

Team-based learning (TBL) for professional development (PD): optimising everyone's potential in the workplace

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Abstract

Purpose – Based on the proven benefits of team-based learning (TBL) in educational settings, the purpose of this study was to explore its impact on neuroinclusion when applied to professional development (PD).

Design/methodology/approach – A bespoke model of facilitated coaching and leadership was used over a four-month period and included a two-day immersive TBL Development Centre (TBLDC) for 28 finance leaders. Four participants were identified by facilitators as potentially being neurodivergent, one of whom disclosed their neurodivergence. A retrospective mixed-methods case study used facilitator observations, a red/amber/green (RAG) rating system ($n = 28$), coded volunteer survey data ($n = 13$), and semi-structured interviews (SSI) ($n = 2$) that were lived experience-checked beforehand and member-checked afterwards. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to explore the neuroinclusive impact of applying TBL within PD.

Findings – TBL fostered neuroinclusion, enhanced social communication and supported faster assimilation, whilst also cultivating a culture of accountability, respect, inclusive team spirit and a shared drive for confident high performance. When combined with longer term coaching, TBL served as a catalyst for developing a community of practice, empowering individuals on a journey of self-directed growth. It highlighted the transformative potential of an andragogical TBL approach in PD – one that provides equitable opportunities for individuals to progress in their careers.

Originality/value – This project comprised a bespoke TBLDC incorporated with a research study. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no other PD settings offered a comparable programme nor were there existing studies examining similar approaches. Sample size was small and self-selected. Further research with psychometric validation for methodological tools is recommended to explore the broader impact of TBL in PD – particularly its effects on neuroinclusion, productivity, workplace culture, employee retention and long-term value for money.

Keywords Team-based learning, Training transfer, Professional development, Neuroinclusion, Neurodivergence, Life-long learning, Community of practice, Leadership and coaching

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Across education, training and employment, there is growing recognition of the value of diversity and the need to develop a broad range of transferable skills and more creative ways of thinking (SMC, 2022; Zahidi *et al.*, 2020). Diverse teams are better equipped to generate innovative solutions to society's complex, modern challenges (Zahidi *et al.*, 2020). In today's



workplace, success depends not only on knowledge and understanding but also on cross-functional abilities such as critical thinking, creativity, strategic learning and problem-solving. Equally important are interpersonal skills such as complex communication, empathy and adaptability (Zahidi *et al.*, 2020). For future society to thrive and prosper, education must prioritise inquiry, reflection, and lifelong learning – enabling individuals to critically engage with information rather than passively accumulate it; essentially, to learn things as a continuum of personal development.

Strong communication, teamwork and networking skills support everyone – including those who think or communicate differently – in building relationships and progressing in education and employment. True collaboration goes beyond theory; it requires inclusive, hands-on practice. This means creating a neuroinclusive culture that values diverse ways of thinking and sees challenges as differences to support, not fix (DWP, 2024; McDowall *et al.*, 2025). Yet, in many workplaces, people with neurodivergent strengths remain overlooked, with their potential underused (APPGA, 2000; Berkson *et al.*, 2020; Themaat, 2019). In spite of growing awareness of recruitment barriers, the Disability Employment Gap in the UK remains substantial, and further research is urgently needed to understand how best to support neurodivergent talent to not only access employment but to also thrive within it (McDowall *et al.*, 2025).

This article emerged as a retrospective adjunct to a broader study conducted at the University of Bradford, which was exploring the inclusivity of team-based learning (TBL) for neurodivergent secondary school learners. Concurrently, one author was applying TBL within professional development (PD) across various business sectors for a training company, specialising in bespoke commercial PD. This specific study focused on a TBL Development Centre (DC) designed for finance leaders within an international provider of sustainable facilities management and regeneration. Drawing on a model of “Leadership Coaching (LC) TBL” (Jamieson and Wood, 2024), it aimed to capture qualitative insights into the use of TBL in PD, with particular attention to participant experience.

Literature review

This review explored key literature on TBL, PD and neuroinclusion. It outlined the pedagogical foundations of TBL as a framework and its success in different phases of education and workplace training. The review also examined current perspectives on supporting neurodivergent individuals in education and professional settings, and together these areas provided the foundations for understanding TBL’s potential as an inclusive approach within PD. Studies were selected through systematic searches in PubMed, ERIC, JSTOR and Web of Science and using combinations of keywords including “team-based learning”, “higher education”, “secondary education”, “professional development”, “workplace training”, “neuroinclusion” and “neurodivergent”. Studies were included if they focused on participant experience and TBL. A critical lens was applied to evaluate methodological rigour.

Research suggests “best” learning takes place when individuals engage in self- and co-regulated sense-making (via active, collaborative and experiential learning) and when learners become completely lost in the learning process (Schneider *et al.*, 2015; Van der Vleuten and Driessen, 2014). Natural curiosity fosters a state of unconscious competence and deep engagement, creating a psychological space where new knowledge can “stick” (Sherhoff *et al.*, 2003; Schneider *et al.*, 2015) and be applied in both immediate and future real-world contexts (Callan *et al.*, 2016). This perhaps mirrors the concept of successful “training transfer” in PD, where learning is effectively applied in the “day job” to enhance performance (Grossman and Salas, 2011; Hart *et al.*, 2019; Saks and Belcourt, 2006). Both educational

settings and organisations must design learning that “sticks” – enabling learners to develop, add value and remain engaged, thus supporting critical thinking skills (Nelson and Crow, 2014; Rosenthal, 1995; Walker, 2003). PD grounded in constructivist learning theory ensures impact where participants build new understanding through comparison, reflection and applied practice based on their existing knowledge (Kaufman, 2003).

According to Baldwin and Ford’s (1988) transfer model, the best “training transfer” occurs when both the design of the training and the characteristics of the participants – such as their cognitive abilities, metacognitive skills and motivation – are carefully considered. Another factor believed to contribute to success is the presence of support beyond the training room, including line manager support, coaching and goal setting (Grohmann *et al.*, 2014; Hart *et al.*, 2019). When collaborative learners develop greater awareness of their own strengths and differences and those of others, they become more effective as a team and better equipped to navigate problem-solving and social dynamics. This, in turn, positively impacts performance and productivity (Burkill, 1997; Maguire and Edmondson, 2001; Panelli and Welch, 2005). Additionally, practising new skills in real-life scenarios is believed to enhance self-efficacy through improved team performance (Grossman and Salas, 2011). This process of effective training transfer is illustrated in Figure 1.

