective positioning or political interpretations” (Rogers, 2012, p. 4). Keeping a journal was part of this approach as was engaging in a reflective analysis where I continually evaluated subjective responses, activity interpretations and, as noted above, how the research process evolved. From the perspective of the narrative bricolage approach I aimed to avoid what Rogers described as “univocal research representations” (p. 7). In my role as bricoleur I adapted to changes participants made (e.g., concept drawings instead of maps) and drew on alternative approaches (e.g., Engeström et al.’s [2015] framework) to understand aspects of participant team activity, such as Uwh’s cultural approach to collaboration and the influences of emotion and humour.

Kincheloe (2001) identified the process of becoming a bricoleur as ongoing as there is always more to learn, more ways to engage with inquiring and analysing, of seeking new and different ways to see the world. He wrote of research bricolage being grounded in “a critical hermeneutics” (p. 342) where “meaning making cannot be quarantined from where one stands or is placed in the web of social reality” (p. 342). When I began this research I had a much narrower perception of collaboration, engaging with a bricoleur process, becoming a bricoleur, has supported a much broader understanding of collaboration in these complex teams. I am really looking forward to the next part of my journey.

**Activity theory.** I found my exploration into data analysis with CHAT both fascinating and challenging. New to activity systems analysis I found it challenging to parse the huge amount of data that a qualitative study brings in order to permit a focus on the best, most illustrative activities. Coding was helpful and so were Mwanza’s (2001, 2002) Eight-Step-Model and Rogoff’s (1995) planes of sociocultural analysis but it would have been easier if I had employed Mwanza’s (2002)
activity-oriented design methods from the start. Such an approach builds the whole research process around the idea of activity systems, making it easier to develop and analyse these systems. Mwanza (2002) and Yamagata-Lynch (2010) present examples of such approaches, supporting an activity systems analysis through the selection of, for example, research questions, participants, researcher role, and the structure and selection of data collection methods.

Employing such an approach would, undoubtedly, have made my research journey much easier. However, I believe I would have missed the wonderful concept drawings and the amazing outlines of collaboration the team members developed as these are, I would argue, not typically employed when developing a study focused on an activity such as collaboration. That said, I have found activity theory a flexible lens from which to view collaboration involving the complex relationships inherent in teacher-teacher aide teams. An activity systems analysis permitted both a narrow and a broad focus on situated team activity and proved an approach adaptable enough to incorporate the concepts of emotion and variety in collaboration. I look forward to contributing to the discussion around CHAT in the years ahead.

Concluding reflection. One of my favourite authors, G. K. Chesterton (1915/2017) once wrote, “An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered” (p. 18). It has been a long and, at times, arduous (inconvenient!) journey since that day that kind, and ever patient, Deputy Principal advised me to go to university if I really wanted to help teacher-teacher aide teams. I have enjoyed this adventure. It has been challenging, I have learnt a great deal, and I have had fun, for this research is close to my heart, and, as Chesterton points out, “everything depends upon the emotional point of view” (p. 17).

8.6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to delve into the struggles and successes experienced by the teams involved in collaboration – to explore how team members collaborated and reveal what collaboration looked like from participating team members’ perspectives – thereby illuminating a little explored area of collaboration in schools. The findings from this exploratory study confirmed problems associated with teamworking from previous studies and revealed new insights into teacher-teacher aide teamworking around collaboration in these teams. Findings from this study support a greater understanding of collaboration in schools, as well as an understanding of how team members and school leaders can support collaboration in these teams. The concluding
message of this research, therefore, is that those concerned with developing collaboration in schools need to give more attention to building and supporting teacher-teacher aide team relationships, placing more emphasis on including these teams in the school collaborative process, if schools are to become the collaboratives of which Fullan (2016) wrote.

Kuhn (2003) argued that, in qualitative research, when “you have reached your aim by presenting the results, you find yourself unexpectedly led back to the starting point” (para. 49). In exploring how teacher-teacher aide teams collaborate, this study uncovered a range of perspectives on team member collaboration and a perspective of collaboration that changed the tentative definition of collaboration developed in Chapter 1 to a definition that incorporates the idea of carnivalisation. Having uncovered this new form of collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams I find myself back at the beginning, as the findings on the ways participants collaborated presents new perspectives on collaboration and raises new questions. Questions such as: What supports carnivalisation in teacher-teacher aide teams? and: How can teacher-teacher aide team members capitalise on carnivalisation as collaborative practice to support student learning and teaching?

