An Investigation into the Work of Teaching Assistants in Four English Primary Schools: Investigating Policy and Practice

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Acknowledgements

Contents

Abstract

The research reported in this thesis examines the work of teaching assistants (TA) in primary schools. The *national agreement* in 2003 saw their numbers rise considerably in an attempt to raise standards and relieve teacher workloads. The initial intention was for TAs to undertake many of the administrative tasks of teachers although some whole-class support was envisaged in the form of higher level teaching assistants and cover supervisors. Following a large scale research project between 2003 and 2008 titled the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff, TAs came under criticism. They were reported to be deployed in pedagogical roles for which they lacked preparation and pedagogical knowledge; where they closed down talk and focused on task completion. The empirical research took place in 2016 in four North of England primary schools; taking a mixed-methods approach it aimed to investigate the reality of TA work. Questionnaires were completed by 46 TAs, eight full day observations undertaken (two TAs in each school), 16 TA interviews (four TAs per school) and four line manager interviews (one per school). The thesis is presented as a set of tensions which act as a lens through which TA work is examined. The four tensions are: professionalisation of TAs versus de-professionalisation of teachers; work versus non-work; control versus autonomy and inclusion versus exclusion. The findings are analysed drawing on theories of power and work with emphasis on the caring and nurturing that is associated with women's work. These findings illustrate a growing professionalisation of TA work coupled with work intensification. Like teachers, TAs are subject to similar control mechanisms, yet, at times work with considerable autonomy. When included as full members of the school they have significant agency to shape their working conditions but are still subject to exploitation as they so readily provide unpaid labour.

List of figures and tables

Abbreviations

ALS	Additional literacy support
BSW	Bilingual Support Worker
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CACE	Central Advisory Council for Education
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DES	Department of Education and Science
DISS	Deployment and Impact of Support Staff
EAL	English as an additional language
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation
ELG	Early learning goals
EHC	Education health and care
EP	Educational Psychologist
ERA	Education Reform Act
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HT	Headteacher
HLTA	Higher level teaching assistant
IEP	Individual education plan
INSET	In-Service Training
KS	Key stage
LA	Local Authority
MAT	Multi Academy Trust
NJCLGS	National Joint Council for Local Government Services
NEU	National Education Union
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PE	Physical education
PPA	Planning, preparation and assessment
RE	Religious education
SaL	Speech and language
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SENDCo	Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
STA	Specialist Teaching Assistant
TA	Teaching assistant
TDA	Teaching and Development Agency
WPR	Wider Pedagogical Role

Glossary

ALS	Additional Literacy Support (ALS) was introduced shortly after the Literacy Strategy and aimed to help pupils in KS2 who had already fallen behind
Cluster meeting	Cluster meetings occur in LAs providing an opportunity for staff to meet form different schools. They could be in relation to an age group or a subject.
Core curriculum	Core curriculum often used to refer to numeracy and literacy
Cover teacher:	Cover teachers are not the regular class teacher; they could be supply teachers if the regular teacher is off sick or a teacher used frequently to cover PPA
Creative curriculum	A creative curriculum is one where children learn through creative and active teaching strategies
Display	Primary schools in particular have displays on the classroom walls of useful information as well as celebrating children's work
Early learning goals	Early learning goals are the standards set that a child is expected to achieve by the end of their first year in school in order to meet the standards for their age.
EHC plan	EHC plans are a legal document setting out the special educational need and the support required
EYFS	EYFS is the curriculum used from birth to five years. It relies on internal assessments towards the ELG so LA moderation allows staff to ensure parity across schools
Forest school	The forest school approach developed in Scandinavia enables children to learn in a safe and supportive natural outdoor environment.
Free flow	Free-flow operates in early years and allows children to move freely indoors and outdoors choosing activities as they wish.
IEP	Children with SEND have IEPs which help target development taking account of their need.
INSET	INSET is an acronym used in schools (In-Service Training) which are the five training days that teachers undertake where children are not in school
Lego therapy	Lego therapy uses Lego to encourage problem-solving and communication.
Modelling	Modelling involves demonstrating how something is done
Nurture groups	Nurture groups target children exhibiting emotional, behavioural or social issues
PPA	Brought in under the national agreement and is allocated time each week for a teacher away from class to undertake administration
Pupil premium	Pupil premium is additional government funding designed to help disadvantaged pupils perform better, hence closing the gap between them and their peers
Rapid maths	Rapid maths is a multi-sensory approach aimed to help children catch up with their peers in maths at KS2
Scaffolding	Scaffolding, first used by Jerome Bruner in 1976 means what support is offered and in what format it takes
Single status	Single status was a national agreement between employers and trades' unions to instigate equal pay across a variety of jobs deemed to have equivalent status

SATs	These are the national tests undertaken at the end of primary school in England
Special schools	Special schools specifically educate children with SEND
Talk Boost	A speech, language and communication intervention
Toe by Toe	Toe by Toe is an initiative to support individuals struggling with reading
Twilight	Twilight training takes place at the end of the school day after the children have left and usually lasts a couple of hours

1.0 Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores my interest in the work and relationships of primary school teaching assistants (TAs). Although I currently work in Higher Education (HE) I began my career as a primary school teacher. Over the years I worked closely with a number of TAs, always women, with whom I shared a classroom and without whom my job would have been more difficult. This chapter sets the context of my research; firstly, identifying why the topic warrants investigation before outlining the themes of interest through my personal journey. Throughout the thesis the term teaching assistant will be used although other common terms are made explicit in appendix one. This introductory chapter presents the key themes that thread throughout the thesis, around which the findings and discussion chapters are organised. The themes were formulated as a set of tensions that have been identified in the policy and practice of TA employment; namely professionalisation versus de-professionalisation, work versus non-work, control versus autonomy and inclusion versus exclusion. This is the order the themes are referred to throughout the thesis except for section 1.3 where their introduction is presented chronologically in my career history.

1.2 Studying Teaching Assistants

Over the years there has been a great deal of research into the work of teachers but interest in TA work gathered momentum after *'Raising standards and tackling workload: a national agreement* (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2003) which led to increasing TA numbers in schools. However, unlike teaching, most TA research has concentrated on the increasing pedagogical nature of their roles rather than a holistic examination of their employment. Research has focused on their preparedness for the role, set within the wider context of workforce remodelling, which occurred during the years following the *national agreement.* It has now become widely accepted that TAs are taking on a frontline pedagogical role (Radford *et al*, 2015) and much is expected from them. Studies have covered a range of topics from their professional development (Woolhouse *et al*, 2009), their work on interventions (Alborz *et al*, 2009), their support for inclusion (Webster *et al*, 2013) and their verbal interactions with children (Rubie-Davies *et al,* 2010). Whilst studies relating to teachers have afforded wide coverage with interpretation from theoretical perspectives, TA research has not always, which presented me with the opportunity to analyse their roles in relation to theories such as those on power and work. The thesis predominately adopts a sociological interpretive approach at school level whilst taking account of the wider national context within which schools operate. The research illuminates the many facets of TA life and how they operate in schools.

1.3 My personal journey

Reflection during and after the research identified the themes of interest and it was then I saw how they had manifested themselves throughout my career hence the decision to present them through

my personal journey. This reflection also made me realise that my direct experiences had positioned me with a positive outlook as to the value of TAs and influenced by desire to undertake this study which also meant careful execution in order to maintain an unbiased study

. As a primary teacher I worked in several schools; when new to a school I found the school's TAs could be relied upon to assist with school routines as well as having detailed knowledge of the children. I was at the penultimate school of my primary teaching career for several years, beginning there in 1998. It was here, in a town on the outskirts of Manchester, where I took on my first middle management role which involved line managing TAs and bilingual support workers (BSW). The late nineties introduced the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies (Department for Education (DfE), 2011), a government intervention aimed at driving improvements in primary schools. This initiated focused training for teachers but often in the absence of the TAs. As part of my role I felt it important for TAs to understand the key messages of the strategies so delivered a number of short training sessions which ensured they were better prepared to fulfil the pedagogical role expected. Introducing the first theme, **inclusion versus exclusion** (section 2.9**)**, TAs' exclusion from meetings or school training in my experience was not uncommon around this time and has continued to feature in research since (Smith *et al*, 2004; Burton and Goodman, 2011; UNISON, 2013). During the early 2000s various initiatives were introduced aimed at upskilling the TA workforce as the government believed TAs would aid children's achievement alongside reducing teachers' workload (Butt and Lance, 2009). Our school backed this initiative and I supported two TAs through the Specialist Teaching Assistant (STA) qualification, a more advanced TA qualification, undertaken with the Open University. Many of the TAs in our school were BSWs and were there to support children for whom English was an additional language (EAL). There were many children, recently arrived from Bangladesh, who spoke limited English, so their role was seen as vital, as they translated concepts into the children's home language. In addition, TAs took on some administrative roles such as photocopying as well as supporting children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). One TA in particular, was employed to work 1:1 with a child in my class with Down's syndrome and her support was invaluable to both him and me. The child had a statement of SEN which, under the Education Act 1981, meant he was entitled to this additional provision. She was in her twenties; bright, dedicated and hardworking and I considered her the 'expert'. She liaised with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) and designed activities for him. She also gathered resources and created activities which he could use independently which I asked him to complete when she was not there. I relied on her totally, considering her to have greater knowledge than me and it appears that this expectation was not uncommon; TAs perceived as the experts for children with SEN has been well documented (Webster and Blatchford, 2013a; Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015). Webster and Blatchford (2015) suggested teachers felt TAs possessed greater knowledge concerning children with statements, adapting and amending work as required for those

children and this is certainly my experience. I saw my TA as more than capable; she was amazing and nothing was ever too much for her. We remained in contact for years after I left the school, as I did with other TAs from there, where we had developed excellent relationships borne from mutual respect and a desire to help the children achieve.

I left the school in 2004 and began work in the Further Education (FE) sector where relatively quickly an opportunity presented itself. The college had become involved in foundation degree provision, which were being promoted by the government with the intention of providing opportunities for socially disadvantaged groups as well as a means of tackling skills shortages (DfES, 2004). An email was sent to all staff searching for someone to undertake an evening class teaching a curriculum-based module on the foundation degree for TAs. Having recently left teaching in the primary sector I was placed in an ideal position and was quickly accepted to the team. Although it is acknowledged that this is a selective sample, my students were , mainly primary school-based TAs, mostly women, juggling work and families in order to gain degrees so that they could improve their practice. They were passionate about what they did and the children they supported, which was evident when I observed them in settings. The majority had a thirst for knowledge, were dedicated and ambitious and gave more than their contracts or salaries dictated. In 2008 I also had the opportunity to help prepare TAs for their higherlevel teaching assistant (HLTA) status assessments. This was a specific role introduced as part of the *national agreement* (DfES, 2003) forged between unions and the government, aimed at raising standards and tackling teacher workloads. Through an assessment TAs gaining this status, proving their capability against 33 standards (Teaching and Development Agency (TDA), 2007a) which, when examining the documents were not dissimilar from the standards expected from Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) (TDA, 2007b). Upon successful assessment HLTAs could take whole-classes in the absence of teachers which allowed for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment (PPA[1]) time, a new requirement following the *national agreement* (DfES, 2003). The TAs I trained in preparation for their assessments were similarly dedicated and caring and came across as competent and capable. In over ten years as an HLTA assessor this continues to be my impression where HLTA candidates are highly regarded in their schools, presenting as knowledgeable, experienced and trusted.

As part of my own professional development in 2012 I visitedthe Education Show (North) and l attended a seminar about TAs. The speaker was Rob Webster who had been involved in a large-scale study that looked at the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS). As he recounted their findings I found they did not always offer a picture I felt familiar with; their research contradicting my own experiences. I later bought the book (Blatchford *et al*, 2012b) and was able to see their

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[1] PPA was brought in under the national agreement and is allocated time each week for a teacher away from class to undertake administration

evidence and I recognised familiarity with some of their findings which they presented against a model called the Wider Pedagogical Role (WPR) model. The model focused on preparedness, deployment and practice as well as characteristics and conditions of employment. The DISS study indicated TAs lacked preparedness due to poor opportunities for planning, preparation and feedback and had a lack of pedagogical knowledge. It was clear the foundation degree I taught on gave TAs detailed pedagogical knowledge; the TAs were often proactive, giving unpaid time, which enabled them to liaise with teachers aiding their preparedness and preparation and they did this because they cared. My experience did not really support the DISS findings in this part of the model, but it did raise the question of what they did in schools indicating there might be a tension between what constitutes work and what might be considered as non-work. For example, Grint and Nixon (2015) suggest work is something done for remuneration whilst Acker (1999, p.19), in research related to teachers, suggests non-work is 'associated with the notion of women doing *'natural'*, quasi-maternal *'caring''*; women easily exploited with workloads increasing without their agreement. What TAs did as **work versus non-work** (section 2.5 and 2.6) was of interest and not widely researched and hence is another of the key themes pertinent to the thesis.

In relation to their deployment my students informally discussed their direct instructional role, often with children with SEN, often away from the classroom and this was also witnessed as part of the yearly observation of their work which was part of the expectations of the foundation degree course in its first few years. This therefore did support the DISS findings but also highlighted the autonomous nature of their roles whilst also working in an environment where, as paid employees, they were very much under the direction and control of others. Many of the TAs reported and were witnessed operating with a great deal of autonomy and appeared well respected. However, contracts of employment position TAs under direction of the teacher and this was also indicated in the *national agreement* (DfES, 2003). Undoubtedly, TAs operate in a subordinate role within the hierarchy of schools (Watson *et al*, 2013; Houssart and Croucher, 2013) yet the autonomous and often powerful position in which they can find themselves (Calvert and Tucker, 2009; Houssart, 2012; Graves, 2014) offers a contrast and features as part of a third theme of **control versus autonomy** (section 2.7 and 2.8) .

Finally, in relation to practice the DISS study reported TAs often focused on task completion rather than the understanding of concepts and their questioning closed down discussions rather than opened them up. Again, the course actively encouraged TAs to consider this aspect of their role and in the observations of their practice I witnessed higher order questioning with some TAs although not all. I distinctly recall talking to TAs after observations and two feedback sessions are prominent in my memory. One, where the TA focused on task completion with her children, warranted some developmental feedback but when I discussed this with her she told me the teacher expected to see something on paper even though she was fully aware that this was not the way to promote

learning. Another was when a TA ploughed through an activity again focused on completion, yet the task was too difficult for the children. Afterwards, when I discussed why she had not adapted it, visibly upset, she told me her recently qualified teacher did not readily accept feedback or suggestions from her and did not want her to modify the work set. For both of these TAs this was a difficult position to be in, creating a great deal of job dissatisfaction, particularly as they were aware of good practice that promoted learning. Fortunately, this was unusual; the TAs were often resourceful and creative and encouraged to be so, engendering successful learning experiences. There has been mounting interest in the growth of TAs as professionals (Townsend and Parker, 2009) and perhaps the teachers in the examples above felt threatened as Wilson and Bedford (2008) suggested could be possible. In addition, there have been concerns regarding the de-professionalisation of teachers with the increase of para-professionals (Blatchford *et al*, 2012b). Evidently developing skills, volunteer TAs quickly gained paid employment, perhaps foundation degrees reflecting an increased perception of professionalism for TAs (Morris, 2009). This identified the final theme which examines the tension of **professionalisation versus de-professionalisation** (section 2.3 and 2.4) of staff in schools.