TBL is an evidence-based pedagogical strategy first developed by Larry Michaelsen and draws upon constructivist learning theory, generates independently functioning teams and enables application of learning, which is transferable to the workplace (Sweet and Michaelsen, 2012). The TBL process involves pre-class work, a readiness assurance process (RAP) – an individual (i) and team (t) assessment – and application exercises (AE), which ensures deeper learning (Sweet and Michaelsen, 2012; Roberson and Franchini, 2014). The AEs, which are “significant” to the learners’ situated context, promote active learning and involve discussions about different approaches to problem solving (Levine *et al.*, 2004; Stanier, 1997). As teams have the “same” task, make a “specific choice” and “simultaneously reveal” their answer, the AEs focus inter-team discussion on analysis, decision-making, rationale and justification. The final stage of TBL is peer evaluation, adding personal accountability and purpose, which builds a culture of peer coaching (Darby *et al.*, 2023; Sweet and Michaelsen, 2012) and an authentic community of practice (Lave, 1991; Wegner, 2000). The success of TBL in higher education (HE) is well-documented in the literature and has been linked to increased knowledge acquisition, intrinsic motivation and accountability (Huang and Lin, 2017; Loftin and West, 2017). Numerous studies have shown improved

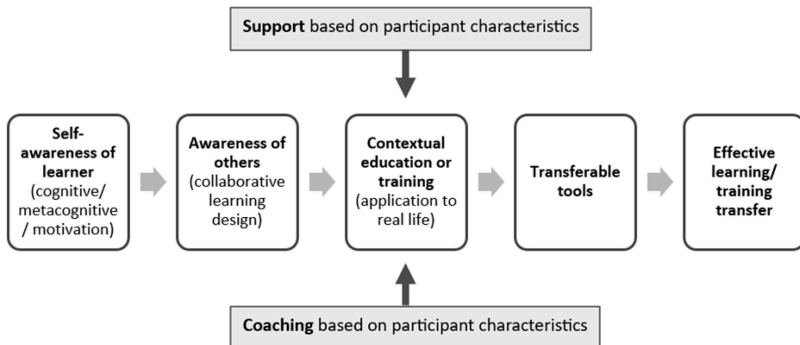


Figure 1. LCTBL model used at the TBLDC

Source: Authors’ own work, which embeds Jamieson’s leadership coaching model

performance for *all*, with significant progress amongst learner groups who have previously performed at a lower level, where TBL has provided social support for knowledge retention (Koles *et al.*, 2005; Nelson and Tweddell, 2017).

The Office for Students (2017–2019) funded a project that aimed to use active collaborative learning as a strategy to address attainment disparities and included the use of TBL in two HE institutions. The final report stated interpersonal skills, promoted through TBL, helped learners become more self-aware and place more value on teamwork. TBL approaches eliminated attainment gaps for ethnicity and age and reduced progression gaps for gender and HE participation (McNeil *et al.*, 2019). This comparative study explored using more than one learning approach across three HE institutions, researched the impact and explained why it made a difference. TBL had a positive effect on academic development and the “soft skills” that are critical in the world of work (Haidet *et al.*, 2014). Use of comparative large sample data added to this study’s value within TBL literature, as conclusions were more empirical and therefore more transferable to different settings, including PD.

Existing literature on TBL in secondary schools is sparse, but TBL appears to have outcomes comparable to TBL research in HE (Darby *et al.*, 2023; Wanzek *et al.*, 2014; Wanzek *et al.*, 2015). An Erasmus+ funded project developed resources and trained teachers to use TBL in secondary schools in Spain, Ireland and the UK and evaluated its impact on teaching and learning (Darby *et al.*, 2023). This research took a grounded theory methodological approach and investigated the teachers’ experiences of using TBL ($n = 10$) – what worked well, what could be improved and the impact on learners’ application of knowledge and understanding. Collected data highlighted how, in spite of some contextual challenges, the advantages of TBL approaches led to increases in knowledge retention and focus on task (Darby *et al.*, 2023). Several teacher participants also noticed benefits for inclusion; TBL created “in-team” support, acceptance for learning differences and appreciation of diversity. This, together with research in other fields, highlighted the potential of using TBL in the workplace; if it can encourage personal talents, promote differences and develop optimal productivity, then it could have a wider influence on social mobility and community cohesion (SMC, 2022). Although this study captured qualitative experiences of teachers using TBL, it did not capture the learners’ experiences as effectively, and this phenomenon of “learner experience” still appears to be a real gap in the literature.

TBL embeds many key training transfer factors outlined by Grossman and Salas (2011) that have been used in preparation for workplace practice, especially in disciplines such as medical education. This is largely because of its success in interprofessional education and as a way of developing team effectiveness. However, a literature search query about TBL and PD only produced two studies where TBL was used. Firstly, Hart *et al.* (2019) investigated TBL in training approaches used by an aerospace company in the USA, who explored how elements of training design influenced knowledge transfer, application and outcomes. The study used a quasi-experimental repeated ($\times 3$) measurement design, which compared TBL to behaviour modelling and error management as training conditions for their employees ($n = 67$) across different functional areas. TBL outperformed other approaches, with participants displaying the highest improvement scores on all knowledge types, including overall and procedural knowledge as well as knowledge application. Just as AE tasks model real-life situations within education settings, TBL in PD models the social nature of collaboration and networking, especially between employees across an organisation. This fosters the development of a transactive memory system, where employees work interdependently yet collaboratively to apply their knowledge to problem-solving tasks (Sharma and Yetton, 2007). Participants learn *how* to learn (adaptive transfer) through

situational learning and by interacting with each other on authentic problems (Lave, 1991; Wegner, 2000). Although Hart *et al.* (2019) admitted a lack of statistical power to test performance differences, results suggested that using TBL in PD led to successful knowledge transfer. It indicated that the teamwork structure increased participants' self-efficacy and motivation beyond the training programme, which could lead to enhanced tangible PD and business outcomes in the long term.

Dolowitz *et al.* (2021) explored the effectiveness of using TBL in an online synchronous modality to train professionals in the principles and practices of TBL across 15 PD workshops (Dolowitz *et al.*, 2021). As this project was online, it enabled participants from 27 countries to join from HE ($n = 311$), workforce training ($n = 17$) and schools ($n = 14$). Data collected from surveys used to measure participant satisfaction were positive, displaying consistent high satisfaction, along with a desire for more online PD using TBL ($n = 152$). Recommendations included more consideration of team diversity to maximise team development and productivity (Dolowitz *et al.*, 2021). Hart, Steinheider and Hoffmeister (2019) concurred that future research should broaden the use of TBL in non-academic settings to understand its impact on a larger scale and for the findings to be verified.

Globally, there is growing awareness and research of neurodiversity in work settings (Silver *et al.*, 2023; McDowall *et al.*, 2025); yet, there is still limited research and literature about the lived experiences within education, training and employment for neurodivergent individuals (Berkson *et al.*, 2020; McNeil *et al.*, 2019; Romualdez *et al.*, 2021). McDowall *et al.* (2025) collected data from neurodivergent employees across UK-based organisations ($n = 985$) and found that psychological safety and the psychosocial environment were closely linked to neurodivergent talent, career satisfaction and turnover intention. This Human Resources (HR) study proposed moving away from tailored environmental support and more towards finding out employees' individual strengths and vulnerabilities, listening to their experience and learning how to support them and manage their talent in an inclusive way. It also identified a gap in the literature about clashing communication styles being a potential cause of occupational burnout for neurodivergent people and how specific training in collaboration and communication could help prevent this (McDowall *et al.*, 2025). The main limitation of this study was its focus on organisations already committed to neuroinclusion and non-ableist practices, making these findings less representative of the broader employer landscape, where neurodiversity approaches may not yet be established.

In a study on neurodivergence in arts education, Glen (2025) explored how actor training often reflects neurotypical norms, disadvantaging neurodivergent actors whose socio-emotional expressions may differ. Interviews with 20 participants from six drama schools across London – both formally diagnosed autistic and self-identified – emphasised the importance of valuing lived experience within training to challenge normative assumptions and unconscious bias of their thoughts, wants and needs in PD. Like other recent research, Glen highlighted the need to support individuals to accept and navigate their internal experiences to grow professionally. While limited in scope – focusing solely on autistic individuals within a single sector – the study raised important questions about the neurotypical bias that appears embedded within education, PD and employment systems.