With the inclusion of carnivalisation and the revelation of the many and varied ways team members collaborate this thesis has challenged the scripted supervisor-supervised practice of teamworking in which the equity required in collaboration is difficult if not impossible to achieve. Instead the teams in this study demonstrated that collaboration is not only possible it is a valuable interaction supporting teaming for teachers and teacher aids. As Stewart (1996) reasoned,

Educational collaboration potentially engenders new ways of seeing and being; it provides for educators traditionally caught in hierarchical and competitive, top-down, information-disseminating structures a means of working towards mutually held goals in more horizontal, equitable, interactive patterns. It can be considered a kinder, gentler way of doing things (p. 22).

Seen as occurring on an as needed basis and driven by the task at hand collaboration in teacher-teacher aide teams in this study engenders a new way of seeing teacher-teacher aide teamworking, one that moves away from the dichotomy of supervision/collaboration to one where collaboration exists as a style of interaction alongside supervision. One where, as Schrage (1995) commented “…we switch into and out of as the moment and the task demand” (p. 33). The valuing of friendship, humour, the involvement in carnivalisation, the cogenerativity and pleasure in cogen
team members demonstrated paint their collaboration as a kinder and gentler way of working together. Such collaboration between teachers and teacher aides holds the promise of benefit, not only to the team members but, to the individuals with whom they interact, notably the students, parents and other school staff. If schools are committed to becoming collaboratives and incorporating collaborative work cultures then support for teacher-teacher aide collaborative practice is not only important, it is essential.
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## Appendices

### Appendix 1  Example of how Mwanza’s (2001, 2002) Eight-Step-Model was used to develop an activity systems diagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component of Activity System</th>
<th>Interpretation questions</th>
<th>Example of Activity using Harry and Alaric’s first cogen session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
<td>What sort of activity am I interested in?</td>
<td>How Harry and Alaric collaborate to solve a problem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Object (can be the goal, motive or reason for the subject to participate in the activity)**

Why is this activity taking place? What is its purpose?

The activity taking place is cogenerative dialoguing between Harry and Alaric

The purpose is to develop a solution to the problem of how to assist new teacher-teacher aide teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects (individuals or participants)</th>
<th>Who is involved in carrying out this activity?</th>
<th>Harry, a teacher and Alaric, a teacher aide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools/artefacts</th>
<th>By what means are the participants carrying out this activity? How is/are the tool/s being utilised to carry out the activity?</th>
<th>Communication employed in their cogen. Note paper and pens.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In particular relation to cogen – What forms of communicative action are there that demonstrate the participants making visible what it is to learn in this activity?</td>
<td>Both discussed problem. Alaric made notes on the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initial communication in the session did not flow equally as set out in the agreed upon protocols for cogen. Alaric supplied few ideas deferring to Harry, and agreeing with everything Harry said.</td>
<td>Initially, communication in the session did not flow equally as set out in the agreed upon protocols for cogen. Alaric supplied few ideas deferring to Harry, and agreeing with everything Harry said.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This changed as the activity progressed and Alaric began to add more ideas.</td>
<td>This changed as the activity progressed and Alaric began to add more ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rules and regulations</strong></td>
<td>Are there any cultural norms, rules, regulations governing the performance of this activity?</td>
<td>The rules governing this activity are the protocols that Harry and Alaric developed to encourage equity in their cogen sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Division of Labour</strong></td>
<td>Who is responsible for what, when carrying out this activity and how are the roles organised?</td>
<td>Each participant is to contribute equally to the construction of knowledge around solving this problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>What is the environment in which this activity is carried out?</td>
<td>The environment is their cogen session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome (objective – direction or motive of activity – what are subjects trying to achieve?)</strong></td>
<td>What is the desired outcome of this activity?</td>
<td>A creative solution to the problem of how to assist new teacher-teacher aide teams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2  Observation protocol adapted for this study from Potter and Richardson’s (1999) framework for viewing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation Protocol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Observation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of observation: Start: Finish:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes (including anecdotes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do the teacher and teacher aide communicate?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.g. Use of language, use of prompts, use of pauses, speed of communication (hurried?), spread of attention, differences in the way they address the students/each other in front of the student/other adults in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| What collaborative practices do the teacher and teacher aide demonstrate? |
| E.g. Seeking counsel/opinions/advice – demonstrating norms of reciprocity, sharing of resources, demonstrating shared leadership with focus on common goals, outcomes, collaborating to team members support each other in the classroom |

| What roles do the teacher and teacher aide take on in the classroom? |

Sketch of Observation area
Appendix 3  Angelwood Primary School team member profiles