Blatchford *et al's* (2012b) research fuelled my interest into TA work as I felt 'my TAs' were not clearly recognisable in this study. When I decided I wanted to undertake a professional doctorate there was no doubt that my research would involve TAs. I realised much of the research in existence focused on their pedagogical role but I knew there was much more and much research often relied on the perspective of school leaders. I was interested in the holistic nature of TA work including and beyond their pedagogical role such as their relationships, motivation and team-working. I wanted to know how they were able to develop autonomous working and access professional development. I also wished to ascertain how their role had developed since its growth in schools. I wanted to capture their voice alongside their line managers and through this I would be able to contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

After deliberation I devised the following objectives and research questions:

Objectives:

In each school:

1. Investigate the characteristics of the TAs in each school.
2. Observe the actual experiences of TAs in order to understand their roles and relationships.
3. Explore the reality of TA work as perceived by TAs and their line managers.
4. Analyse TA work in relation to institutional, local and national policy.

Research question: What is the nature of teaching assistants' work in four primary schools in England?

Sub-questions:

1. What qualifications, training and knowledge do TAs have that enable them to take on their roles and responsibilities and how does this impact on teacher work?
2. What are the key components of TA work and how does 'caring' impact on how they go about it?
3. To what extent is TA work monitored and controlled?
4. To what extent are TAs fully included as member of the pedagogical team in the schools?

The research was conducted in four schools over a five month period which straddled two academic years in 2016. Data were gathered from the TAs in each school by means of a questionnaire and its administration was used to identify TAs willing to be shadowed for a day and/or interviewed. In total eight TAs were shadowed and these alongside a further eight TAs were interviewed. In addition, their line managers or headteachers were also interviewed as well as documentary data gathered in the form of job descriptions and individual timetables.

1.4 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is organised as follows. Chapter one begins with my personal and professional interest in the subject of TA work and identifies the tensions which will frame the research inquiry and discussion. Chapter two examines literature in relation to the growth and development of TA work with emphasis on literature around the four themes identified in section 1.3. Chapter three concentrates on the sociological framework for the research with focus on power and theories of work which will aid the later discussion of the findings. Chapter four outlines the methodology and methods used in order to gather the data. Linking to the sub-questions above, chapters five to eight provide the combined results and discussion under the four key tensions of:

1. Professionalisation versus de-professionalisation;

2. work versus non work;

3. Autonomy versus control;

4. inclusion versus exclusion.

Chapter nine concludes the study in relation to TA work, ensuring the research questions have been fully addressed. It clearly identifies the key contributions to knowledge whilst noting limitations and recommendations for future research. A summary of the schools and TA characteristics is available in the appendices.

2.0. Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The introduction of support staff into English schools can be traced back to the *Elementary Education Act 1870,* however, the inclusion of children with SEN into mainstream settings increased TA numbers (Swann and Loxley, 1998). In particular, children with a statement of SEN tended to have allocated TA support hours (Doherty, 2004). However, the *national agreement* (DfES, 2003) resulted in TA numbers almost trebling in the following years and in the 2017 census the total number of TAs across the sector stood at 262,800 (DfE, 2018). This chapter examines existing literature in relation to the four main themes.

2.2 The Rise of the TA role

The employment of support staff (this concept is explored in appendix one) can be plotted as far back as the *Elementary Education Act 1870* but the Hadow Report[2] (Board of Education, 1933) made a strong recommendation that there should be support staff in schools who would be:

> Girls who have attended school up to the age of at least fifteen years; their
> employment as 'helpers' should cease at the age of eighteen or nineteen
> (Hadow, 1933, p. 158)

This recommendation was reiterated in the Plowden Report[3] (Central Advisory Council for Education (CACE), 1967) which suggested schools should employ what were described as 'teachers' aides'. The first increase in TA numbers resulted from the Warnock Report[4] (Department of Education and Science (DES), 1978) which suggested children with SEN should be educated in mainstream schools and TAs assisted this policy. However, the New Labour government in 1997 placed education under the spotlight, emphasising a commitment to challenging social and economic disadvantage and education was to be the enabler (Chitty, 2014). Curricular direction initiated under a Conservative government with the National Curriculum in the *Education Reform Act (ERA) 1988,* was further reinforced under New Labour with the introduction of prescriptive primary National Literacy and Numeracy strategies (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 1997). The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED[5]) inspections alongside published league tables of the end of key stage (KS) test results, increased schools' accountability (Forrester and Garratt, 2016; Blatchford *et al*, 2012b) yet children still failed to reach the expected standard set in 1997 for 2002 (DfEE, 1997). Rising tension regarding teacher workloads was evident with teachers reporting long hours (Forrester, 2000) under strain from constant appraisal, testing and inspection (Bates *et al*, 2011). The government needed to act and commissioned a review by Pricewaterhouse Coopers (2001) which found two thirds of teachers' time involved non-teaching

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[2] the Hadow Report was a review of infant and nursery education
[3] the Plowden Report was a review of primary education
[4] the Warnock Report was a review of the education of children with SEN
[5] OFSTED was renamed the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills in April 2007

activities with excessive workload cited as the main reason teachers were leaving the profession. It concluded that developing the role of support staff was essential to eliminate excessive workloads whilst also helping to raise pupil achievement. The white paper *Schools: achieving success* (DfES, 2001) highlighted the government's belief that TAs were central to recent pupil achievements and £350 million was invested in the development and recruitment of TAs (Blatchford *et al*, 2012b) despite there being no evidence to substantiate the claim that support staff did in fact raise standards (Cooke-Jones, 2006).

Support staff continued to be seen as the panacea and featured significantly in the government proposals to remodel the workforce in the *Time for standards; reforming the school workforce* (DfES, 2002). The contribution of TAs to the modernisation of schools was evident in the document which highlighted they could expect access to training and career pathways. After prolonged discussion these reforms were ratified by the government and the unions (apart from the National Union of Teachers (NUT)) in a significant policy, *'Raising standards and tackling workload: a national agreement'* (DfES, 2003). The *national agreement* intended to reduce teachers' workloads with a range of measures which included the reduction of administrative tasks. Initially referred to as the 24[6] tasks (Hammersley-Fletcher *et al*, 2006), this administration would be undertaken by support staff (DfES, 2003). Teachers would have released time for planning and less commitment to cover for absent colleagues so specialist roles such as HLTAs and cover supervisors were introduced; both roles were envisaged to undertake whole-classes (DfES, 2003). Lehane (2018) suggests this was 'deeply controversial' and the root of the NUT's objection; although welcoming the growth of the TA role the NUT was reticent about TAs taking classes, feeling it undermined the teaching profession's graduate status (NUT, 2003). The reforms were to be known as 'Remodelling the School Workforce' (Gunter, 2007) and support staff numbers were envisaged to rise as needed (DfES, 2003) providing what Hanccock and Eyres (2004) suggested was a ready supply of cheap labour.

Consequently, TA numbers in primary schools did rise (DfE, 2018), partially driven by the increase of children with SEND in mainstream schools (Forrester and Garratt, 2016) accounting for 13% of school budgets in 2015 (Sharples *et al*, 2015). In addition, over 55,000 TAs have been awarded HLTA status in England (HLTA National Assessment Partnership (NAP), 2016) and in 2015 accounted for around 15% of the TA population (Sharples *et al*, 2015). However, more recently TA numbers in primary schools have fallen slightly (table 2.1) (DfE, 2018) as schools report funding constraints (DfE, 2019c) and Chakrabortty, Adams and Weale (2019), writing for The Guardian, report a leaked paper which indicates the current government appears more committed to reduce TA numbers

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[6] these later became 25 tasks

further. Ironically, since the Coronovirus pandemic in 2020, the DfE (2020) have endorsed that TAs, supported by a teacher, can lead groups.

Year	Number of primary school TAs
2000	53,400
2010	126, 300
2016	177,700
2017	176,200

Table 2.1: Growth in TA numbers (DfE, 2018)

Although , the *national agreement* (DfES, 2003, p.4) was about teachers it acknowledged 'significant implications for support staff' promising extended roles with training, standards frameworks, new career paths and better remuneration. Remodelling occurred in schools but in a large-scale report, Hutchings *et al* (2009) indicate only around 50% of existing TAs were consulted as it happened. The rapid growth also led to parent helpers gaining employment in schools (Wilson *et al*, 2003) and this no doubt increased the use of the somewhat derogatory term *'mums' army'* when making reference to TAs (Swann and Loxley, 1998). As workforce remodelling became established it was apparent that schools had interpreted the *national agreement* (DfES, 2003) multifariously in relation to TA training and management (Pugh, 2007). In particular, Gunter (2004) (cited in Butt and Lance, 2009) highlighted concerns regarding the possible deregulation of teaching by the increasing utilisation of TAs as replacement teachers.

2.3 Professionalisation of Teaching Assistants

The increase of support staff performing elements of roles previously undertaken by professionals has been widespread across public services and the term paraprofessionals has frequently been used (Blatchford *et al*, 2012b) as well as associate professional (Edmond and Price, 2009). Lowe (2010) argues that for TAs to truly be classed as a profession, certain criteria need to exist including clear entry levels, job descriptions, career stages, appraisal systems, career structures as well as access to continual professional development. In addition, professionals achieve their status through tightly controlled regulatory practices; the erosion of which for teachers has occurred commensurate with the rise in the para-professional (Blatchford *et al*, 2012b). However, for Townsend and Parker (2009) TAs should be considered professionals and coin the term 'new professionals' when they discuss TA roles and responsibilities in schools.

In the 1990s, Farrell *et al* (1999) identified an absence of career structure for TAs as well as limited opportunities for either development or promotion. The *national agreement* (DfES, 2003, p. 12) attempted to tackle this issue when it introduced the HLTA role with a 'professional standards framework'. Nevertheless, following its introduction discrepancies occurred between schools on how they remunerated and interpreted its use (Wilson *et al*, 2007). Townsend and Parker (2009)

suggested HLTA status introduced career structure and job opportunities notwithstanding in a somewhat inconsistent manner. However, the wide scale reforms introduced in the government white paper '*'The importance of teaching'* in 2010 which aimed to make the English education system 'world class' hardly mentioned TAs (DfE, 2010, p.4)). The DfE (2019c, p42) report TAs as having 'lost value and respect' in the sector perhaps influenced by the governments lack of commitment to this workforce with reforms such as the removal of government funding for HLTAs (DfE, 2014b). This may well have influenced perceptions in schools and Graves and Williams (2017, pp. 269) in a small-scale study, reported HLTA status amongst secondary TAs appeared to be 'losing currency' offering limited progression opportunities. HLTAs were choosing to drop the title preferring alternative they deemed sounded more professional such as Senior Learning Assistant or Maths Intervention Officer. The lack of career opportunities for HLTAs was highlighted by Miller (2017) but she described innovative routes did exist that converted school staff such as HLTAs into qualified teachers with the development of work based degree pathways where students can gain accreditation for aspects of training already undertaken. Ultimately, regardless of the preferred term, the development of para-professionals allowed for cheaper employees to be recruited in order to reduce the work load of more expensive and fully trained teachers (Blatchford *et al*, 2012b).

Lowe (2010) also emphasises the requirement for professionals to have professional standards, which are in existence for teachers and HLTAs but not for TAs. This was an area the government at that time planned to address, commissioning a set of TA standards in 2014 (DfE, 2014b), produced in draft (DfE, 2015) but never published; a further example of the governmental withdrawal from its previous commitment to TA development. Scott (2015), writing for Schools Week, reported Nick Gibb, the then schools minister backtracking, stating:

> The government believes that schools are best placed to decide how they use and deploy teaching assistants, and to set standards for the teaching assistants they employ (Scott, 2015, n.p.)

It was seen as a deliberate knock against professionalism; responding, Jon Richards, head of UNISON commented:

> While teachers are setting up the College of Teaching, the government is smashing the idea of professional standards for TAs. It is an outrage (Scott, 2015, n. p.)

The standards were intended as non-statutory guidance (DfE, 2015) however organisations felt they would prove useful so entered the public domain with the caveat that the DfE no longer had direct association with them (UNISON *et al,* 2016). Edmond and Price (2009) argue the role has professionalised due to the increase in professional development and qualifications and the

National Education Union (NEU) (2019) which incorporates the now defunct NUT willingly represents TAs whom they refer to as professionals.

At the time of the *national agreement,* he debate into whether TAs' should be considered to have professional status was not necessarily viewed favourably by teachers; highlighted by the NUT's objection to the proposals(NUT, 2003). Watson *et al* (2013) found that some teachers, whilst respecting TAs for their professionalism, objected to using the term 'profession' for TAs, feeling it undermined teachers' professional qualifications and the concern over the impact TAs can have on teachers' self-perception as professionals was highlighted by Haycock and Smith (2011). In addition, Radford *et al* (2015) emphasised issues with the expectation teachers will aid unqualified people to develop skills which then encroach on their own professional standing.