Currently, there is no systemic approach to inclusive or universal design practices in TBL. In some qualitative TBL studies, several neurodivergent learners voiced a negative experience, and it was questioned whether TBL supports autistic learners and other neurodiversity (Berkson *et al.*, 2020; Kent, 2015; Roberson and Franchini, 2014). TBL involves collaborative working, increased noise levels, decreased processing time and crowded spaces, all of which can be challenging for neurodivergent individuals. Research conducted by Berkson *et al.* (2020) employed a mixed-methods idiographic case study

approach combining automated data analysis with qualitative insights from questionnaires and interviews. Focusing on each learner as an individual rather than as part of a representative sample, grades improved in TBL modules compared to non-TBL modules, and in particular, significant improvement was seen in grades for neurodivergent learners. Along with a study by [Kent \(2015\)](#), which used TBL with learners with specific learning difficulties, both commented on the potential of TBL for inclusive practice, with an individualised TBL approach and observation during collaborative discourse ([Kent, 2015](#)). Additionally, [Berkson et al. \(2020\)](#) highlighted the urgency of further research in this area, as neurodivergent learners often achieve a lesser level of educational attainment than neurotypical peers and are less likely to obtain higher paid professional jobs after leaving university ([DWP, 2024](#); [SMC, 2022](#)).

Taken together, research about the use of TBL outside of HE was limited. Analysing the experience of participants is key to broadening the understanding of the potential of using TBL for PD. [Hart et al. \(2019\)](#) suggested that organisational success depended upon whether settings could establish themselves as social learning systems or, as [Grossman and Salas \(2011\)](#) defined it, if they can establish a positive transfer climate where situational and social cues encourage the transfer of knowledge. Just as in school, college or university, when inclusion is cultivated in training rooms, everyone benefits; it strengthens the ability of everyone to work together, understand and value different points of view, think critically and be successful learners (supportive transfer) ([Hart et al., 2019](#)). Improved decision-making, stronger relationships, and a thriving culture of neurodiversity, collaboration and empowerment could lead to greater talent retention, satisfaction and success, both during training and beyond ([McDowall et al., 2025](#)). Such outcomes have the potential to influence systemic practices not only within PD but also across earlier stages of education and learning.

Team-based learning development centre case study

The training company was commissioned with the co-design and delivery of an immersive, residential leadership and team development programme in collaboration with an organisation's Learning and Development (LD) department. Its purpose was twofold: to support participant development through experiential learning and to enable facilitators to observe participant progression, leading to evidence-based recommendations for personal growth and talent development initiatives. Participants were selected from across the organisation's finance division, having been identified as high-potential individuals within their existing roles ($n = 28$). All participants held finance manager roles and represented diverse service areas from across the UK. The LD team did not share any personal or demographic information with the training company prior to the programme to minimise the risk of unconscious bias influencing facilitator observations or interactions. Participants were arbitrarily divided into two cohorts. Each included individuals with varying levels of managerial responsibility and experience and who were at different stages in their PD journeys.

The aim of the TBL Development Centre (TBLDC) was to grow the unique personality of individuals to counter challenges and aim for high achievement ([Jamieson and Wood, 2024](#)). It used a Leadership Coaching TBL (LCTBL) approach across a four-month period and included a two-day immersive residential programme. In advance of the TBLDC, participants were required to complete pre-learning that included an external online aptitude assessment, resources on company fundamentals and leadership theory, as well as an opportunity for an individual discussion with facilitators. This primed participants to focus on their strengths, values, personality, differences and blind spots at the TBLDC.

During progression to the next phase, participants explored awareness of others; their impact on peers as well as what others needed from them (Jamieson, 2023). This was completed through self-assessment checklists, naïve independent tasks and the iRAT (individual readiness assurance test). Team formation was self-selected but directly based on participants' individual strengths and followed by the tRAT (team readiness assurance test) and naïve leadership tasks (Roberson and Franchini, 2014). Teams then tackled a bigger real-life problem through smaller tasks based on leadership and team theory (linked to the company). These tasks scaffolded cognitive and metacognitive learning and increased intrinsic motivation and frequency of interactions, which accelerated the development of propinquity. Within the final AE, participants were tasked to present a pitch for practical yet innovative solutions to the overarching problem and to simultaneously submit their pitches. Although teams faced a panel of external experts, they also made a team-specific choice (and rationale) with a "walking vote" and were then asked to self-reflect and peer-review.

One month after the TBLDC, a follow-up 1:1 coaching session (participant/facilitator) took place using Rolfe *et al.*'s (2001) reflective model of "What?/So, what?/Now what?". After three months, a review meeting was held as the final stage of the TBLDC. This session was structured using Sinek's Golden Circle model (Sinek, 2001), encouraging participants to reflect on their "Why" – their core purpose, strengths and internal drivers. The overarching aim was to support participants in reaching a stage of unconscious competence, where authentic self-leadership becomes embedded in behaviour (Jamieson, 2023). During the session, participants shared their progress towards individual goals, identified ongoing development needs, and articulated the support required to continue their growth. Line managers were invited to support participants in sharing progress, highlighting strengths, and applying learning to their roles (Hart *et al.*, 2019).

Figure 2 shows the LCTBL model that was used for the TBLDC, with a focus on PD dedicated to individual needs (Jamieson and Wood, 2024).

Research aims

This research considered participant experience (perception) and successful training transfer (performance). It focused on the following questions:

- 4. REVIEW with line manager present (3 months after)
 - TIME to implement!
- 3. 1:1 follow up coaching session
 - TIME to reflect!
-
- 2. 2-day TBL Development Centre:
 - Self-review
 - RAP
 - Application Exercises
 - Self & peer review
- 1. Pre-learning:
 - Cappfinity Online Strengths Assessment
 - Pre-reading

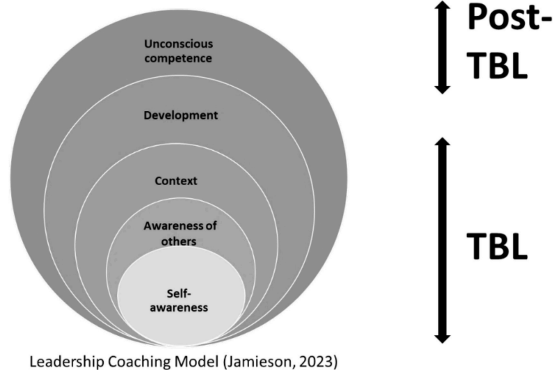


Figure 2. Process of effective training transfer
Source: Authors' own work

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- Q1. What were the experiences of all employees when TBL was used as a method of delivering bespoke company training? Quality Education for All
- Q2. What were the experiences of neurodivergent learners of TBL?
- Q3. How can the research of TBL and its use within PD be used to contribute to literature to encourage optimal training transfer for all?

Methodological approaches and methods

This study emerged organically from a piece of commercial work and was not initially intended as a formal research project. It arose because participants were eager to share their experiences and expressed interest in contributing to the broader exploration of TBL and inclusion. This enthusiasm was largely driven by the distinctiveness of the training itself, unlike methods they had previously encountered. Just as TBL is known to accelerate a sense of belonging within teams (Parish *et al.*, 2023), in this context it also enhanced the relational dynamic between facilitators and learners.