Note: Shaded areas indicate teams that completed the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Team members</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Education level/training</th>
<th>Work experience as teacher/teacher aide</th>
<th>Experience in current team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team A</strong></td>
<td>Erica</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher and Year Level Co-ordinator for Prep</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep. class</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher aide</td>
<td>Certificate III in Education Support</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team B</strong></td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
<td>Worked as a teacher aide before becoming a teacher. Bachelor of Education, Special Education (Honours)</td>
<td>3 years as a teacher</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher aide</td>
<td>Certificate III in Education Support, First Aid Certificate, 2 Auslan (Australian Sign Language) short courses</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class - Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team C</strong></td>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Masters in Special Education</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs</td>
<td>Jay</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher aide</td>
<td>Certificate III in Education Support and Diploma in Education Support</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class - Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team D</strong></td>
<td>Fran</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Master’s Degree in Special Education</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>First year at this school - worked 5 years together at previous school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Years</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher aide</td>
<td>No higher level certificates or training - just her years with Fran</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 4 Bayshore Special School team member profiles Part 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Team members</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Education level/training</th>
<th>Work experience as teacher/teacher aide</th>
<th>Experience in current team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uwh</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Diploma in teaching</td>
<td>21 years - 6 years at Bayshore; Taught in New Zealand</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Teacher aide</td>
<td>Diploma in Management and Certificate IV in Disability Studies, Workplace Health and Safety certificates - in final year Bachelor of Education in Primary, Special Education</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
<td>Masters in Teaching - Secondary, Prior to working at Bayshore worked as a teacher in a Pupil Referral Unit in England</td>
<td>3 years as a teacher - 2nd year at Bayshore</td>
<td>8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Teacher aide</td>
<td>Certificate III in Disability Support, First Aid Certificate and Statement of Achievement in Cooking</td>
<td>5 years as a volunteer at Bayshore then 10 years as a teacher aide at Bayshore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aubry</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Masters in Special Education, Masters in Guidance and Counselling &amp; Masters in Leadership Management</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cos</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Masters in Environmental Science, Environmental Change Management, Graduate Diploma in Education Studies</td>
<td>8 years - 2nd at Bayshore</td>
<td>9 months - Saige had only been with the team 7 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lisandra</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher aide</td>
<td>Certificate III in Family Services and First Aid Certificate</td>
<td>6 years at Bayshore - also 27 years as childcare assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saige</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher aide</td>
<td>Enrolled nurse, Diploma in Child Care, Certificate IV in Work Health and Safety, Certificate III in Aged Care and Disabilities also in first year of Bachelor of Education degree majoring in Special Education</td>
<td>7 months at Bayshore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 4 Bayshore Special School team member profiles Part 2

**Note:** Shaded areas indicate teams that completed the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Team members</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Education level/training</th>
<th>Work experience as teacher/teacher aide</th>
<th>Experience in current team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Childcare assistant before becoming a teacher, Certificate III in Childcare, Certificate III in Education Support and a Bachelor of Education (Special Education)</td>
<td>first year</td>
<td>8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Years class</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Teacher aide</td>
<td>Certificates in First Aid, Tube Feeding, Epilepsy Seizure Management and Smart Pups (to assist student with visual impairment) Certificate IV in Youth Work and Community Services</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 5</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Childcare assistant before becoming a teacher, Certificate III in Childcare, Certificate III in Education Support and a Bachelor of Education, Special Education</td>
<td>Just over 1 year</td>
<td>2 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Years class</td>
<td>Alexa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher aide</td>
<td>Certificate III in Disability Support also &quot;management type structures courses on communication&quot; (Interview 1, 11 April 2016) and &quot;different skills with children&quot; (Interview 1, 11 April 2016)</td>
<td>20 years - 6 of those years as a paraeducator in the USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 6</td>
<td>Alese</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts and Diploma of Education</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Secondary</td>
<td>Alaric</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Teacher aide</td>
<td>Certificate III in Disability Support, First Aid Certificate, Statement of Achievement in cooking</td>
<td>5 years as a volunteer at Bayshore then 10 years as a teacher aide at Bayshore</td>
<td>2 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>