2.4 De-professionalisation of Teachers

As arguments over TAs as professionals began, the existing debate over teachers' professionalism continued; teachers themselves have in the past been referred to as semi-professionals (Etzioni, 1969). Teachers' professionalism has been scrutinised for some time and objections to reforms to professional working conditions is often linked to a historical perception of what that profession should look like (Menter *et al*, 1997). Ozga (1988) suggests this scrutiny has been for a sustained period; measured against reputable professions and found wanting due to a lack of esoteric knowledge, status, salary and the prevalence of female participants. The struggle for professionalisation of teachers was seen as an important one for women as they attempt to gain equal status with men (Apple, 1988). Professionalisation, Tropp (1957) (cited in Ozga and Lawn, 1981) indicates is brought about through a combination of policy, higher qualifications and salaries. However, Ozga and Lawn (1988) suggest that the use of the term professionalism for teachers acts as a means of control and is an attempt to separate them out from the working class; manipulating them to deliver the messages required to maintain capitalism. For many years, after the *Education Act 1944*, teachers enjoyed great autonomy over the curriculum and school practices, seen to have professional knowledge and expertise (Forrester and Garratt, 2016). Hargreaves (1994) considers increased complexity and hence professionalisation of teaching was evident from the requirements for collaborative and leadership tasks yet it contrasted with intensification to their role where their work has become increasingly routine, allowing for deskilling with less autonomy for decision making. Menter *et al* (1997) indicate that teacher control existed across the spheres of the economy, politics and society but the *ERA 1988* specifically introduced greater state control with prescriptive governmental intervention regarding the curriculum (Menter *et al*, 1997) which, Galton and MacBeath (2002) claim, alongside bureaucratic assessment and reporting, has led to the de-professionalisation of teachers. In addition, building on Ozga and Lawn (1981) and their application of labour process theory to teaching (section 3.2.4), Gunter (2008) suggests teachers' utilisation of lesson plans

sourced from the internet, TA deployment, as well as government issued materials means teachers are no longer able to claim professional knowledge as they are detached from conception of the curriculum. The 24 tasks, undoubtedly deemed to be what Bach *et al* (2006) would describe as less skilled tasks, passed to support staff in schools, links firmly with Taylorism (section 3.2.4). Ozga and Lawn (1981) argue that deskilling occurs when teachers lose 'ownership', losing their professionalism when they are required to implement the concepts of others. According to Galton and MacBeath (2002) deskilling means teachers no longer act on their initiative and examples of teachers' lack of skill are evident in SEND provision where TAs have been considered the expert (Bedford *et al*, 2008; Webster and Blatchford, 2015; Webster and Blatchford, 2017). In addition, Graves (2012) suggests in primary schools it is hard to distinguish between teacher and HLTA roles but HLTA status is acquired without specific training suggesting de-professionalisation and deskilling. However, Carter and Stevenson (2012) consider that workforce remodelling after the *national agreement* has not particularly led to the deskilling of teachers. They suggest that both teachers and TAs have actually been upskilled, with TAs more involved with teaching and teachers increasingly involved with managerial duties. Yet, they do consider this has ultimately led to the degradation of the wider process of teaching. Smaller (2015) also argues against the notion of deskilling, suggesting teachers are increasingly developing innovative ways to meet the increasing demands placed upon them.

2.5 The work of Teaching Assistants

Although the original intention of the *national agreement* was for TAs to assume more administrative roles, Hancock *et al* (2002) suggested the boundaries between TAs and teachers had already begun to blur. Several later reports have continued to indicate that TA and teacher roles are not clear with TAs involved in direct instruction and curricular design rather than administrative tasks (Butt and Lance, 2009; Warhurst *et al*, 2014; Chambers, 2015; Gibson *et al*, 2016; Bovill, 2017).

The *national agreement* attempted to improve the professional standing of TAs with the introduction of new roles such as HLTAs and cover supervisors, deemed suitably proficient to cover staff absences or PPA time; these roles were seen as possible career enhancements (DfES, 2003). It was predicted that HLTAs would make:

> Substantial contribution to the teaching and learning process in schools and to raising standards of achievement (DfES, 2003 p. 13)

Later documentation sought to clarify the expectations of the HLTA role and outlined their role in whole-class cover where they should be supervised and not used to substitute a class teacher (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2007). However, Hancock *et al* (2010) found the reality was a flexible interpretation of the role and HLTAs considered themselves to be teaching. In addition, HLTAs found themselves taking on management responsibilities (Woodward and Peart, 2005; Mansaray, 2006; Hancock *et al*, 2010) and Emira (2011) highlighted they could even be

leading training. There were also guidelines in relation to what cover supervision, (more common in secondary schools) was and involved:

> No active teaching taking place. Pupils would continue their learning by carrying out a pre-prepared exercise under supervision. (DfES, 2004, p. 1)

However, Carter and Stevenson (2012) interviewed a secondary school manager who identified the reality was that cover supervisors taught.

The flexible interpretation of these two roles also applied to TAs. Research in the years after the *national agreement* showed TAs to be undertaking a wide range of tasks ranging from the envisaged administrative duties, through to small group work and whole-class teaching (Hancock *et al*, 2002; Kerry, 2005; Mansaray, 2006; Wilson and Bedford, 2008; Warhurst *et al*, 2014). Radford *et al* (2015) suggest that TAs undertaking a front-line pedagogical role is now widely accepted as the norm although a key area where Blatchford *et al* (2009a) expressed concerns. In the DISS project Blatchford *et al* (2009a) found the instructional role of TAs was prominent in intervention work. Interventions are often undertaken away from the mainstream classroom (Mansaray, 2006; Houssart, 2012; Slater and Gazeley, 2018) leading to the separation of children from their class teachers which caused Blatchford *et al* (2009b) particular disquiet in relation to TA work. Earlier concerns with TA interventions focused on TA effectiveness in aiding children's achievement with Muijs and Reynolds (2003) indicating TAs had little impact delivering a mathematics intervention, even when trained. Nevertheless, this appears the exception and on the whole research since the *national agreement* reports favourably with regard to TA intervention work (e.g. Alborz *et al*, 2009; Fricke *et al* 2013; Houssart and Croucher, 2013; Sharples *et al*, 2015; Sharples, 2016; Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), 2017a; EEF, 2017b). In common, they all stress that TAs need to be properly trained and managed in order to ensure effective implementation with Alborz *et al* (2009) suggesting teacher-TA collaboration is also important. However, Webster and Blatchford (2015, p. 337) continue to be critical and consider that much intervention work is actually 'inappropriately targeted, repetitive or undemanding'.

Due to TA led interventions and other in-class support TAs spend considerable time interacting with children. In the DISS project Blatchford *et al* (2012b) placed great emphasis on adult – pupil communication. The role of teachers' language in children's learning has been widely researched and discussed (e.g. Alexander, 2008; Dawes, 2014) but the DISS research illuminated TA-pupil dialogue too. Rubie-Davies *et al* (2010) reported teachers' interactions tended to orientate children to their work; engaging and challenging them, using effective questioning and clear descriptions. In contrast, they reported that TAs focused on task completion, closed down discussions and took a reactive rather than proactive stance. However, it has been suggested that this is created from practices outside TAs' control and one reason is a lack of preparation for direct pedagogical engagement with children (Radford *et al*, 2011). With clear support in relation to the strategies

needed such as scaffolding techniques, Radford *et al* (2015) indicate that TAs can have greater impact. TAs' pedagogical role is also widely evident when supporting children with SEND and this is discussed in section 2.8; the autonomous working of TAs.

2.6 The non-work of Teaching Assistants

The concept of 'non-work' was introduced in section 1.2 and is elaborated further in section 3.2 and its association of women's work with teaching. This section aims to identify how non-work relates to primary school TAs. Literature into TA employment indicates that many women come to the role through their children, often initially as volunteers which works alongside their role as mothers outside school (Hancock *et al*, 2002; Collins and Simco, 2006; Mansaray, 2012). TAs are valued for their caring persona, but their good nature means they are easily exploited (Giangreco, 2013). TAs described themselves as needing to be 'supportive', 'caring' and 'friendly' acting as a 'buffer between children and teaching staff' or a 'second mum' (Doherty, 2004, p.32). Similarly, Mackenzie (2011) highlighted that TAs felt 'caring' and 'love', associated characteristics of women, were seen to be a fundamental requirement of their role. Children too valued certain characteristics and Fraser and Meadows (2008, p.355) found a 'good' TA was described as 'caring, happy and friendly', whilst Bland and Sleightholme (2012, p. 174) found children wanted TAs who were 'kind, caring and helpful'. However, Doherty (2004) identifies one teacher who critically expressed the need to restraint her TA's 'mothering' instinct yet conceded that this was actually what made her a good at her job. TAs have also become increasingly involved with pastoral care of children and Edmond and Price (2009) indicate that teachers no longer had time to undertake this role. Targeted pastoral duties are now a common role for TAs (Alborz *et al*, 2009; Carter and Stevenson, 2012; Saddler, 2014) who are frequently running nurture groups[7] (Groom, 2006; Edmond and Price, 2009; Tarry and Cox, 2014).

2.7 Control

The control of TAs in schools works at various levels from the organisations' formal systems to the relationships at classroom level. TAs have been reported as on the periphery of school life, largely without influence, at the bottom of the school hierarchy (Emira, 2011; Mansaray, 2012; Graves, 2014) yet are still highly valued (Docherty, 2014; Saddler, 2014) and a fundamental part of the school team (Emira, 2011). Children too show awareness of the hierarchy, but Fraser and Meadows (2008) found on the whole children behave as well and work as hard for TAs although Williams and O'Conner, (2012) observed children's behaviour altered depending on who was in charge of the class. In contrast, Watson *et al's* (2013) research found TAs are viewed as equals but this links closely to the teacher -TA relationship. Supporting research by Graves and Jones (2008), they found a TA's position in school was associated with how confident TAs felt in their role.

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[7] nurture groups target children exhibiting emotional, behavioural or social issues

Greater access to knowledge also impacted positively on TAs' position in the school (Goddard *et al*, 2008; Graves, 2012).

Earlier in section 2.4 it was highlighted that professionals should have access to job descriptions and appraisals and historically these were not in place for TAs (Lorenz, 1998; Wilson *et al*, 2003). However, governmental advice in the form of *Working with teaching assistants: a good practice guide* (DfEE, 2000, p.16) indicated that *'clear and accurate job descriptions should be every employee's right'* and provided a framework for schools, which continued to be advised as good practice by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJCLGS) (2003) in their assessment of how the *national agreement* would impact on support staff. Yet, conflicting evidence in relation to job descriptions is prevalent. The establishment of TA job descriptions in some research appear to have taken time (Doherty, 2004; Morris, 2009; Lowe, 2010) whilst other studies identify a growing majority of TAs had them (Smith *et al,* 2004; Durant and Kramer, 2005; Blatchford *et al*, 2009a). However, consistently, job descriptions are reported to lack clarity or not realistically reflect TAs' roles (Cooke-Jones, 2006; OFSTED, 2007; Hancock *et al,* 2009; Butt and Lance, 2009; OFSTED, 2010; Radford *et al*, 2015) and TAs in the past have reported not using them or undertaking work that did not relate to the job description (Farrell *et al*, 1999) . Ultimately job descriptions are a way that employers can control the working environment of employees and rigid job descriptions allow for greater control (Ducey, 2002).

As the TA role continued to grow, their inclusion in performance management systems was advised (DfEE, 2000; OFSTED, 2002); benefitting TAs' professional development and raising their status (Collins and Simco, 2006; Bedford *et al,* 2008; Balshaw, 2010). Nevertheless, it can also be argued as a good process to help align employees with the objectives of the employer (Ashdown, 2014). Research from large scale studies shows an increasing prevalence of TAs receiving appraisals; Hancock *et al*, (2002) report 24% whilst OFSTED (2010) report it in place for all support staff albeit in a variety of formats. Yet, at a similar time, smaller scale research indicates that TAs had limited access to an appraisal system (Burton and Goodman, 2011) whilst Blatchford *et al* (2009a) in 2008 reported a figure of 50%, suggesting an incomplete picture. More recently the NEU (2020) report performance management as 'patchy' but , unlike teachers, there is no legal requirement for TAs to undergo appraisal although it continues to be recommended by the DfE as good practice (The Key, 2017). However, Basford *et al* (2017) found some resistance from TAs to the process; deemed to be an unacceptable aspect of their employment and its existence, alongside job descriptions, can be viewed as a means of control (Vallas, 2012; Foucault; 1977).

Successful management has been highlighted as a crucial aspect of TA deployment and in 2000 the New Labour government produced documents advising that TAs needed 'guidance and sound training' (DfEE, 2000, p.7). More recently UNISON *et al* (2016, p. 6) suggest the role of school leaders

is paramount in relation to TAs, helping raise their status as well as ensuring their 'skills, knowledge and expertise' are used to best effect. In a large scale study of nearly 1000 participants, the formal line management of TAs in primary schools was reported by Smith *et al* (2004) to be undertaken by the head or SENCo although Butt and Lance (2009) reported 'distributed leadership' models have meant TAs being managed by a range of individuals resulting in misunderstandings and replication of effort. Houssart and Croucher (2013) report two models of TA management exist; one that emphases the subordinate role of TAs whilst the other values team working. Webster *et al* (2011), support a less authoritarian approach, but do advocate close monitoring of TAs with pedagogical roles. Regardless of the formal process, class teachers are instrumental in TA deployment in classrooms. Alborz *et al* (2009) identified an increased managerial role for teachers as they addressed how to utilise additional adults in classrooms. The first wave of research in the DISS found teachers had no training in TA management but this increased by wave three (Blatchford *et al*, 2009a). Nevertheless, there continues to be a need to develop teachers' management of TAs (Morgan and Ashbaker, 2011; UNISON, 2013) and Sharples *et al* (2015) are adamant that effective utilisation of TAs means they need to be well managed and recommend their comprehensive guide is read by leaders and teachers alike. However, this still needs prominence as 44% of NQTs did not feel well prepared to deploy support staff in the 2016 survey (National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL), 2016).

Any deployment of TAs is, arguably, enhanced by good working relationships and better liaison between TAs and teachers will further develop TA effectiveness (Wardman, 2013; Radford *et al*, 2014). TAs seen as equal partners enhances classroom working relationships which also benefits the children (Tarry and Cox, 2014; Blatchford *et al*, 2012b). Good relationships take time to develop and the more time a TA and teacher spend together the more effective their working relationship will be (Wilson *et al*, 2003; Symes and Humphreys, 2011). Benefits work on different levels; good relationships allow for a sense of belonging and aid greater discussion regarding lesson content and pupil needs (Symes and Humphreys, 2011; Watson *et al*, 2013) but according to Devecchi and Rouse (2010, p. 96) also allow TAs to provide vital 'emotional and personal support' for teachers. Ultimately Devecchi and Rouse (2010) found effective collaboration came more from how individuals felt comfortable with their colleagues rather than as a result of direct school strategies although systems in place which encourage collaboration are a positive step (Heardman, 2009; Emira, 2011). Nonetheless, role clarity is vital (Gibson *et al*, 2016) as is teachers showing respect for TAs' opinions (Houssart and Croucher, 2013; Gibson *et al*, 2016). Ultimately, as teachers do hold managerial responsibility in classrooms, whether TAs are viewed as on the 'periphery' (Fraser and Meadows, 2008) must depend on how teachers refer to them and deploy them. Devecchi and Rouse (2010) advocate that status can be given to TAs by an acknowledgement of their skills and knowledge which helps promote respect and authority with children.

2.8 Autonomy

TAs are often able to work in autonomous ways, in particular those employed as HLTAs, for a specialist skill or for SEND. Intervention work (section 2.5) can also lead to autonomous working. The introduction of the HLTA role provided some professional autonomy (Groom, 2006; Hutchings *et al*, 2009; Graves, 2012) and was an appealing feature of the role for some HLTAs (Graves, 2014). Although the HLTA role came with a set of standards (TDA, 2007a), a lack of national coordination after has enabled HLTAs to develop unique roles (Hutchings *et al*, 2009; Graves, 2012). Graves and Williams (2017) suggest the role requires great flexibility but also that HLTAs are often in charge of their own career development which inevitably produces issues around succession planning. In addition, it has meant that some HLTAs' career development is restricted due to idiosyncratic and less transferable skills (Graves 2012). Warhurst *et al* (2014) also indicated that when TAs are employed for a specialist skill it is more likely to involve a degree of autonomy.