Recruitment and sampling

30 participants were invited to participate in the TBLDC through a targeted email by the company's LD team, creating a purposeful sample for the project. 28 participated in the TBLDC, were observed and red/amber/green (RAG) rated (Data Collection 1). As a retrospective study, the sample became one of convenience and opportunistic, which generated theories and ideas from the data set – some sample bias is inevitable. After four months, one participant left the company, and one did not take up the opportunity for the final call ($n = 26$). All TBLDC participants were invited by the LD Department to complete the survey (Data Collection 2). This had a response rate of 46% ($n = 13$). All TBLDC participants were invited by the LD Department to be interviewed about their experience of the TBLDC with a lens on neuroinclusion. Two participants volunteered (Data Collection 3).

Design

Although inductive and idiographic in nature, this study adopted a mixed-methods design, incorporating a multi-phase case study model situated within an interpretivist paradigm (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018). This approach was chosen for its ability to capture rich, context-specific insights and in response to the data and interactions with participants, rather than for the purpose of generalisation (Stake, 1995). The research design integrated both quantitative and qualitative data to address the needs of diverse audiences, with data collected over a four-month period through observations, a survey and semi-structured interviews (SSI). Methodological and time triangulation were used to enhance the study's validity, as illustrated in Figure 3, and the emergent approach is consistent with interpretivist methodology.

For corporate leaders, empirical evidence was essential to demonstrate cost-effectiveness. However, the deeper impact of the TBLDC was found in human development – best understood through qualitative insights. While the broader academic community continues to value evidence-based research, there is increasing criticism of overly narrow, one-dimensional methodologies. This is particularly relevant in the context of neurodiversity, where “one-size-fits-all” approaches are often seen as reductive and where the inclusion of lived experience is widely recognised as essential (Pellicano and Crane, 2021). During analysis, initial open coding identified recurring concepts, and as familiarity with the data deepened, relationships between codes began to emerge naturally, which led to the development of wider thematic categories through axial coding (Simmons, 2017).

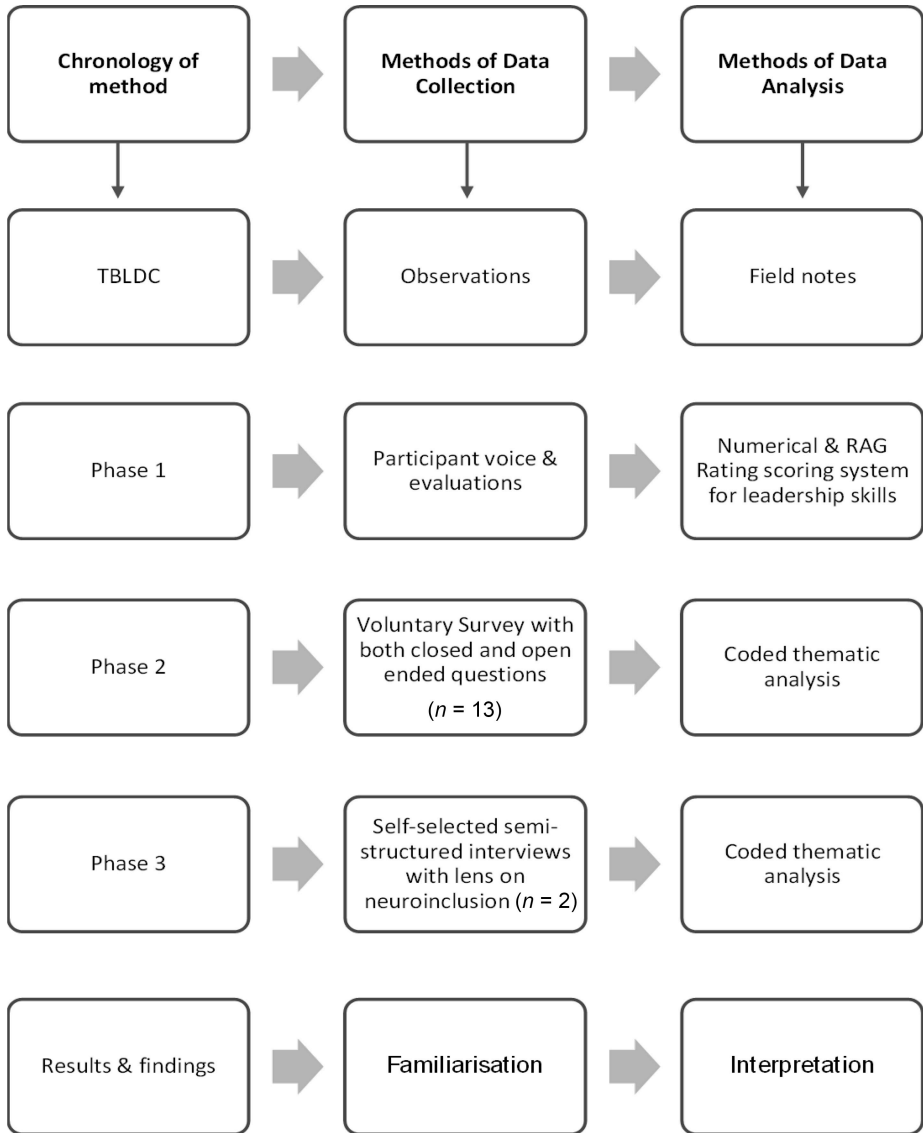


Figure 3. Methodological approaches
Source: Authors' own work

Ethical considerations

Ethics approval was granted by the University of Bradford (E1132) for a broader study exploring whether TBL could support neuroinclusion for secondary school learners. As part of the quality assurance process for conducting SSI with neurodivergent learners, additional insights from neurodivergent professionals with TBL experience were sought. This current study falls within the scope and timeframe of the approved research.

To minimise power dynamics and protect the validity of the qualitative data, SSI were conducted after the TBLDC ended, with participants informed that their responses would not be shared with the company. Although the researchers were external to the company (reducing bias), participants volunteered to be interviewed and could have done so because they had experienced a more positive experience at the TBLDC. Therefore, to mitigate potential bias, triangulation of multiple data sources helped to cross-validate findings, participants were de-identified in the SSI transcripts (using number coding) and participants were sent summaries to ensure their views were accurately represented (Birt *et al.*, 2016). A Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form – identical to those used in a wider study and co-created with professionals with lived experience of neurodivergence – were distributed to interviewees. Following anonymisation, all data was stored securely in line with the University of Bradford’s Research Data Management Policy.

Data collection

Phase 1

Qualitative data collected represent both participants’ and facilitators’ ($n = 2$) observations, reflections and perceptions. After completion of participants’ first coaching sessions and at the request of the company, facilitators created a “development dashboard”. This was based on 10 observed leadership skills linked to participants’ attitudes and performance, rather than on pre-planned categories. This was reassessed three months later. A simple numerical rating scale (1–5 scoring system for only the top five participants) was devised for each category:

- (1) Strategic thinking;
- (2) Innovation;
- (3) Motivation;
- (4) Being supportive;
- (5) Flexible thinking;
- (6) Resilience;
- (7) Performance/productivity;
- (8) Ability to be front and centre;
- (9) Organisation; and
- (10) Ability to process information.

Participants were RAG rated (from their numerical scorings) into divisions of development (red = underachieving, amber = working well and green = optimal success achieved), and recommendations were given to the company about how they could support their employees post-TBLDC.