TAs are often required to support children with SEND (e.g. Webster and Blatchford, 2013a; Gibson *et al*, 2016, Lehane, 2018) often withdrawing them from class (Blatchford *et al*, 2012b; Webster *et al*, 2013; Sharples *et al,* 2015; Lehane, 2018) which leads to autonomous working. Webster and Blatchford (2013a) found children with SEND often have a high degree of separation from their classes, regularly receiving 1:1 support from TAs (Symes and Humphreys, 2011; Webster and Blatchford, 2015). Despite recommendations to the contrary (Blatchford *et al*, 2012b), TAs are viewed as the primary educators of children with SEND (Maher and McBeath, 2014; Russell *et al,* 2016), with wide acceptance they are the experts with limited contact with teachers (Symes and Humphreys, 2011; Houssart, 2013; Webster and Blatchford, 2015). When pupils received a statement of SEND with allocated TA support, teachers shift their responsibility for these pupils (Webster *et al*, 2013; Slater and Gazeley, 2018). Responsibility, Apple (1988) suggests, goes hand in hand with professionalism.

With TAs adopting roles and responsibilities associated with learning, inevitably they report undertaking their own planning (e.g. Mansaray, 2006; Hancock *et al*, 2010; Warhurst *et al*, 2014) with limited input from teachers (Webster and Blatchford, 2013a; Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015), particularly if they are withdrawing children from class (Houssart, 2012; Brown and Devecchi, 2013). TAs are also often differentiating materials for children (e.g. Butt and Lowe, 2012; Radford *et al*, 2014; Slater and Gazeley, 2018). However, Gibson *et al* (2016), report mixed views from TAs regarding the differentiation of work with some TAs suggesting this was a teacher's role although, as already indicated, there is plenty of research showing TAs do this. In addition, Warhurst *et al* (2014) found TAs had limited supervision for some aspects of their role such as administrative tasks and the minor care of pupils.

2.9 Inclusion and exclusion of Teaching Assistants as members of school staff

The hierarchy in school can be seen in aspects of school life such as invitations to meetings (Burton and Goodman, 2011; Mackenzie, 2011). Including TAs in collaborative training ventures provides greater classroom cohesion as well as increasing TA prestige (Huxham and Vangen, 2005) and school hierarchies are not so evident if TAs have the same access to training as teachers (Wilson *et al,* 2007). The dichotomy of inclusion and exclusion will be examined together as when one is present the other is absent.

The DfEE (2000) made recommendations for TAs to be included in staff meetings which does not always happen. Reasons cited vary such as TAs are not paid to attend them (e.g. Collins and Simco, 2006; Wilson and Bedford, 2008; Blatchford *et al*, 2009a; Devecchi *et al*, 2012), being held outside working hours (e.g. Collins and Simco, 2006; Devecchi *et al*, 2012) as well as TAs not being invited (e.g. Devecchi and Rouse, 2010; Mackenzie, 2011). Of particular impact on cohesive practices was the work of Mansaray (2012), who found TAs had their own separate meetings, leading to feelings of marginalisation, particularly when the senior leadership team (SLT) regularly cancelled them.

Blatchford *et al* (2009a) criticised that much of TAs' knowledge was gained through experience rather than training and Graves (2012) suggests a need to provide training and development opportunities for TAs. This sometimes comes from peers and specialist teachers (Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015) whilst training undertaken alongside teachers was deemed highly effective in developing shared practices (Houssart and Croucher, 2013). Research into TA support for children with SEND has suggested there has been weak or a lack of training (Burton and Goodman, 2011; McKenzie, 2011; Webster and Blatchford, 2013a). Symes and Humphreys (2011) found TAs in secondary schools supporting children with autism had no training or experience and many felt poorly trained once established in the role. Rose and Forlin (2010) suggested that, with appropriate training, TAs confidence and competence was enhanced. Staff meetings are often utilised for training (Burton and Goodman, 2011) so exclusion of TAs from these means, potentially, exclusion from relevant continual professional development (CPD). Whilst less than 40% of TAs in Smith *et al's* (2004) study reported being invited to whole school training, by 2013, in a reasonably large study, UNISON (2013) reported it as the norm. Their inclusion in training appears entirely reasonable given their increasing pedagogical role (Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015) and teachers report seeing the benefit of TAs receiving training (Hancock *et al*, 2002; Webster *et al*, 2013).

TAs and teachers having time to meet to discuss planning has been recognised as beneficial in a number of studies (e.g. Vickerman and Blundell, 2012; Chambers, 2015; Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015) but there has been a plethora of research which identifies time afforded for collaborative planning between teachers and TAs is rare (e.g. Maher, 2014; Gibson, *et al*, 2016; Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015; Bovill, 2017). Feedback after sessions also suffers a similar fate with limited time

available (Houssart and Croucher, 2013; Docherty, 2014). Lesson discussion is more likely to occur informally with TAs reporting as *'working on the hock'* (Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015, p. 98) or communicating *'on the hoof [...] in doorways'* (Lehane, 2016, p. 11). Webster *et al* (2013) indicate headteachers saw benefits for children by readjusting contracts which enabled TAs to talk to teachers before school. Yet, in order to be fully included in the lesson, feedback and discussion often relies on the good will of TAs working outside their contracted hours (Webster *et al,* 2013; Roffey-Barentsen and Watt, 2014). In the absence of time to meet access to planning is beneficial (Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015; Gibson *et al,* 2016) but there are mixed reports as to its frequency with contrasting results showing it does not occur (Houssart, 2012) and it does (Roffey-Barentsen and Watt, 2014). Additional evidence suggests TAs regularly do not receive planning in advance or only receive it at very short notice (Lehane, 2016; Basford *et al,* 2017). Webster *et al*, (2013) also argue that more detailed lesson plans, which outline teacher expectations, aid TA preparedness and therefore increase effectiveness.

2.10 Conclusion

The TA role, originally envisaged to have a greater administrative focus, has shifted from one aimed at supporting teachers to one where TAs regularly are involved in the pedagogical practices in classrooms. TAs operate in an environment that lacks clarity (Gibson *et al*, 2016) which leads to the tension that exists in their employment. Concerns exist over the professionalisation of this workforce (Watson *et al*, 2013) as TAs have been reported as lacking the qualifications associated with the teaching profession. TA roles appear to have developed greater complexity which has contributed to the suggestions regarding the deskilling of teachers (Webster and Blatchford, 2017). TA work is varied yet tension exists as it calls upon the 'natural' characteristics associated with motherhood (Doherty, 2004) allowing for their exploitation. Through the introduction of formal systems such as performance management TAs' work is aligning with the control mechanisms in existence for some time for teachers whilst at other times they work autonomously through interventions and SEND. TAs' inclusion and exclusion in the workings of the school also varies. A TA's position in school is dependent on others and what is prescribed in policy and presented in practice can be very different.

3.0 Chapter Three: Theoretical Perspectives

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a theoretical and conceptual framework and focuses on work including labour process theory and women's work. The chapter considers relationships with links to power which is the second major theme; relevant to the control and monitoring of TA work. Structuration theory is also explored in order to reflect on TAs' capacity to influence their own environment.

3.2 The nature of work

Work describes the expenditure of mental and physical effort in order to produce goods or services that humans desire (Giddens and Sutton, 2017). Grint and Nixon (2015) suggest that the label of work is dependent on culture and power; influenced by the changing face of society. Strangleman and Warren (2008) also advocate work cannot be examined in isolation and other factors should be considered, such as the influence of gender or the excursion of power. Additionally, Grint and Nixon (2015) propose work cannot be demarcated merely in terms of employment as much work receives no remuneration, which Strangleman and Warren (2008) suggests is why a distinction is often made between paid and unpaid work when considering definitions. Unpaid work has many facets not least the motivation behind it such as the unpaid work undertaken by interns to gain experience or work completed in the home out of love (Strangleman and Warren, 2008). A discussion of work alongside non-work causes the rejection of labelling non-work in terms of leisure activities due to employment in the leisure industry whilst for some non-work means unemployment (Grint and Nixon, 2015). For others the term non-work conjures up the notion of women partaking in what have been described by some as 'natural' activities typically associated with their gender (Acker, 1999) and Brook and Brook (1989) advocate non-work can be closely aligned to domestic duties. Grint and Nixon (2015) argue it is often difficult to differentiate between work and non-work and the distinction is rarely about the activity itself rather more about the social context within which it sits. Strangleman and Warren (2008) suggest work should be viewed as a social relationship and so needs to be placed within its social context and its relationship to people in order to fully comprehend it. For some, work is a source of satisfaction and accomplishment (Giddens and Sutton, 2017) whilst for others a chore (Strangleman and Warren, 2008) and attitudes to work vary historically and within society and across societies (Haralambus and Holborn, 2000).

3.2.1 Women's work

In the developing world employment practices have altered as industrialised work has declined (Giddens and Sutton, 2017) with increased automation (Rubery, 2018). A rise in roles traditionally associated with women's work, such as the service industry (Giddens and Sutton, 2017) and education (Rubery, 2018) have increased women's presence in the workplace in the latter part of the twentieth century (Giddens and Sutton, 2017). There is a tendency for employment to be decidedly gendered (Fulcher and Scott, 2007) and jobs are moulded by the gendered traits women

and men are expected to possess (McDowell, 2015). Feminine workplaces support stereotypical female characteristics such as care, whilst masculine workplaces value dominant and competitive behaviour (Baxter, 2010) and Williams (1992) claims masculine qualities have been interpreted as having higher value. Women's work has often been an extension to their domestic role (Fulcher and Scott, 2007) and tends to be poorly paid and part time (Giddens and Sutton, 2017), featuring more heavily in roles that require care (Fineman, 2012) as well as being the subject of career disruption for reasons such as child rearing (Hostetler *et al*, 2017). Low paid work is also associated with lack of prestige and status (Abercrombie and Ward, 2002) and according to Rubery (2018), alongside low pay, may be a reason women are now less likely to be replaced by men in times of unemployment as was prevalent in the past. However, Rubery (2018) also argues women are increasingly committed to their careers; having invested in their education alongside requirements for a second wage.

Segregation in the labour market on gender lines exists both horizontally in relation to different occupations and vertically in relation to the hierarchy in occupations (Fineman, 2012). Men continue to dominate powerful positions across Europe (Francis and Skelton, 2005), although increasingly women enter male occupations and senior positions (Fulcher and Scott, 2007) but there is significant outflow too (Torre, 2014). The changing characteristics in roles can also feminise them when there is a decrease in pay and status (Rubery, 2018). Barriers appear to exist for people of the 'wrong' sex who wish to be employed in gender associated occupations (Fulcher and Scott, 2007) facing perceptions that they are not suited to this kind of work (Harvey-Wingfield, 2009). Williams (1992) argued that men do not appear disadvantaged working in female professions although Ross (2017) would suggest otherwise but both agree that men may be victims of prejudice from outside (Williams, 1992; Ross, 2017). In addition, they can be subject to discrimination in the hiring process for work that is traditionally associated with women (Raich and Rich, 2006). Men working in caring roles face being labelled as gay regardless of legislation prohibiting overt opposition (Fulcher and Scott, 2007) whilst male trainee teachers themselves fear the labels that can be associated with a desire to work with younger children; also viewing working with older children as more masculine as it can be defined as involving real teaching (Skelton, 2003). However, being male in a female environment can often act as an accelerator to promotion which is in direct contrast to women employed in predominantly male organisations (Harvey-Wingfield, 2009). Harvey-Wingfield (2009) also suggests men often distance themselves from feminine aspects of their roles and in so doing are able to maintain their masculine position regardless of employment in women's work. McDowell, (2015, p273-274) suggests they develop strategies to 'maintain, emphasize or adjust their masculinity', which may enable them to take advantage of the 'glass elevator' where men frequently gain promotion more readily than women. Harvey-Wingfield (2009, p.16) argues this works alongside the tendency for women to 'push men into leadership roles'.

However, in later work Williams (2013) reminds us that studies of gender must also consider race, class and sexuality and concluded the glass escalator effect did not apply universally. She also concludes the glass escalator effect does not operate in workplaces where stereotypical male and female behaviours were of no significance.

3.2.2 Teaching as women's work

In 1990 81% of primary teachers were women with 51% of primary headteachers being men (McKenzie, 2001). This trend has continued; in England in 2016 just under 85% of nursery/primary teachers were women whilst just over 91% of TAs across the sector were female; the data not separating primary and secondary (DfE, 2017a). However, when considering school leadership, primary school heads in 2015 were still disproportionally male at 28% (The Future Leaders Trust, 2015), potentially subject to the 'glass escalator effect'.

Teaching itself has become framed as more feminised due to increasing numbers of women employed in the profession (Galman, 2012) although Francis and Skelton (2001) argue that management styles and structures in schools exhibit masculine characteristics. Primary schools conjure up vision of a 'caring and mothering atmosphere' (Hutchings *et al*, 2008, p. 153), hence teaching has been viewed as a suitable career for women enabling them to use characteristics that are considered 'natural' (Forrester, 2005). Closely associated with the maternal instinct of 'caring' (Acker, 1999), the connection with children affords it low status (Steedman, 1985). Forrester (2005, pp. 271-272) suggests that the late nineteenth century revealed 'conventional and 'natural' gender roles of the maternal teacher and paternal head' initiated by the *Elementary Education Act 1870* which had opened up opportunities for women. However, Nias (1997) considers inequality existed around pay and status for women due to the patriarchal nature of society at that time which perpetuated afterwards. A shortage of workers allowed increased female employment when the *Education* Act *1944* enabled married females to teach.

As TA numbers increased (section 2.2) women gained this work as a direct result of their role as mothers, combining care for their children with employment (Chopra and Uitto, 2015). Dunne *et al*, (2008, p. 2) suggest a historical perspective of TAs in primary schools is one of 'carer, parent helper, and / or substitute mother', a point of view supported by Chambers (2015). There is still a perception that TAs directly in 1:1 support are classed merely as 'an extra pair of hands… a carer' (Mackenzie, 2011, p. 68). TAs, according to children, adopt a caring role in the classroom, helping them if they are hurt or sad, keeping secrets and offering emotional support (Fraser and Meadows, 2008). Not surprisingly, these findings are similar to the characteristics Hutchings *et al* (2008) found children want from their teachers. There is also a belief that teaching is viewed as a 'calling' not merely 'a job or career' (Isenbarger and Zembylas, 2006, p.132) with teachers' depth of caring enabling their exploitation (Acker, 1999). Caring appears to be an integral expectation for the

teaching profession (Noddings, 1995; Nias, 1997; Acker, 1999; Harris *et al*, 2014) with a high investment of emotional labour and has been highlighted here as it will be part of the exploration of TAs' work in chapter six.

So far teaching has been outlined as women's work, associated with natural female characteristics but Nias (1997) stresses the profession is still one that is appropriate for men who are equally capable of care. However, she asserts gendered stereotypes of male and female teachers exist which Hutchings *et al* (2008, p.153) believe to be co-constructed. They consider the 'kind and caring' woman teacher and the 'jokey-blokey' male teacher' perpetuate in classrooms reinforced by children's own gendered stereotyping working alongside those held by their teachers. Skelton (2000) found masculinity was often evident through football in the primary school, important in defining relationships between boys, male teachers and girls. In addition, Skelton (2012) suggests when male teachers are employed, they are more likely to be found with older children. However, she adds, assuming all male teachers hold the same characteristics is not helpful. Nias (1997) stresses there are numerous excellent male practitioners, yet teaching is still associated more readily with women, influenced not least due to numbers. The gendered nature of the role of TAs became of greater interest as two of the TAs involved in the research were male and is discussed in chapter six.

3.2.3 Emotional labour

The traditional association of women with the home and children has led to the implication that they are more in tune with emotions and therefore the appropriate gender to deal with the emotions of others (James, 1992). Emotions in the workplace are regularly discussed under the concept of emotional labour and Hochschild's (1983) work relating to emotions is well recognised. She distinguished between emotion work and emotional labour as follows:

> By 'emotion work' I refer to the emotion management we do in private life; by 'emotional labour' I refer to the emotion management we do for a wage (Hochschild, 1990, p. 118).

'Feeling rules' she suggested guide emotion work; the social norms that govern the exchanges around feelings. Emotional labour, James (1992) purports, takes skill and requires individuals to act as well as react to situations. Frequently, work requiring considerable emotional effort is rewarded with relatively low pay; its invisibility seemingly accounts for the lack of remuneration for its use (Steinberg and Figart, 1999).

Numerous jobs require the interaction with others and in so doing often require employees to disguise their emotions (Hargreaves, 2000). Emotions are concealed through what Hochschild (1983) referred to as 'surface acting' and 'deep acting'. Surface acting is where a person consciously deceives the clientele, faking and hiding true emotions. In contrast, in deep acting the individual also deceives themselves, often having bought into the belief and value system of their

organisation. The increasing importance given to the customer experience means the role of emotional labour is paramount; both deep acting and surface acting aim to persuade the customer to engage with the product (Grint and Nixon, 2015) and the organisational expectations are outlined in handbooks (Steinberg and Figart, 1999). Although Hochschild (1983) assumed emotional labour was extrinsically motivated, performed only for remuneration, Truta (2014) suggests intrinsic motivation has some, albeit small correlation with deep acting which complements organisational demands. Philipp and Schüpbach, (2010) report advantages of deep acting for teachers which lead to feelings of authenticity and dedicated teachers are less likely to act.

In school, teachers are considered to be in Loco Parentis (Burchell, 2018) and the profession is one requiring a high input of emotional labour (e.g. Noddings, 1995; Nias, 1997; Isenbarger and Zembylas, 2006; Truta, 2014) where the clients are considered to be the children, their parents and the wider community (Truta, 2014). Nias (1997) suggests there has been an increasing expectation by politicians and the media that teachers have responsibility for the care of children outside of school too, blameworthy when things go wrong. The mounting demands placed on teachers at managerial level pushed by external forces, arguably impacts on teachers' emotional well-being (Skinner *et al*, 2019). This pressure adds to the assortment of emotions teachers deal with daily and how they manage these is vital to their own welfare as well as their organisational professionalism (Lee *et al*, 2016). Isenbarger and Zembylas (2006) consider teachers need to control their own emotions, often forced to supress feelings of disappointment or guilt when they feel they have failed students and Hargreaves (1994) proposes guilt is endemic of the teaching profession. Yet, the investment of emotional labour in teaching can also bring pleasure and rewards (Isenbarger and Zembylas, 2006). Nias (1997) believes that primary schools are arranged in ways where genuine, intense, loving feelings are created and thrive as teachers are immersed in a range of tasks supporting children's development and welfare.

Whether emotional labour has adverse effects on individuals has been examined in a range of professions including teaching and produced varying results. In a study of just over 100 teachers, Philipp and Schüpbach (2010) conclude deep acting is less detrimental to health than surface acting leading to less emotional exhaustion one year later although Maxwell and Riley (2017) reported deep acting research has produced mixed effects. There is also a range of negative associations with surface acting reported by researchers and Lee *et al* (2016) identified emotions such as anxiety, anger and frustration whilst Näring *et al* (2012) referred to emotional exhaustion. Emotional labour has been considered here with specific reference to the work of teachers. Missing from much research with TAs is an examination of the emotional investment they make in their roles and these concepts are explored in chapter six.

3.2.4 Labour process theory

The rise of capitalism promoted an ethos of hard work and duty, (Macionis and Plummer, 2012) and industrialisation introduced time constrained working patterns where workers began to lose their independence as greater control was exerted upon them (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). One of the issues of early industrialisation was productivity (Grint and Nixon, 2015) with managers concerned with extracting labour from an individual (Thompson and Smith, 2009). Efforts were made to find ways of driving up production and the process of deskilling was developed effectively by Ford in 20s America (Strangleman and Warren, 2008) building on Tayler's scientific management which aimed for close control to increase production (Fineman, 2012). Scientific management refers to the application of science to production; utilising standardised procedures and regulated working hours, made possible through supervision and instructions (Braverman, 1974). With the introduction of assembly lines Ford was able to apply scientific management, reducing the need for skilled workers in car manufacturing by employing people on one aspect of production as parts moved along a conveyer belt (Strangleman and Warren, 2008); this way of working was referred to as Fordism (Grint and Nixon, 2015). Fordism increased productivity but also afforded greater control by the management whilst giving workers limited control of their work (Ritzer, 2008; Haralambos and Holborn, 2000); the less complex a job is, the greater managerial control (Ikeler, 2015). Writing from a Marxist perspective Braverman (1974) proposed this process only enabled workers to use a small proportion of their skills whilst Ritzer (2008) adds deskilling allows for lower wages as lower skilled workers are paid less. This style of working meant workers were isolated and unable to identify with the product they were a part of, leading to hostility and limited job satisfaction (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). Yet, Braverman (1974) argued the definition of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled work is dependent on the requirements capitalism needs therefore alters over time and Menter *et al* (1997) refer to TAs as semi-skilled.

Braverman (1974) suggested teaching was becoming increasingly routine and regulated leading to a loss of responsibility and control and hence also a loss of power. Further application of labour process is covered well by Ozga and Lawn (1988) who discuss the proletarianisation of teachers' work resulting in reduction of their autonomy as managerial control increases. Proletarianisation attacks teachers' perception of professionalism, depersonalises working relations and breaks down the skills associated with their craft. The deskilling process is initiated; separating conception from execution with increased management control over workers' skills and productivity (Ozga and Lawn, 1981) which Braverman (1974) indicates leads to a reduction of authority, status and reward. The reduction of autonomy and skill caused by detachment from conception and execution is brought about by routinised work introduced through predesigned packages which define purpose, content and pedagogy (Ozga and Lawn, 1981). The National Curriculum allowed these ideas to develop further removing autonomy by centralising the

curriculum (Jones, 2003) including content alongside suggested time allocation to subjects too (DES/Welsh Office, 1987). Supervision evident in factories is undertaken by SLT in schools who check quality and quantity, exerting control over teachers' skills and pace which external inspections reinforce (Ozga and Lawn, 1981). Scientific management, Ozga and Lawn (1988) suggest is applicable to schools as curricular control positions teachers alongside other workers where planning is separated from execution. A major part of proletarianisation is the loss of skill, which they advocate runs parallel with the loss of autonomy and the increased supervision and introduction of reskilling some aspects of their work. Reskilling enables new supervisory roles to develop which concentrate on productivity (Ozga and Lawn, 1981) and teachers take on additional managerial roles in conjunction with their existing teaching commitment which often occur in teachers' own time (Ozga and Lawn, 1988). Teachers' work has been subject to intensification (Apple, 1988; Hargreaves, 1994) where teachers report being time pressured, working before and after school, with increased testing and accountability and so increasingly rely on the expertise of others. However, increased pressure on teachers from organisational factors Chang (2009) believes lead to amplified workloads, stress and burnout. TAs have also been identified as needing to undertake unpaid time in order to fulfil their commitments (Bovill, 2017)

Although Ozga and Lawn (1981) apply labour process theory to teachers' work, Carter and Stevenson (2012) argue labour process theory cannot truly be applied to teaching as teachers do not produce goods for profit. Bolton (2009) strongly believes that the labour processes involved in work with people is different from those aimed at making profit and the internal motivation of school staff cannot fall into a traditional description. However, in her research with nurses, Bolton (2009) does discuss the increasing pressure on public sector staff, working under ever tightening budgets which can easily be applied to schools. However, the notion of deskilling of teaching linked to TA employment (section 2.5) is analysed in chapter five.

3.2.5 Relationships
Friedman (1977) coined the phrase 'responsible autonomy' where managers encouraged workers to identify with the organisational aims therefore acting responsibly, requiring limited supervision. Opportunity was given for employees to use their own initiative as they worked towards the profitability of the company. Manager and subordinate worker relationships are deemed to be better when workers identify with the objectives set by the management (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000) hence the importance of staff consultation by SLT (Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain, 2011). Where there is limited requirement for control (needed to drive production) and a workforce is given a voice then the quality and perception of work improves (Macionis and Plummer, 2012). Schools have not traditionally been seen as organisations intent on making profit so staff motivation links strongly to emotional labour outlined in section 3.2.3. Butt *et al* (2005) purport that primary

teachers' motivation comes from a range of factors, not least linked to their commitment to their role and relationships with children and colleagues.

Watson *et al* (2013) advise as team members in schools build mutual respect the increased sense of belonging allows for greater exchange of ideas between teachers and TAs which Chopra and Uitto (2015) indicate builds up TAs' feelings of worth. In the classroom relationships between teacher and TA can be enhanced by recognition of each other's capabilities and knowledge (Devecchi and Rouse, 2010). Better connections between teachers and TAs appear inextricably linked with TA confidence (Watson *et al,* 2013) and where TAs lack confidence presenting their knowledge in front of others their powerless position is reinforced (Graves and Jones, 2008). This suggests the importance of not placing TAs in subordinate positions to avoid feelings of marginality (Trent, 2014). Relationships are also fundamental for dealing with work related stress (Hochschild, 1983; Acker, 1995) and equitable relationships reduce burnout (Taris *et al*, 2004). Research with teachers by Kinman *et al* (2011) found some evidence to support the belief that social support amongst teachers contributed positively at work; reducing emotional exhaustion, improving job satisfaction and feelings of accomplishment. Again, school research has centred around teachers therefore TA relationships will be examined further in chapter six.

However, relationships have associations with power which is embedded in shared organisational values and goals and reduces the need for coercion or force (Parsons, 1967). Power can be observed in terms of 'persuasive influences'; implanted into the complex systems in the workplace regarding trust, loyalty and commitment; facilitated through language and information sharing (Scott, 2001). Compliance for Foucault (1977) comes when individuals become 'docile bodies', accepting the power executed on them. , Through discipline, people can be made amenable to the power being implemented; a 'docile body' able to be 'manipulated, shaped, trained' (Foucault, 1977, p. 136). However, Caldwell (2007) suggests Foucault considered that even docile bodies had some power which was executed over themselves in order to instil self-discipline. It is a productive state which has been developed with individuals taught how to behave and aligns themselves with the organisational demands (Corbert, 2010). However, although Foucault showed awareness of the influence of human agency which allows individuals the ability to offer some resistance it is Giddens who suggests human agents have the capacity to act in alternative ways (section 3.3.2). The concepts of docile bodies have particular relevance for discussion in chapter seven.

3.3 Power
To consider the work of TAs it is essential to examine the concept of power as it is considered to operate at all levels of society (Foucault, 1972). Bachrach and Baratz (1962) suggested the notion of power was somewhat elusive with disagreement over its definition which leads to the concepts explored in the following sub-sections.

3.3.1 Power in schools

With respect to education, although the government controls policy and decision-making (Scott, 2001), much is devolved to Local Authorities (LA) or school governing bodies (Hindmarch *et al*, 2017). The English education system is linked to the democratic and arguably capitalist government that exists and is an instrument for economic and social policy (Forrester and Garratt, 2016). Governments over a period of years promoted the devolution of decision-making capability to schools (Hammersley-Fletcher and Adnett, 2009), enhanced through legislation such as *ERA 1988* which allowed for schools to develop some autonomy through budgetary control and direct funding of schools. Centralised control still existed by government in areas such as monitoring (Hammersley-Fletcher and Adnett, 2009) and curricular design but this was separated from its actual implementation (Stevenson, 2007). However, Local Management of School (LMS) allowed for control over resources, including the deployment of staff (Ball, 1993). Although teachers may have autonomy in the classroom regarding how they teach, it sits within a wider context where power lies with the school, LA and the state (Stevenson, 2007) and the shaping of schools discussed inappendix eleven. Increasingly, primary schools are converting to academies (Hindmarch *et al*, 2017) and with this there is potential for increased autonomy (*Academies Act, 2010*). The current rate of conversion is leading to de-centralised state education in England (Regan-Stansfield, 2018) and schools have autonomy over working practices such as salaries and the curriculum (Hindmarch *et al*, 2017). However, the curriculum offered still needs to include the core subjects (Regan-Stansfield, 2018) which, according to Marsh (2016) writing for the Guardian, affords limited freedom. In whatever format, Ball (1993) suggests the curriculum maintains control due to standardisation, testing and monitoring of both children and teachers. Further monitoring of teacher performance operates through school inspection, and staff appraisal (Stevenson, 2007). According to Heilbronn (2016) the process of academisation weakens teachers' position as it disunites them due to varied pay and conditions and places them with less control over curricular decisions. In addition, Ball (1993) suggests governments exercise control more subtly creating accountability through school outcomes whilst Heilbronn (2016) suggests teachers are constantly scrutinised in relation to pupil performance data and TAs now operate within this culture.

The perception of TAs, closely intertwined with volunteer helpers, impacts on how they are perceived professionally in schools and impacts on relationships within (Graves, 2014). Educational organisations tend to be hierarchical where leaders hold more power and may choose to use it in the best interests of their team or not (Sharp and Meeson, 2009). Powerful people are those involved in the decision-making processes in an organisation (Polsby, 1963; Scott, 2001) and the amount of power an actor has is measured against the scale of change they can make (Polsby, 1963). The decision-maker is viewed as having the legitimate right to make decisions and their wishes take precedence over others (Parsons, 1967). The more powerful position of headteachers,

as employers, appears to be readily acknowledged and identified by a cohort of 30 TAs in research into TAs perceptions of power (Lowe and Pugh, 2007); a position headteachers themselves also acknowledge (Duncan, 2002). Indeed Foucault, (1977) notes one person may have a hold over another that enables them to act as is required. TAs also recognise their role at the bottom of the school hierarchy (Dunne *et al,* 2008; Graves, 2014) with some perceiving they had little power in comparison to others (Lowe and Pugh, 2007). This shows the importance of school leaders in exerting their power to raise the status of TAs by making good use of their 'skills, knowledge and expertise' (UNISON *et al*, 2016, p. 6). The power TAs hold in school is discussed in chapter eight.