Phase 2

The LD Department used their in-service evaluation platform to collect data about the three research questions for this study. To overcome respondents providing only socially acceptable or idealised answers (Ranganathan and Caduff, 2023) and to ensure participants’ confidentiality, Microsoft Forms™ was used. The company’s LD department quality assured the survey before distribution to ensure the questions, structure and completion time aligned with their evaluation process. Participants were informed of the intent of the questionnaire, but no demographic or identifiable data was collected. It included ten Likert scale open-ended questions for additional comments. It was self-administered by respondents before

being returned to the researcher by the company as an anonymised spreadsheet ($n = 13$). Open-text responses were analysed thematically using a framework grounded in psychological safety (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Ryman Healthcare, 2020), with illustrative quotes presented in this paper. Participants' experiences were interpreted through four zones of engagement: the Comfort Zone – where individuals feel safe and in control but may experience stagnation; the Fear Zone – where learners face barriers to progress; the Learning Zone – where challenges are addressed with support; and the Growth Zone – where meaningful transformation or application occurs (O'Donovan *et al.*, 2020). Secondary subheadings were then allocated for the zones, which enabled further exploration of participants' individual experiences of the TBLDC (Table 2). To protect participant anonymity, all individuals involved in Phase 2 were assigned alphabetical codes (PA, PB, PC, etc.). Each theme was then contextualised with the lead researcher's reflexive interpretations, which evolved across the different phases of data collection.

Phase 3

Follow-up online SSI ($n = 2$) provided deeper reflection on personal experiences of inclusion and how this compared to previous experiences of group learning. Participants received themes and probing questions in advance of the SSI, asking details about their learning differences, their LD journey, why they wanted to contribute to the project, their experiences of TBL/non-TBL collaborative work and their thoughts about TBL being used in secondary schools. Answers were recorded, transcribed and provided data about two participants' individual journeys through education and employment. To protect participant anonymity, individuals were assigned unique codes (P1 and P2), ensuring confidentiality whilst enabling reference throughout the analysis. The small sample supported a more nuanced understanding of the research.

Results and findings

To assess growth over time, the development dashboard was updated three months after the first coaching session to capture changes in performance and perception. Figure 4 presents a comparison of observations from initial progress check-ins and final one-to-one sessions. Upward movement on the dashboard indicates that participants were able to demonstrate clear progression in their developmental journey, along with a growing understanding of the wider impact and value of their learning to the business. The leadership category scores provided a baseline from which progress could be measured. By the final coaching calls, many participants showed significant improvement, with notable shifts in several leadership domains (Figure 4 and Table 1). The time between programme phases appeared to deepen participants' reflections (Jamieson and Wood, 2024), and after three months, 20 (77%) participants were achieving optimal success (green) compared to just six (23%) at the outset.

As participants completed the final stage of the programme, they demonstrated a strong commitment to sustaining their PD. This aligns with findings from existing TBL research, which highlighted long-term impact on learner development (Fong, 2010; McNeil *et al.*, 2019; Rotgans *et al.*, 2018). Of the 13 participants who completed the survey, 12 indicated that the TBLDC would have a long-lasting influence on their professional practice; only one participant disagreed. As open-ended survey responses were reviewed, initial codes were created to capture recurring ideas. Patterns and relationships emerged organically, leading to the grouping of related codes into themes, which reflected the principles of axial coding, where categories are linked and contextualised to explain their connections (Simmons, 2017). The following section presents these key themes, each illustrated with participant quotations and summarised in Table 2.

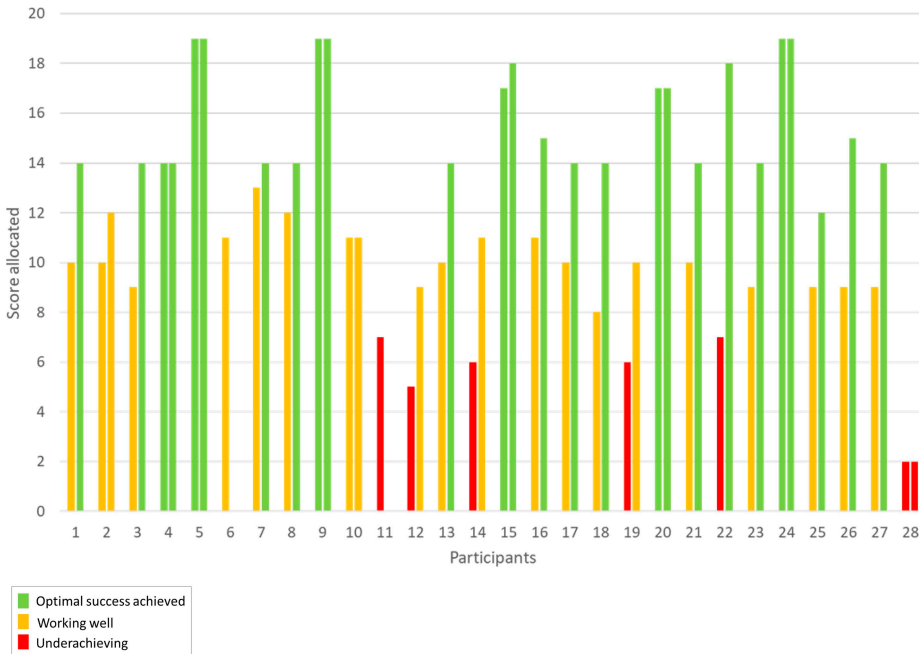


Figure 4. The impact of time and coaching after the TBLDC; left column: one month after; right column: three months later
Source: Authors’ own work

Table 1. The impact of time and coaching after the TBLDC

| Progress | No. | Comment |
|-----------------------|------------|---|
| A-A | 2 | Stayed in the same category; one went up and one stayed the same |
| A-G | 13 | Moved from amber to green |
| G-G | 6 | Five of which had the same pre and post score, and one of which had an increase score |
| R-A | 3 | Moved from red to amber |
| R-G | 1 | Moved from red to green |
| R-R | 1 | Stayed in the same category |
| R | 1 | Only one data point |
| A | 1 | |
| Total | 28 | |
| Went up/made progress | 1 13 1 3 1 | 19 went up (73% of participants made progress) |
| Went up a category | 13 3 1 | 17 went up a category |
| Stayed the same | 7 | No change |
| Total | 26 | |