3.3.2 Agency and structures

How much power an individual has depends on agency; the capacity to act independently and structures; the factors that influence this capacity (Martin and Dennis, 2010). Shilling (1992) argues that structures are replicated in a school environment by means of social interactions. Giddens (1984) attempted to bridge the gap between the dualism of agency and structure and coined the term *'structuration'.* Structuration begins with an understanding that people are constantly analysing the making and remaking of social structures (Giddens and Sutton, 2017) through time and space in their everyday lives (Shilling, 1992). Groups within society have structures which account for the predicable way in which people behave and action is possible as individuals know how to act under different circumstances (Giddens and Sutton, 2017). Existing standard practices can be altered by agents acting differently, however it is accepted people's actions are often regulated (Giddens, 1984). Foucault (1977) advocated that power could not be perceived as something fixed and relied on it being actioned as part of interactions with others. Giddens (1976) also considered action and power to be related; particularly the transformational capacity of human agency by either action or inaction and power comes from the capacity to change the course of events. Giddens (1984) claims that structure and agency are inextricably linked; one cannot exist without the other. However, humans are restricted by the power relationships which exist in all social action (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). Power is therefore an intrinsic feature of human relationships (Craib, 1992). Although Giddens' definition of structure is somewhat abstract it connects with rules in existence and resources (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). Structural rules exist and can be reproduced by means of interaction with others but do not fix behaviour (Shilling, 1992). In schools, Shilling (1992) suggests teachers may have the capacity to alter rules on an individual level within their classroom but practices on a larger scale are unaltered. Giddens (1984) breaks resources down into physical resources brought into existence with human action (allocative resources) and human resources where one person, through human interaction, can influence the actions of others (authoritative resources). Layder (1997) suggests resources can be used as a form of power including having access to them denied and is relevant to TAs preparedness in schools (section 2.9). TAs themselves are also a resource and leaders have power as they control working

conditions (Lowe and Pugh, 2007). The concepts in this section are applied in greatest detail in chapter five.

3.3.3 Ubiquitous nature of power

So far, it is suggested that TAs are in a weaker position compared to teachers in schools but Giddens (1984) also considered that the possession of power was not restricted to one person and subordinate actors nearly always have some level of power however meagre. This is reinforced by Lowe and Pugh (2007) who suggested TAs had power over productivity and work ethic and Scott (2001) suggests there are usually choices between courses of action. Individuals constantly interact with the world around them and therefore have the capacity to change it including through unanticipated consequences of their actions (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). The two-way character of action and structure in relation to power Giddens (1984) referred to as 'dialectic of control' within social systems and Scott (2001) suggests this potentially enables an individual to carve out a niche, demonstrated with the HLTA and specialist roles (see section 2.3 and section 2.8). Dialectics of control are fluid (Scott, 2001) creating a space where conflict can occur (Craib, 1992) and there must be mutual concessions and compromises between actors and the resources they possess which manipulates the balance of power (Scott, 2001). Indeed, Webster and Blatchford, (2013) found that many class teachers positioned TAs as the experts in relation to SEN. Power relations between groups typically develop over time with the resulting autonomy and dependence that inevitably arises (Layder, 1997).

Giddens and Sutton (2017) suggest Foucault saw power as evident in all social relations. Power, according to Arendt (1970), is not owned by a person, possessed in so much as a group allows it to be so; without a group an individual has no power. Power, she articulates, also needs legitimacy through the legal system which Parsons (1967) proposes operates through consent, relying on 'consensual solidarity' from all involved. Foucault (1980) also proposed that power does not belong to any one person and should be viewed in terms of individuals being the subject as well as instigators of power. Power, he suggests, is a complex long-term relationship and not something allocated or bestowed on a person or organisation; it is not possessed or imposed but exercised and embraced. He concludes power is ubiquitous and evident in all walks of life, alongside resistance to it. Power relations Foucault (1997) suggests meant situations are not static and individual's behaviour has the potential to influence proceedings, hence the opportunity for resistance is always present. However, in contrast, as outlined in section 3.3.2, Foucault (1977) also indicates that discipline has the potential to create docile bodies which conform to the wishes of others through duty or constraint, with subtle coercion, hence resistance is unlikely. The ubiquitous nature of power for TAs with its ebb and flow is made evident predominately in chapter seven.

3.3.4 Surveillance

One way power is executed in organisations Foucault (1977) describes as 'disciplinary power' where control over the population is maintained by continual surveillance and constant monitoring or its threat. This, he suggested, removed the need for physical punishments and encouraged individuals to become self-disciplined. He discussed this with reference to the panopticon, a prison building design, initially developed by Bentham at the end of the eighteenth century, which allowed a single central figure to watch over the inmates. Inmates knew not if they were being observed and hence the conscious exercising of control by an external agency was no longer required; self-discipline becomes automatic, therefore external coercion is no longer necessary (Layder, 1994). Applicable to schools, Layder (1994) indicates that routines such as teacher appraisal, classroom practices and monitoring achievement ties school culture with one of surveillance. Individuals are encouraged to self-monitor and accountability measures that exist are normalised over time (Ball, 1993). The growth of performance management and appraisal for teachers with increased monitoring and surveillance was highlighted by Carter and Stevenson (2012); part of the requirement of middle managers to undertake decisions about the performance of their colleagues.

Foucault (1999) deliberates how sub-groups in society can be the object of repression or exclusion where there is discussion of power over them. To ensure exclusion of these groups a system of surveillance is needed, hierarchical in nature (Foucault, 1999) and people as the subject of surveillance could become embedded in society (Foucault, 1980). Discussing Foucault's work, Layder (1997) suggests this operates in schools firstly as the architectural design, alongside the operational structures, allows for surveillance. Secondly, control operates through the rules and systems in place including sanctions and Block *et al* (2012) report this includes dismissal of poorly performing teachers. Thirdly, Layder (1997) adds the practice of scrutinising people through observations, normalises the practice of judging behavioural expectations in settings. This enables the regulation of school staff as well as reaffirming their place in the organisation (Layder, 1997) and Thompson *et al* (2010, p 647) reflect on the 'ever present nature of watching' in schools suggesting 'Foucault's gaze' places everyone under or instigating surveillance. Surveillance mechanisms have not been widely discussed in relation to TAs but the culture of surveillance that has been applied to teachers for some time is increasingly evident for TAs (see section 2.7), and is discussed in chapter seven and chapter eight.

Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) writing about Foucault's work suggest an extension of disciplinary power is pastoral power and Chapman (2003) adds pastoral power is exercised upon us but also by us. It operates in many spheres not least of all schools (English, 2004). Pastoral power, Foucault (1982) suggested, operates on a 'flock' of people where the pastor cares for each member on an individual level, prioritising the group above themselves. Additionally, he considered this form of power was only effective where intimate details were known regarding members of the group and

English (2004) suggests it produces submissive individuals. Foucault (1982) indicated that although pastoral power had its roots in religious institutions it was now more applicable to immediate 'salvation', exercised through aims such as promoting well-being. Pastoral power is discussed in chapter seven.

3.3.5 Power and knowledge

Foucault was interested in the relationship between power and knowledge, inextricably linked, one reinforcing the other (Giddens and Sutton, 2017); able to operate through discourse (Fillingham, 1993). Ball (2013, p19) suggests Foucault perceived discourse to be concerned with 'structures and rules' rather than the 'texts and utterances' produced in conversations and discourse enables patterns of behaviour to be normalised (Foucault, 1980). Horrocks and Jetvic (2004) indicate discourses develop through social and cultural practices and the authorities of knowledge that emerge. Through discourse disciplines themselves can set boundaries as to what is deemed acceptable knowledge (Giddens and Sutton, 2017). Discussing Foucault, Layder (1994) identified that discourse is an integral aspect of power relations; the ability to converse knowledgeably about a subject gives control over those who lack knowledge and enables a power relationship to be established and sustained. Scott (2001) suggests long training of experts helps build trust in their ability and the link between TA qualifications and their level of power is reiterated by Lowe and Pugh (2007). Expert power filters into all walks of life and roles that offer a professional status can claim expertise as they hold distinct, specific knowledge forming the root of their power (Scott, 2001). Possession of relevant 'technical knowledge' is a form of power (Giddens, 1976) and Foucault (1977) suggested modern professions emerged as part of creating systems of expertise. However, TAs report feelings of demotivation when there is a lack of recognition for their knowledge (Houssart and Croucher, 2013). This area of conflict between schools and TAs is outlined in chapter five. However, there has been evidence of increased power afforded to TAs in relation to knowledge. Graves (2012) reported a power shift when TAs developed specialist SEND knowledge borne through partnerships with external agencies. A meta-analysis by Alborz *et al* (2009) is often cited as demonstrating numerous studies where TA expertise is recognised in targeted literacy interventions and further studies support this (e.g. Fricke *et al*, 2013; Houssart and Croucher, 2013) but effective training and management is key (Sharples, 2016). Increased knowledge gained through undertaking foundation degree courses has also been outlined by Morris (2010) to improve confidence and self-esteem amongst TAs enabling them to make greater contributions to their workplace. To accept professional competence needs an element of trust; people may lack knowledge or have been deskilled and so place trust in those whom they consider have the required knowledge (Scott, 2001) and TAs as experts are trusted with planning (section 2.9). Surveillance also operates for professionals who may work autonomously but within regulatory practices (Scott, 2001). In addition, in recent times, there has been an increase in semi-professionalised expert

workers which can lead to opposition from the established professionals (Scott, 2001) and Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain (2011) report a mixed response from teachers regarding TAs leading whole-classes. The concepts around discourse and knowledge are explored further in chapters five and seven.

3.3.6 A radical view of power

Lukes (1974) developed 'a radical view' of power which he suggested is three dimensional. A one-dimensional view of power already widely acknowledged focused on the behaviour involved in the decision-making processes which provided opportunities for observable conflict of interests (Lukes, 1974). Bachrach and Baratz (1962) developed this original idea further suggesting a two-dimensional view of power. Acknowledging the one-dimensional view they added that power is often exercised by restricting decision-making to safe topics or by excluding individuals from the decision-making process completely; therefore, not being able to raise topics that may be detrimental to persons in more powerful positions. In addition, Bachrach and Baratz (1962) argued that even when individuals may be able to dispute a point, they do not, for fear of appearing disloyal to the organisation. This resulting suppression of subordinate groups, often caused by routine institutional practice, may be an unintentional exclusion ploy but has that effect (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962).

Lukes (1974) argued that even a two-dimensional view is still too simplistic leading to his three-dimensional view of power. He added that subordinate groups are influenced and controlled by encouraging them to adopt the thought processes of the organisation and hence become compliant with those in power. Illustrating this point, Mansaray (2012) suggests TAs acquiesce to structures in schools which reinforce their subordinate position. TAs' exclusion from school practices (section 2.9) illustrated where TAs have been included and excluded in school practices and this is examined further in chapter eight.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the theoretical and conceptual framework that is used to investigate the work and relationships of TAs in primary schools. Understanding the wider nature of work in a sociological context is fundamental for the specific exploration of TA work; the role of women, the role of non-work and emotional labour in predominately female occupations is paramount. Of importance also is the place of men in these environments and how they validate their position in schools which became of interest during the inquiry. These theories will be particularly useful to explore the research in chapter six, work versus non-work where they will help illuminate the roles occupied by TAs of both genders. As the position of TAs in schools has altered, labour process theory helps provide a framework where the work they undertaken can be examined as has occurred in the past with teachers and provides structure from where the professionalisation of TAs can be discussed in chapter five. Theories around power will feature significantly and thread through several chapters. Although power has been considered in relation to teachers, there is limited research in relation to TAs and power will play a large part of the discussion in chapters five, seven and eight. TAs have been represented as occupying subordinate positions in schools and the place of power in relation to their work and their own agency seems central to their position in school. The control and monitoring, long associated with teachers' work may now be applicable to TAs, how it is used to maintain control through mechanisms of surveillance such as observations and timetables is explored in chapter seven Power and its association with agency in relation to TAs is identified and discussed in chapter eight.

4.0 Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and justifies the methodology utilised which was that of a case study with ethnographic characteristics and was collected in four schools using mixed-methods. This includes an examination of the appropriateness of the methods selected alongside ethical considerations. Analysis is also examined in the latter sections of the chapter. The overall aims and research questions were identified in section 1.4 so will not be repeated in this chapter.

4.2 Paradigm

Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) suggest that researchers adopt a paradigm in order to guide their research. A paradigm, Mertens (2015, p. 8) describes is 'a way of looking at the world' whilst Bryman (2016, p. 694) indicates it influences 'how research should be done, and how results should be interpreted'. According to Hammersley (2013) educational research was traditionally positivist where data were collected using scientific means of experimentation using large numbers of respondents (Basit, 2010). However, developments occurred which saw the rise of interpretivism, which according to O'Donoghue (2007, p. 16) 'concentrates on the meaning people bring to situations and the behaviour which they use to understand the world'. Cohen *et al* (2018, p. 19) suggest interpretivists aim 'to understand the subjective world of the human experience'. The interpretivist characteristics described by Hammersley (2013) were all present; it was exploratory in nature, sought to obtain individual perspectives and observe behaviours in situ. Criticisms of interpretivism exist with suggestions that it can produce a narrow viewpoint (Cohen *et al*, 2018) with the information generated being subjective (Bernstein, 1974). There is often the belief that certain paradigms are associated with certain methodologies but paradigms do not dictate the methodology used (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) nor should deciding the methodology dictate the methods (Bell and Waters, 2018). Bell and Waters (2018) suggest each method will have strengths and weaknesses therefore requiring the correct approach for the situation. Punch and Oancea (2014, p. 19) indicate there needs to be 'compatibility and integrity' in how the research questions and the chosen methods interrelate; the research question giving the project 'direction and coherence' (Punch, 2014, p. 65). Ultimately the choice of methods develops from the purpose of the research, driven by the problem, not the methodology (Flyvbjerg, 2011) and the methods chosen supported the research question and sub-questions.

4.3 Research methodology

Mackenzie and Knipe, (2006) state 'methodology is the overall approach to research linked to the paradigm or theoretical framework while the method refers to systematic modes, procedures or tools for collection and analysis of data' (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, n. p.). This study utilised a process advocated by Punch and Oancea (2014) where a holistic view could be obtained through gathering data with richness and complexity.

4.3.1 Case study with ethnographic features

Case study research aims to ascertain the intricacy of a situation and reflect on occurrences at that point in time rather than aiming to collect generalisable data (Cohen *et al*, 2018; Newby, 2014). Yin (2014, p. 16) considers a case study is:

> 'An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in-depth and within its real-world context.'

Newby (2014) indicates its aim, as with other research strategies, is to seek patterns and variations and the four schools were examined with this in mind. Case studies can take account of a wide variety of methods (Cohen *et al,* 2018) and the selected methods are those which suit the inquiry (Bassey, 1999), although Yin (2014) suggests observations and interviews lend themselves to case studies whilst Newby (2014) adds documents, and questionnaires. Case study research needs to be examined in varying terms but of interest here is the purpose and Yin (2014) outlines there are three; exploration, explanation and description. Primarily the focus of this research was on exploration in relation to TA work as well as explanation as to why and description of the situations they found themselves in.

Ethnography in simple terms is 'writing about people' (Newby, 2014, p. 60) and in a school context this extends to descriptions of systems and procedures in context (Wiersma and Jurs, 2009). Ethnography aims to identify what people routinely do in a particular environment and the meaning accredited to it (Wolcott, 2008). Data are usually collected via observations and increasingly interviews and ethnography lends itself to subjects that are not easily quantifiable (Basit, 2010). Ethnography involves the study of everyday lives, taking place 'in the field' with data being collected in an unstructured way therefore needing time for interpretation at the analysis stage (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Ethnographic research is conducted over a prolonged period of time (Jeffery and Troman, 2004) where the researcher often takes the role of participant observer (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Aspects of ethnographic study were present in my research but an extended period of immersion was not possible therefore the research must be viewed as case study research with ethnographic characteristics which utilised the full range of research methods (Troman and Jeffery, 2007).

4.4 Research methods

Methods are the primary tools used to answer research questions and stem from the research questions (Punch and Oancea, 2014). Strengths and weaknesses of methods need to be considered in order to ascertain which were appropriate (Cohen *et al,* 2018). The research sub-questions (section 1.3) indicate a more qualitative approach as they seek to describe and examine experiences (Punch and Oancea, 2014). Punch (2014) suggests preserving the holistic nature of case study research is important and promotes the use of multiple sources of data collection. Observations, interviews, questionnaires and documents are all promoted as useful in case study

research (Yin. 2014; Punch, 2014; Cohen *et al*, 2018) and were all deemed necessary to answer the research questions. Utilising different methods supports rigorous data collection by enabling data triangulation.

4.4.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are usually designed to collect data that can readily be converted into numbers (Basit, 2010) but Punch and Oancea, (2014) suggest they are useful instruments through which to gain background information as well as opinions and attitudes. Questionnaire data requires consideration in relation to constraints such as the volume of data requested, the time taken to complete it and the sensitivity of the data required (Wolf, 1988). Respondents were made fully aware of the purpose with clear assurances in relation to confidentiality and anonymity (Punch, 2014) which occurred both verbally and in writing. Being present can impact on feelings of compulsion to complete the questionnaires (Cohen *et al,* 2018) but the voluntary aspect was stressed at the time of administration by me. The purpose of the questionnaire was to ascertain biographical information such as qualifications, how the job was obtained, contractual hours and main role which was obtained through a mixture of multiple choice questions and open questions. Consideration was given to the design in relation to layout and questions (Buckler and Walliman, 2016) (see appendix two). Although Bell and Waters (2018) recommend names should be omitted from questionnaires, names were needed in order to contact individuals willing to partake in further research in order to explore their role in more depth later (Buckler and Walliman, 2016).

The questionnaire was administered personally and in each school line managers arranged a meeting with the TAs, providing a good platform from which to do this (Cohen *et al,* 2018). This approach Newby (2014) suggests increases the likelihood of trust which is often initiated with a detailed outline of the project and Bell and Waters (2018) indicate increases the chance of cooperation (Bell and Waters, 2018). It also gave respondents the opportunity to clarify any questions (Newby, 2014) which reduces the number of incomplete answers as, on the whole, the forms could be checked whilst respondents were present (Cohen *et al,* 2018).. In the first school TAs were asked to note on their questionnaires if they would volunteer to be shadowed or interviewed and were contacted later by email but in all subsequent schools this was arranged on the day.

4.4.2 Documents

In research documents record processes and procedures and help to provide background detail regarding the organisation (Cohen *et al,* 2018) which can include timetables and personal files (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The documents selected need to have relevance to the research question (Finnegan, 2006) and job descriptions and timetables were selected as they illustrate aspects of TA work. Selection and interpretation of documents can be affected by access (Finnegan, 2006) but job descriptions were obtained from each school's SLT whilst timetables were accessed

through the observed TAs themselves. By obtaining these two documents early in the process, it allowed the documents to be tracked in use as well as providing opportunity for dialogue during interviews or as part of the observation if required (Prior, 2012). Consideration can also be given to additional evidence a document produces and Marwick (2001), referring to historical documents, discusses 'witting' and 'unwitting' evidence. Witting evidence is that gathered from the observable characteristics of the document that were intended to be shared whilst unwitting evidence is other information that can be gleaned from the source (Marwick, 2001). Thorough examination gave the full picture of the document and the environment in which it existed (Perakyla and Ruusuvuori, 2011) which included how easily the document was accessed, whether it was hard copy or electronic, its age and how current it appeared.

4.4.3 Observations

Observations are considered key to data collection in case studies complementing data collected from interviews (Cohen *et al,* 2018). When aimed at gathering qualitative data they tend to be unstructured, without prearranged categories (Moyles, 2007); the observer able to directly observe the situation, in order to witness the action (Punch and Oancea, 2014). One issue of being present is that observees may act differently from their usual behaviour (Silverman, 2011). Samph (1976) (cited in Wragg, 2012) identified that teachers did respond differently when someone entered the classroom; asking children more questions, praising more and more readily accepting ideas. which is applicable to my research. Hence, Angrosino and Rosenberg (2011) advise observers to be unobtrusive but this was not always possible in order to hear TA-children conversations over the general noise of the classroom. However, this consideration was one of the reasons for undertaking observations for a whole day as it was hoped the TAs and children would get used to the presence of an additional adult, and so help minimise some of the effects (Basit, 2010). Observation of practice is relatively common in schools (Wragg, 2012) but the term 'shadowing' was used with the TAs attempting to make the event appear less intimidating; a term adopted by Acker (1999) in her study with teachers. Although best efforts were made to be unobtrusive for the TA and the children, as a close observer present in the setting, (Newby, 2014), there were inevitably occasions which were spent engaging in direct conversation with the TAs, teachers and children and often notes were made about these if they were on related topics.

The notion of the 'insider' or 'outsider' researcher is popular terminology in anthropological research (Milligan, 2016). Whilst much academic research is undertaken as an 'outsider', if trust can be established then a fruitful partnership can blossom between researcher and participant (Kerstetter, 2012). Yet, Milligan (2016) would argue where conscious efforts are made to establish bonds then it is easier to consider the position and recognition of the 'inbetweener' researcher, taking on different positions depending on what the situation dictates. Mertens (2015, p 379) would describe this as 'observer-as-participant' which encompasses observing in the setting whilst

undertaking some involvement. However, of additional importance throughout was to maintain a certain detachment and neutrality in order to reduce bias (Moyles, 2007) and reflection on the process was needed to consider how the situation was influenced by me as an observer as well as the selection of the information recorded (Foster, 2006a). In addition, consideration needed to be given to the perceptions of power which influenced the developing relationship (Milligan, 2016).

The pilot trialled other methods (section 4.5) but Punch and Oancea (2014) outline hand-written field notes are a recognised observational technique and were found to work best so were used for the full study. Field notes were made for each participant and a snapshot is identified below in figure 4.1 (see appendix three for typed examples). Throughout the observation consideration was given to Spradley's (1980) suggestion for field notes which take account of nine different features he listed as space, actor, activity, object, act, event, time, goal and feeling; taken into account during the day, as applicable.
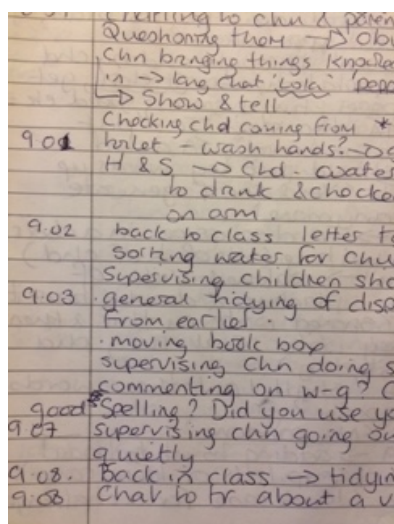
Figure 4.1: Example of handwritten notes.

Notes were taken as an ongoing process with the aim of recording events as they occurred. However, as suggested by Acker (1999) consideration was given to the fact that this may make some TAs uncomfortable so they were invited to examine these notes if they wished.

4.4.4 Interviews

Interviews offer a good way of generating data in case study research (Silverman, 2011) and are common in educational research (Basit, 2013). Interviews differ depending on the methodology, but qualitative interviews tend to have a less structured, open format (Cohen *et al*, 2018*).* Semi-structured interviews seemed most appropriate as they make use of open- ended questions (Silverman, 2011) and enable the interviewer to delve deeper and probe answers further if required (Bell and Waters, 2018; Cohen *et al*, 2018). Interview schedules (see appendix four) were used for the interviews conducted with TAs and line managers. Each school had a slightly different set of core questions (see appendix four), incorporating different aspects from job descriptions

and each TA shadowed had additional questions added linked to the observations. Line manager interviews had generic topics but some were specific to each school as a result of practices observed. A logical sequence of questions was planned (Cohen *et al*, 2018) but, in reality, the order varied as sometimes topics flowed naturally and were not always presented in the way that had been predicted so were discussed at the point they naturally occurred. Interviews were all face to face and this allowed more readily for clarification of points (Dialsingh, 2013) and by doing so also enabled a rapport to be established more easily (Basit, 2010). Ultimately the interviews allowed the exploration of school-based practice and views. For this study the main drawback of interviews was that participants may have responded in a way that 'presents them in a better light' (Newby, 2014, p. 358).

The timings of the interviews varied considerably. It was envisaged interviews with the TAs would be around half an hour and, in reality, some were more and some were less. Line manager interviews also varied, from just under half an hour to nearly 55 minutes. The interviews were all recorded verbatim using audio equipment (Punch and Oancea, 2014). All participants consented to the recording and two recorders were used for each interview in case one failed. Interviews in school settings can be affected by background noise (Acker, 1999; Buckler and Walliman, 2016) but not all schools were able to provide a particularly quiet environment which impacted on audio quality.

4.5 Pilot

A pilot study was conducted in early March 2016 where questionnaires were administered to all TAs by the headteacher who also arranged volunteers for the day of the visit (see appendix five and six). The examination of the pilot questionnaires indicated a need to clarify the qualifications section which was amended (see appendix two). The pilot also led to the confirmation that being present for its administration would be beneficial, giving opportunity for ambiguities to be resolved (Wilson and Sapsford, 2006). The pilot observation allowed for three different methods of data collection to be trialled for an hour each (see appendix seven). It had originally been thought that either a semi-structured observation with more generic categories or even a structured format which would help to determine if certain events occurred and in what frequency (Cohen *et al*, 2018) The pilot made it apparent that a tick list approach was too rigid and difficult to manage because of the number of categories required and resulted in them being littered with additional notes to add clarity to the ticks and the unstructured format worked best. The initial analysis of the pilot data gave reassurance that answers to the sub-questions could be achieved (Basit, 2010). There was no intention of reusing the pilot school (Yin, 2014) and a further four schools were obtained. The pilot gave assurance that having four schools in the main study was realistic in the timeframe set (Basit, 2010). Undertaking a pilot also increases validity and reliability (Cohen *et al,* 2018). The pilot ultimately confirmed the methods were appropriate for the research and the subsequent

execution of these methods worked in all four schools as planned; only a minor adjustment was made to the administration of the questionnaires and selection of participants after the first school (section 4.4.1).

4.6 Research validity, reliability and triangulation

Research needs to ensure trustworthiness which originates from ensuring validity, reliability and triangulation (Bush, 2007) and research should be scrutinised to ensure this (Bell and Waters, 2018). Reliability and validity are often examined together and Basit (2010) refers to this in a succinct way suggesting:

> 'Reliability is a prerequisite to validity. Research which is valid is always reliable. Nevertheless, reliable research is not necessarily valid' (Basit, 2010, p. 69)

4.6.1 Reliability

Reliability simply put means consistency (Punch and Oancea, 2014) and concerns the capacity to replicate the study which would produce similar or the same results if undertaken in similar or same conditions (Yin, 2014). In quantitative research reliability can be tested (Foster, 2006b) but in qualitative research replication is problematic as finding similar participants and circumstances proves difficult (Basit, 2010). Qualitative research tends to be unique and therefore reliability comes from elements such as the trustworthiness of the data, the honesty of its collection, the detail and the depth (Basit, 2010). For some researchers, dependability therefore is deemed to be a more appropriate term when discussing qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) where dependability concerns the quality and relevance of the research (Mertens, 2015). Predetermining a clear focus and the avoidance of distractions helps improve the reliability of the research (Bush, 2007) as does ensuring that the research is undertaken with methodical precision as well as ensuring it does indeed answer what it intended to do (Basit, 2010).

4.6.2 Validity

Validity, according to Bell and Waters, (2018) entails ensuring that the research undertaken actually does describe and measure what was planned (Bell and Waters, 2018) as well as what the researchers asserts in the analysis and conclusion (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006). Validity positions itself more easily with quantitative data where it is more readily identifiable due to its prescriptive nature (Holliday, 2016). Validity tends to be examined in terms of internal validity and external validity. Internal validity concerns whether the findings precisely describe what was being examined whereas external validity is about how generalisable the findings are (Cohen *et al,* 2018). Much quantitative research discusses external validity (Mertens, 2005) but educational research is about social settings where there are numerous variables and this makes scientific generalisability impossible (Bassey, 2000). However, attempts were made to increase the possibility of making generalisations hence four different schools were used to gather the data but even so this can still

be perceived as a limitation as generalisability is more readily associated with quantitative data (Silverman, 2009). Yet, Mason (2017) identifies although there is an expectation that qualitative research should generate results that are generalisable they can instead produce results that have implications for the wider population, which is applicable here. Many qualitative researchers such as Lincoln and Guba (1985) would argue that the term validity is not applicable to qualitative research and the terms credibility and transferability are more appropriate terms. Credibility is about conducting the research with dedication, thoroughness, reflection, revision and accuracy (Mertens, 2005; Holliday, 2016). Transferability relates to how transferable the findings are to other comparable settings (Cohen *et al,* 2018) improved by making use of more than one setting (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

4.6.3 Triangulation

Enhanced reliability and validity can also be achieved by using a range of research methods known as triangulation (Flick, 2009). Triangulation is the process by which data is verified; complementary data is obtained regarding the subject (Punch and Oancea, 2014,) making use of two or more research methods to support each other (Cohen *et al,* 2018; Newby, 2014). Triangulation then increases validity and reliability and can take the form of such things as multiple interviews (Moyles, 2007) alongside observations (Hammersley, 2013) and Hammersley (2013) advocates interviews complement observational data which have a tendency to be subjective (Moyles, 2007). By utilising triangulation of methods, a researcher may produce better quality research (Flick, 2009) which is more balanced (Basit, 2010) which led to my design incorporating several methods, all aiding validity and reliability of the data. Increased reliability may through the inclusion of more than one participant group (Basit, 2010) which is why four schools were used.