Source(s): Authors’ own work

Table 2. Coding table for Phase 2 data collection

| Participant code | RAW data | Initial code | Theme |
|------------------|---|--|----------------------------------|
| PA | <p><i>I don't think there was enough peer review and I think it would have helped a lot of people on the course</i></p> <p><i>I think you could come to the centre without doing any pre-reading. The pre reading only helped about 30%</i></p> <p><i>I didn't want to let my team down so I made sure I was always listening ...</i></p> <p><i>The constant flow of information in different ways meant that we were always engaged and it never got boring</i></p> <p><i>Even if I didn't feel confident, it was important to communicate confidently with so many people in the room and it was also important to use the time in the most productive way as we were always short on time and under pressure</i></p> <p><i>We wouldn't get anything out of the centre if we faded into the background and let others take the lead so every made sure they got involved</i></p> <p><i>I'm not sure if it helped in creating my own knowledge though, as there were so many people in each team, it was hard to get my knowledge across</i></p> <p><i>I think it helped in my confidence and learning how to work with different types of people</i></p> <p><i>Working in a group was challenging for my learning style</i></p> | Desire for more peer input | Learning zone – collaboration |
| | | Preparedness | Learning zone – preparation |
| | | Team accountability | Growth zone – accountability |
| | | Diversity created motivation | Learning zone – engagement |
| | | Team accountability increased confidence | Learning zone – confidence |
| | | Team accountability increased confidence | Growth zone – accountability |
| | | Communication can be a barrier | Fear zone – social communication |
| | | Teamwork increased confidence | Learning zone – confidence |
| | | Feeling uncomfortable | Fear zone – social communication |
| | | Seeking processing time for development | Learning zone – preparation |
| PB | <p><i>I think we should have had more time with the consultants that led the session to review the pre-assessment results</i></p> <p><i>Not enough time</i></p> | Processing time | Fear zone – processing |
| | | Feeling uncomfortable | Fear zone – social communication |
| PC | <p><i>Working in a group was challenging for my learning style</i></p> | Readiness to develop | Learning zone – preparation |
| PD | <p><i>It was fine, it all helped. But there's an element of not being able to prepare fully, you basically need to go into it with an open mind to tackle the challenges you are faced with</i></p> <p><i>If the team is working well, it can help with the focus on the tasks in hand</i></p> <p><i>It created scenarios that enabled me to practise these skills</i></p> | Psychological safety for focus | Learning zone – engagement |
| | | Psychological safety for practice | Learning zone – collaboration |
| | | | Growth zone – vision |

(continued)

Table 2. Continued

| Participant code | RAW data | Initial code | Theme |
|------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|
| | <i>It prompted ideas about my own strengths and weaknesses, about team dynamics, training, productivity, confidence, resilience, leadership</i> | Psychological safety for diverse thinking | |
| | <i>It reminded me that I've got potential</i> | Facing opportunities | Learning zone – confidence |
| | <i>It pushed me out of my comfort zone, but that was the point</i> | Feeling uncomfortable vs feeling comfortable | Learning zone – engagement |
| PE | | | |
| PF | <i>The team-based learning activities pushed some people out of their comfort zone which is a good thing but may have led to varying perceptions...</i> | Feeling uncomfortable vs feeling comfortable | Learning zone – engagement |
| | <i>Forced to collaborate with people not used to working with led to good skill development</i> | Practising teamwork/ collaboration increased confidence | Learning zone – collaboration |
| | <i>Team-Based Learning – in the context of the Development Centre – was like a muscle to exercise. By the end of the 2 day event people were comfortable interacting and collaborating with strangers but if this KSB is not used on a regular basis then people will lose that KSB and underlying confidence</i> | Practising teamwork/ collaboration increased confidence | Learning zone – confidence |
| PG | <i>I carried out the pre-learning and fully participated with others throughout the 2-day event</i> | Decisive readiness to participate | Learning zone – engagement |
| | <i>There wasn't enough time to reflect and digest between activities, would have preferred more time as part of my development to consider what I had done/ felt/ learnt before starting the next activity</i> | Need for processing time – not facing it | Fear zone – processing |
| PH | <i>The mix of activities, building to the team task, kept the days interesting and high-paced, with a strong focus on self- and team-learning</i> | Motivation to learn increased through diverse activities | Learning zone – engagement |
| | <i>Having the opportunity to reflect on my team-working behaviours in a context with no business outcome pressures was very helpful and has given me some key insights for future personal development</i> | Safe space to reflect | Growth zone – vision |
| | <i>Needed a little more time to reflect on performance during the tasks</i> | Need for processing time | Fear zone – processing |
| PI | <i>Felt very comfortable throughout</i> | Comfortability | Comfort zone |
| | <i>Performance same as usual</i> | No change | Comfort zone |
| | <i>A great opportunity to network with other areas of the business, an enjoyable experience</i> | Safe space to enjoy/ connect | Learning zone – engagement |

(continued)

Table 2. Continued

| Participant code | RAW data | Initial code | Theme |
|------------------|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| PJ | <i>There was too much to process</i> | Need for processing time | Fear zone – processing |
| PK | | | |
| PL | <i>I did the prereading when it was sent through rather than just before so couldn't remember as much of it as I would have done if it was closer</i> | Readiness | Learning zone – preparation |
| | <i>Working as a group helped generate more ideas across the team and bounce off each other</i> | Safe space to collaborate | Learning zone – collaboration |
| PM | <i>There was a lot to take in in the pre-course emails etc and I feel that these could have been clearer e.g. a single email with everything we needed</i> | Preparation | Learning zone – preparation |
| | <i>I feel like it allowed/ helped me to contribute more than I normally would i.e. previously I may have been more passive or allowed others to lead</i> | Safe space to practise | Learning zone – confidence |

Source(s): Authors' own work

Learning zone – engagement

Participants commented that the TBLDC was an engaging approach to training and it had maintained their interest. Consistent with learner experiences of TBL in education (Darby et al., 2023; Koles et al., 2005; McNeil et al., 2019; Medlinskiene et al., 2024; Nelson and Tweddell, 2017; Tweddell, 2018), participants in this PD setting appreciated the interactive, inclusive nature of TBL and the opportunity to share ideas within their teams and wider cohort. Furthermore, it highlighted the importance of social engagement and playful interaction as vital elements of learning, regardless of age (Vygotsky, 1978).

PF: The team-based learning activities pushed some people out of their comfort zone which is a good thing [...].

PD: It pushed me out of my comfort zone, but that was the point.

PI: A great opportunity to network with other areas of the business, an enjoyable experience.

PH: The mix of activities, building to the team task, kept the days interesting and high-paced, with a strong focus on self- and team-learning.

PG: I carried out the pre-learning and fully participated with others throughout the 2-day event.

Learning zone – collaboration

Participants highlighted benefits of learning in a team through discussion, noting that it fostered deeper collaborative learning and understanding. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and supports existing educational research on the benefits of effective collaborative learning (McNeil et al., 2019; Baker et al., 2013; Rosenthal, 1995; Van der Vleuten and Driessen, 2014; Walker, 2003). The TBLDC enhanced participants'

understanding of highly functioning teams, emphasised individual and collective accountability and highlighted the role of team diversity in better decision-making. Participants appreciated working in heterogeneous teams and commented that TBL fostered an immediate sense of belonging, encouraged an appreciation of difference and adaptability, and strengthened team dynamics by helping individuals find ways to bring out the best in one another. Similarly, in educational contexts, TBL has been shown to support retention and achievement among female learners and promote the value of diversity (Darby *et al.*, 2023; Rosenthal, 1995).

Participants translated this PD back into the workplace, with a reframing of differences as strengths and the practice of being able to deal with conflicts and curveballs in situations where key performance indicators could be under threat.

PD: If the team is working well, it can help with the focus on the tasks in hand.

PL: Working as a group helped generate more ideas across the team and bounce off each other.

PD: It created scenarios that enabled me to practise these skills.

PF: Forced to collaborate with people not used to working with led to good skill development.

Learning zone – confidence

Improved self-confidence was reported by many participants as a direct result of being involved in the TBLDC and aligns closely with other TBL research where participants felt empowered by knowledge and skill acquisition, networking, idea development and individual agency (Burgess *et al.*, 2014; Darby *et al.*, 2022). At the TBLDC, participants became more at ease communicating with each other and in front of each other as time progressed. This typically translated as feeling more adept – many going on to deliver presentations and be part of wider “front and centre” functions (Burke and Hutchins, 2007).

PA: I think it helped in my confidence and learning how to work with different types of people.

PD: It reminded me that I’ve got potential.

PF: Team-based learning – in the context of the Development Centre – was like a muscle to exercise. By the end of the 2-day event, people were comfortable interacting and collaborating with strangers but if this KSB (knowledge, skills and behaviour) is not used on a regular basis, then people will lose that KSB and the underlying confidence.

PM: I feel like it allowed/helped me to contribute more than I normally would, i.e. previously I may have been more passive or allowed others to lead.

Learning zone – communication

Participants felt TBL provided opportunities to practise communicating confidently, clearly, and succinctly within a supportive team and where the stakes were not so high. Although some participants found the pace intense, some considered the time constraints of TBL an advantage to prompt more precise and reciprocal communication (placing more emphasis on active listening and patience) to avoid team conflict. For some, TBL gave a greater self-awareness of “EDI responsibility” – how they should give time and space for others to process information and encourage quieter members of the team to contribute to discussions. This coincides with findings in other TBL studies in educational and professional practice (Burgess *et al.*, 2014; Darby *et al.*, 2023; Hart *et al.*, 2019). It is also something that McDowall *et al.* (2025) recommended for improved neuroinclusive talent management.

Newfound confidence in communication translated to the workplace as participants reported feeling more capable of articulating their requests and opinions with teams and line

managers. As a result, participants reported increased effectiveness in leading their own teams, greater involvement in business hubs and peer-led projects, and enhanced job satisfaction (Burke and Hutchins, 2007; Hart et al., 2019).

PA: *Even if I didn't feel confident, it was important to communicate confidently with so many people in the room and it was also important to use the time in the most productive way as we were always short on time and under pressure.*

Learning zone – preparation

Many participants felt a strong connection to personalised “factual” information about themselves, particularly the online aptitude assessment that formed the basis of most participants’ individual action plans. Additionally, all participants felt that pre-reading was beneficial, although they expressed lower confidence in this response compared to other questions. IRAT scores highlighted that not everyone had completed the pre-reading to a high standard. Rajalingam et al. (2018) commented about the potential of using this data as a training gap analysis tool. The comment made by highlighted the importance of accessibility of the pre-learning, including the initial correspondence.

PL: *I did the prereading when it was sent through rather than just before so couldn't remember as much of it as I would have done if it was closer.*

PA: *I think you could come to the centre without doing any pre reading. The pre reading only helped about 30%.*

PM: *There was a lot to take in in the pre-course emails etc and I feel that these could have been clearer e.g. a single email with everything we needed.*

PD: *It was fine, it all helped. But there's an element of not being able to prepare fully, you basically need to go into with an open mind to tackle the challenges you are faced with.*

PB: *I think we should have had more time with the consultants that led the session to review the pre-assessment results.*

Growth zone - accountability

Studies have suggested TBL fosters accountability amongst learners through its flipped approach with pre-reading and the RAP (Darby et al., 2023; Haidet et al., 2014; Sweet and Michaelsen, 2012). Similarly, participants in the TBLDC reflected that TBL prompted them to become more self-aware, helping them to identify their own strengths and weaknesses (Nelson and Tweddell, 2017; Rotgans et al., 2018; Swanson et al., 2019). Participants’ reflections about their performance, together with peer, facilitator and line manager feedback, encouraged most to be more honest about what they needed to do for self-improvement. This sense of responsibility and accountability extended beyond the training room and into the workplace, prompting intrinsic motivation for PD (Burke and Hutchins, 2007; Hart et al., 2019). There was increased ambition to continue career progression and firm ideas of how they might work with their line manager to create opportunities for growth (Hart et al., 2019).

PA: *I didn't want to let my team down so made sure I was always listening [...].*

PA: *We wouldn't get anything out of the centre if we faded into the background and let others take the lead so everyone made sure they got involved.*

Unlike previous studies that emphasised the need for inclusive facilitation, this study showed a strong desire to participate and be inclusive from participants themselves. All 13 survey respondents felt able to fully engage in the TBLDC. However, facilitators observed “assumed” moments of discomfort, echoing findings from the Berkson et al. (2020) study. This suggests that the motivation to participate outweighed existing barriers, or it highlights the “double empathy” conundrum – mutual misunderstandings between neurotypical and neurodivergent

Growth zone – vision

In addition to participants feeling empowered, many reported in coaching sessions that TBL had made them more open, adaptive and accepting of themselves and others. They became more trusting of their colleagues and empathetic to others’ experiences, which subsequently made them more willing to collaborate across different departments beyond their immediate role (Lave, 1991; Hart et al., 2019; Wegner, 2000).

PD: It prompted ideas about my own strengths and weaknesses, about team dynamics, training, productivity, confidence, resilience, leadership [...].

PH: Having the opportunity to reflect on my team-working behaviours in a context with no business outcome pressures and has given me some key insights for future personal development.

Fear zone – challenges for social communication

One participant found team communication challenging and felt that they would have benefited from greater team member support. This aligns with broader recommendations within education and the workplace, which call for more inclusive practices, better communication strategies, workable adjustments for all and better training on embedding an EDI culture (Glen, 2025; Romualdez et al., 2021).

PA: I’m not sure if it helped in creating my own knowledge though, as there were so many people in the team, it was hard to get my knowledge across.

PA: I don’t think there was enough peer review, and I think that would have helped a lot of people on the course.

I think we should have had more time with the consultants that lead the session to review the pre-assessment results.

PC and PA: Working in a group was challenging for my learning style.

Fear zone – challenges for information processing

Four participants reported in the feedback that they would have appreciated more time to process information and to reflect on the learning. As some neurodivergent individuals will process information more slowly, this has real-world implications for designing, including learning and work environments – such as allowing extra time for discussions, decision-making and response (Haigh et al., 2018):

PG: There wasn’t enough time to reflect and digest between activities, would have preferred more time as part of my development to consider what I had done/felt/learnt before starting the next activity.

PH: Needed a little more time to reflect on performance during the tasks.

PJ: There was too much to process.

Comfort zone

One participant (PI) reported that the TBLDC had no impact on their behaviour, performance, or professional identity:

PI: Felt very comfortable throughout.

PI: Performance same as usual.

Rather than serving as a criticism, this response underscores the principle that self-motivation is also key for talent management and highlights that a “one-size-fits-all” approach will never really work (Remington et al., 2017).

Neurodivergence in the team-based learning development centre

During the TBLDC, facilitators observed potential neurodivergence in four participants. Of these, three were initially categorised as “red” (underperforming) immediately after the first phase of the programme. However, all four demonstrated measurable progress when provided with time, targeted coaching, and support. Notably, one participant – who later disclosed their neurodivergent identity – went on to make the most significant improvement, ultimately becoming one of the highest-scoring individuals in the cohort. This progression was enabled by support from facilitators and the participant’s line manager, who all worked to reframe perceived challenges and weaknesses as areas for growth. This approach encouraged the development of renewed confidence and intrinsic motivation, helping the participant to transition to the “Learning zone” and then to the “Growth zone”. Crucially, the responsibility for enabling neuroinclusion did not lie solely with those requiring adjustments; it depended on a collective, systemic commitment from the wider team (McDowall *et al.*, 2025).

Survey feedback indicated that some participants found the TBL approach challenging for their learning style, particularly because of its fast pace. Whether neurodivergence is formally disclosed or not, the need for timely support and appropriate accommodations is often essential. Without this, individuals may remain “stuck”, unable to progress into meaningful learning or growth. Whereas, fostering psychological safety – through clear communication, visuals, and acceptance of diverse communication and processing styles – can enable neurodivergent individuals to thrive (Glen, 2025). Moving forward, it is essential that this insight – and the feedback provided through lived experience – is used to embed a systemic, sustainable approach to neuroinclusion in the workplace (McDowall *et al.*, 2025; Romualdez *et al.*, 2021).

A focus on the individual experience

SSI with two participants gave further insight into the lived experience of TBL in a PD environment. They were finance leaders within the company but from different functions and service areas. Both interviewees achieved optimal success as part of the TBLDC (prior to the interviews taking place), and this perhaps influenced their decision to contribute to the study. Both said they “recognised how much work had gone into the TBLDC” and wanted to “give something back”. This built on the earlier point about TBL helping to quickly foster mutual respect (Slavin, 1996). It also posed a limitation for this study in terms of perspective in spite of their valuable rich insights.

One participant disclosed that he was on the neurodevelopmental pathway for ADHD and self-identified as autistic (P1). The other participant did not disclose neurodivergence but had clear awareness of his own learning differences and preferences (P2). P1 described himself as being a “lone ranger”, an introvert and a perfectionist who “doesn’t mix well with other people”. He commented that he likes processes, structure and being able to control pathways, directions and outputs, finds organisation difficult and gets distracted easily – a learner that some educational TBL studies have expressed suitability concerns about (Berkson *et al.*, 2020; McNeil *et al.*, 2019). P2 felt as though he had experienced collaborative approaches at school (he went to an independent fee-paying school) and that like TBL, it suited his quick-processing learning style, preference to learn with others and to be solution-focused.

Experience at the team-based learning development centre

From an observer’s perspective, P1 did not look like he was having a positive experience at the TBLDC. When *in situ*, he was quite negative about himself and his experience. He also looked exhausted. However, he said that he found the TBLDC “valuable” as he wanted more understanding of his differences to aid his career progression and that TBL created a safe environment for this growth mindset to develop. This highlights potential “double empathy”

and “normative assumptions” (Glen, 2025 p. 123) but also supports the idea of “readiness assurance” in a different way: a motivation to be responsible for personal learning and to understand its significance (Burke and Hutchins, 2007). With time, P1 became more comfortable with people and was able to get more involved and engaged. He was able to “open up and went through the full range of comfortable and uncomfortable feelings” and put this down to being out of his personal comfort zone but being with a team that worked well collectively and with a good atmosphere. Similarly, P2 believed that the output for the team was optimal over individuals working on their own but only if team formation was right. This feedback is similar to findings in the McDowall, Doyle and Kiseleva study (2025), where psychological safety was the strongest predictor of overall well-being, career satisfaction and the likelihood of remaining in the role.

Furthermore, P1 said that he felt as though the TBLDC encouraged personal accountability to “take the initiative more” but with a supportive process in place to ensure actionability (Burke and Hutchins, 2007). This was also a theme highlighted by P2, who liked the way “there was information and support from the facilitators but with flipped accountability for action” and felt that this started from the very beginning with guided self-formation of teams, ultimately giving participants ownership for the success of the tasks. He also discussed personal accountability and commented that self-reflection checklists at the beginning and the end of the TBLDC helped participants to get into a psychological space – to see their own behaviours and to frame them.

P2 commented that the TBLDC increased energy, motivation, views and insight and low-stake tasks, “still requiring enough thought, energy and effort, drove the right behaviours and interactions and the time pressure quickened this process”. Furthermore, he thought that more time and space were given to discussion in comparison to other training approaches, and this gave different perspectives, which created a group learning culture and “problem-solving solutioning” within a healthy environment for questioning and challenge (Burke and Hutchins, 2007).

P1 became more aware of his visual learning preference throughout the TBLDC and thought tasks were interesting and engaging, believing that there was a good balance of learning styles. This correlates with TBL educational research that suggests when the learning climate is inclusive, the experience of learning is also inclusive (Darby *et al.*, 2023).

Both participants thought benefits of using TBL outweighed challenges. However, P1 felt that although he managed to use strategies to overcome challenges, such as not knowing what was coming next, some neurodivergent people could shut down and that this would need careful planning and consideration (Berkson *et al.*, 2020). This contrasted with P2, who enjoyed the TBLDC’s curveballs as they added to the excitement. This within-person neurodivergent experience is discussed by McDowall, Doyle and Kiseleva (2025) and why getting the psychosocial environment with psychological safety is so important for neurodivergent talent to thrive.

The two participants both commented that everyone’s experience of TBL would be different and should not cater for “one size fits all”. They recommended inter-team strategies to help people feel more comfortable, ways to provide extra processing time along with more emphasis on building awareness of each other’s learning and communication differences and team formation based on these, not just more visible EDI (race, culture, gender and age). Both valued TIME given to teams to find common ground and felt “team identity” would increase over a long-term project.

Implications for practice

To support the company’s continuing discussions around how talent could be harnessed, retained and progressed, the following points were suggested as ideas to consider:

- Further involvement of line managers and how they might best support the development of individuals (Burke and Hutchins, 2007; Grossman and Salas, 2011; McDowall *et al.*, 2025).
- Focused, timebound coaching activities to help unpick the comfortable from uncomfortable feelings (Jamieson and Wood, 2024).
- Targeted accommodations and tailored activity for participants' personal development needs (McDowall *et al.*, 2025).
- Succession approaches and future research could examine how businesses could offer cost-effective TBL training opportunities for employees to engage in continued learning to strengthen "training transfer", prevent knowledge decay and strengthen retention (also a recommendation by Hart *et al.*, 2019).
- Embedded neuroinclusion support (with dedicated time to process and reflect) within a biopsychosocial model (McDowall *et al.*, 2025), strategies to better communicate across different neurotypes (Glen, 2025) and reasonable adjustment plans (DWP, 2024).

Limitations

Sample size was firstly limited to those invited to participate in the TBLDC. It was then further limited to those who volunteered to complete the questionnaire and then to be interviewed. Although it would have been beneficial to have had a larger sample size, the timescale of the project was restricted because of the nature of the contract as well as the way this research organically and retrospectively developed. While the in-depth insights gained offer valuable preliminary findings about the potential value a TBL approach could have for PD and neuroinclusion, the limited number of self-selected participants restricts the generalisability of the results. The findings should therefore be interpreted as exploratory and context-specific.

Recommendations

By involving a larger and more diverse sample, this could validate and build upon the findings of this study. Investigation, supported by psychometric validation, of TBL in professional settings is recommended, with a focus on its broader impact on productivity, neuroinclusion and employee satisfaction and retention. This would provide valuable insights into how TBL supports diverse talent and enhance organisational outcomes.

Conclusion

The collaborative nature of TBL not only enhanced communication and teambuilding skills but also contributed to sustained performance and ongoing personal growth. Importantly, it created a psychologically safe and supportive environment for neurodivergent participants. Findings underscore the urgent need to nurture, support and amplify neurodivergent voices in both educational and professional settings. By offering structure, inclusivity and connection, the TBLDC enabled participants to perform, thrive and grow.

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