4.7 Sampling

There are several factors to consider when selecting a sample such as size and access (Cohen *et al,* 2018) but important to note is whether the sample is representative of the population as a whole (Punch and Oancea, 2014). For qualitative research purposive sampling is common where the cases are selected based on specified features (Cohen *et al,* 2018). The selection process of schools for this study considered a range of characteristics such as faith and OFSTED grading and an informed judgement was made to their typicality, on paper at least (Cohen *et al,* 2018). Purposive sampling is not without criticism and a critique of purposive sampling may lack representativeness and an inability of generalisability but the aim was to gain in-depth information (Cohen *et al,* 2018) and this supported the choice. In qualitative research the sample size is likely to be relatively small (Cohen *et al,* 2018). Four schools with a range of characteristics were considered sufficient in order to ascertain suitable thick description to assist in the credibility of the data.

Obtaining participants presents challenges; firstly, that of gaining access and secondly persuading possible participants to partake in the research (Cohen *et al,* 2018; Shenton and Hayter, 2004). This

was made easier as all schools, including the pilot, were accessed by making use of known contacts which Foster (2006b) describes as a 'sponsor' approach without whom access would have been difficult. The schools (psuedonyms are used below) were found as shown in table 4.1.

School	Main contact	How this occurred
St Michael's	partner's daughter	Partner's daughter forwarded an email to the headteacher (who is her friend's mum)
St Mary's	ex -governor	Ex-governor (friend) forwarded an email to headteacher
Fernleigh Academy	colleague	Colleague forwarded an email to headteacher
City Academy	Ex-colleague	Ex-colleague spoke to her Principal who contacted the head of the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) who emailed the Principal of the school required

Table 4.1: Sponsors

A detailed description of the four schools which examines key characteristics of the schools and participants is available in appendix eleven.

4.8 Ethics

Ethical considerations are important when gathering information and research involving human participants warrants careful deliberation. Basit (2013) indicates a dilemma is created between the pursuit of 'truth' and the moral obligation to protect participants from harm (Basit, 2013). This is described by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, (1992) as 'costs/benefits ratio'. The research design took account of the professional guidelines offered by the British Educational Research Association (BERA), (2011)[8], whilst also obtaining approval from the University Ethics Committee (Basit, 2013) (see appendix eight), to ensure it was ethically sound and adding to the robustness of the research. In order to progress it was necessary to obtain informed consent in each of the schools alongside clearance to work in proximity with children (Cohen *et al,* 2018). Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) approval, needed for working in settings where children are present (Hall *et al*, 2015), was in place which was shared with each school upon arrival. Initial consent was obtained via email from the headteacher or their designated representative and the initial meeting set up where an information letter was presented and written consent acquired (see appendix nine) (Mertens, 2015). This ensured participants fully understood the purpose of the research and the requirements (Bell and Waters, 2018). During the study, a similar information letter was given to TAs alongside a consent form (see appendix ten) which covered all aspects of TA involvement starting with the questionnaires through to observations and interviews. Although Newby (2014) suggests consent given at one stage may not carry through the entire process, further written consent was not requested from TAs after the initial questionnaire but each subsequent section of research began with brief recap and verbal consent was again obtained.

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[8] applicable at the time of the research

When considering ethics key areas are around privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and deception (Silverman, 2011). It was not envisaged that questions would involve any particular private information and as Punch and Oancea, (2014) note individuals could chose to withhold information so this was not significant. Nor was there any requirement for deception where information was withheld or lies told (Cohen *et al,* 2018) and the proposed research question and a breakdown of what was being investigated was shared with all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were of key deliberation so as to protect participants.

Abbott and Sapsford (2006) state that confidentiality involves assurance that participants will not be identifiable whilst anonymity means the researcher themselves will not be able to identify the participants. Complete anonymity in this sense was not possible due to the nature of the research involving interviews and observations but it was possible to ensure the removal of any identifiable features (Punch and Oancea, 2014). Confidentiality was outlined in the participant information sheet and participants were guaranteed that neither they, nor the school would be identified by name in the final write up. In addition, participants were assured of their right to withdraw as well as assurances of how their data would be stored, which was in line with the *Data Protection Act 1998*[9] (BERA, 2011).

A small element of concern regarding confidentiality comes from 'readers who are in the know to identify the individual or institution concerned' (Bell and Waters, 2018, p. 52). Considerable effort was made to ensure the schools were protected by positioning schools in large geographical areas where there were hundreds of primary schools. In addition, possible identifiable features such as statistical data were removed (Punch and Oancea, 2014). The TAs were assured information from observations and interviews would not be conveyed directly to headteachers and that schools would not be identified by name. All data was stored securely as per the BERA guidelines (BERA, 2011; BERA, 2018), whether in hardcopy or electronic format.

4.9 Data analysis

All four methods of data collection were subject to analysis in order to interpret the evidence (Newby, 2014) and it was important to examine it as a whole to begin the investigation of emerging themes (Holliday, 2016). Although initial reflections were made after the research was completed for each school, the process of organising the data into something more manageable (Cohen *et al*, 2018) came after all the research was completed.

Although some of the data were collected in a way where analysis could begin, the audio recordings, in particular, needed preparing for analysis (Boulton and Hammersley, 2006). Interviews were transcribed and although costly, in order to speed the process up, the majority

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[9] applicable at the time of the research

were sent away for the initial transcription (Basit, 2010) before careful examination for accuracy upon their return (Cohen*, et al,* 2018). Newby (2014) suggests there is no 'correct' method for the transcriptions although some methodologies would suggest more detail is needed than others (Silverman, 2011). It was decided for the initial transcriptions to ask for the verbatim conversations only. In the checking process further features were added such as pauses and 'ers' if they were deemed to have significance (Silverman, 2011) and over talking plus some of the interruptions were also made evident (Boulton and Hammersley, 2006). Ultimately, the written transcriptions made it easier to identify emerging codes as well as key comments made by participants (Bell and Waters, 2018). The field notes were written with as much detail as was possible however occasionally some additional notes were made, at the time, in relation to interpretation but care was taken to ensure these were distinguishable from the actual field notes themselves (Boulton and Hammersley, 2006). These tended to be in relation to possible codes that immediately became apparent (Punch and Oancea, 2014) although this was infrequent. In addition, numerous shorthand abbreviations were utilised to speed up note taking (Bell and Waters, 2018) and occasional diagrams were used (Wiersma and Jurs, 2009).

The documents were also the focus of detailed analysis (Bell and Waters, 2018) and examined with key areas in mind such as the origins of the documents, witting and unwitting evidence as well as comparisons with other documents (Bell and Waters, 2018) such as between schools and national policy. The questionnaires provided small amounts of numerical data but due to the quantity it was possible to collate this without making use of statistical software (Bell and Waters, 2018). This all added preparation in order to move from data collection to the analysis and writing process (Holliday, 2016).

 As the initial analysis began care was given in order to avoid directly answering the research questions and in so doing allow themes to emerge (Holliday, 2016). Ultimately ethnographic studies need the evidence to be assembled before interpretation can begin (Newby, 2014) and it was decided to adopt this approach although this study was not truly ethnographic. This enabled the connection between all aspects of the data to occur so the thick description needed in qualitative research (Holliday, 2016) could be obtained. Once all the data were organised each piece was examined with a view to coding, the process of putting a label against it (Punch and Oancea, 2014). Handwritten in a book (see appendix twelve), the codes assigned were 'descriptive codes' such as *planning* and *caring* which Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest as a starting point for familiarisation. Working alongside this was 'memoing' which they add allows for additional notes regarding relationships between codes as they arise and leads the researcher into a more creative way of thinking (Punch and Oancea, 2014). The interviews were coded first with some codes being adjusted or amalgamated during the process so interview transcripts were revisited and checked for consistency (Basit, 2013). Subsequently, the field notes and documents were also coded and

each document was re-examined later in case emerging codes had been missed. Codes underwent thematic analysis to develop emerging themes (Braun and Clarke, 2013) (see appendix thirteen) which were then allocated to the sub-questions they addressed. Ultimately there were 181 codes and 22 themes. Where codes appeared under two different themes, a decision was made as to where they would be included to avoid repetition. As the themes developed the tensions existing in the TAs' working lives became increasingly evident and the four dichotomies (section 1.4) emerged. Ultimately, throughout the chapters which relate findings and discussions, direct quotes from participants are from interviews unless otherwise stated.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has justified the methodological approach and the research tools adopted. It has reflected on the ethical issues associated with research in general as well as consideration to this particular study, ensuring the BERA guidelines were adhered to. In addition, it has paid close attention to the procedures involved in ensuring the research was valid and reliable. Finally, it outlined the process of data analysis which led to the format taken in which the results and subsequent discussion would be reported.

5.0 Chapter Five: Professionalisation versus De-professionalisation

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the developments in TA professionalisation brought about through increased qualifications, individual training and knowledge. In addition, it will examine the blurring of the boundary between teacher and TA work. The intensification of the TA role now includes utilising specialist knowledge as well as a requirement for undertaking whole-class[10] teaching. The reskilling of TAs enhances their professionalisation and arguably contribute to the deskilling of teachers, an aspect that contributes to their de-professionalisation. The interplay of structure/agency and power/knowledge present in TA work will also be discussed in relation to their roles.

5.2 Professionalisation

An increased expectation of TA work in recent years was identified by TAs and headteachers during the interviews. Headteachers spoke highly of their TAs' skills and acknowledged their qualifications, experience and expertise. HT3 suggested:

> These are professionals who are doing a professional job, the old sort of job
> of washing out paint pots, that's gone. (HT3, Fernleigh)

HT1 commented:

> They are very skilled. (HT1, St Michael's)

HT1 referred to an increased requirement for good literacy and numeracy skills which was reflected in the provision of better TA courses. She also noted that during external validations TAs always came out as:

> Outstanding; particularly in questioning skills. (HT1, St Michael's)

Her reasoning for using TAs at lunch-time instead of midday supervisors was because she wanted:

> Skilled staff at social times. (HT1, St Michael's)

HT2 was keen for her whole staff to undertake training provided by the LA in order to gain a better insight relating to TA deployment in classrooms. HT3 was also concerned with negative portrayal of TAs in the media, suggesting:

> Your confidence as a professional has just being knocked. (HT3, Fernleigh)

Some of the longer-serving TAs reflected how their jobs had altered over the years (see section 2.3). TA1 referred to her initial employment where she would:

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[10] Whole classes in English primary schools are typically 30 children of mixed ability

> Wash up paint pots, do a bit tidying up, reading with children, very much an assistant in the classroom; a bit of sewing and just helping. (TA1, St Michael's)

TA29 began 18 years previously and had a similar experience:

> We weren't teaching assistants we were classroom assistants. On a Friday we used to sit in the resource room, all the TAs […] and have a cup of tea […] Then we'd go and water the plants. I'd collect the tea towels and wash the tea towels. (TA29, City)

TAs generally presented as feeling confident in their roles brought about by training and experience. However, some TAs expressed reticence about being asked to do work outside of their usual role such as TA4 who no longer felt comfortable with phonics as she had not delivered sessions for a while. TAs praised each other's work and headteachers spoke highly of the TAs in all schools with very little evidence in the data that presented TAs as anything but professional. Only HT3 suggested:

> There are two of my full team here who will come in late; thorn in my side. (HT3, Fernleigh)

5.2.1 Qualifications

The data from the questionnaires showed that TAs held suitable qualifications and, in many cases, had qualifications above the grade they were employed at albeit some which could be seen as in an unrelated[11] discipline. All 46 TAs were asked about their qualifications both generically and specifically relating to supporting children. TA18 (Ferneleigh) failed to complete the box in relation to relevant[12] qualifications at level 2[13] or level 3 and a greater breakdown per school can be seen in appendix eleven. Although not the case HT2 suggesting TAs could:

> Start from so many different directions […] from people who are NNEB trained to people who had no training. (HT2, St Mary's)

In contrast HT1 indicated her LA would not allow TA employment without relevant qualifications. Whilst HT3 indicated:

> All of them have qualifications; they're not just mums that have popped in and gone 'oh I'll have a TA job.' (HT3, Fernleigh)

Both HT1 and HT4 indicated they always got a large number of applications even if as HT1 noted:

> You make TA qualifications as your essential criteria. (HT1, St Michael's)

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[11] unrelated qualifications could be A levels or degrees in other subjects
[12] relevant means qualifications relating to childcare or education
[13] TAs tend to be employed from level 1 to level 4. Level 1 should be more of an administrative role with an increasing expectation of work with children form level 2 up to level 4. Level 4 is HLTA level. Fernleigh referred to level 2 as grade 5 and level 3 as grade 6

When all qualifications were examined 52% had qualifications higher than the level they were employed at whilst an examination of relevant qualifications reduced this to 35%. The breakdown can be seen in figure 5.1.

All schools' qualifications and level of employment

- highest qualification greater than the level employed at
- highest qualification equal to the level employed at
- DNA
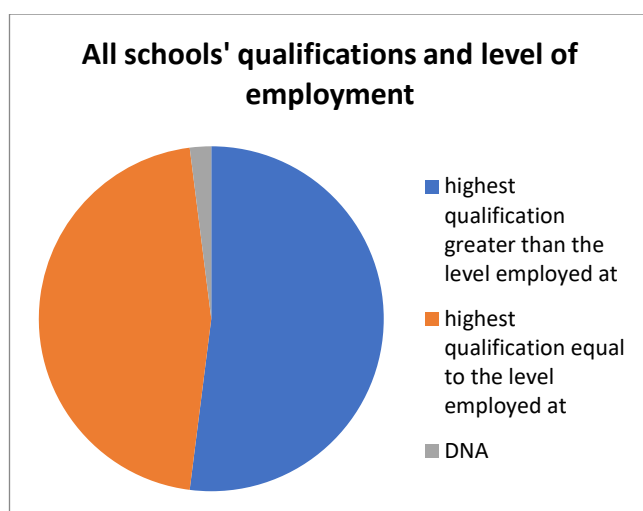
Figure 5. 1: Highest qualifications and the link to employment level

The majority of TAs possessed a level 3 qualification and the breakdown can be seen in table 5.1. Two TAs held a relevant level 3 as well as other level 3 qualifications.

Relevant level 3 or above qualification	Other level 3 or above qualification	Only level 2 qualification
80% (37)	15% (7)	4% (2)

Table 2.1: Level 2 and 3 qualifications

There appeared greater opportunities to obtain appropriate qualifications. TA3 stated:

> I started in 2000, and I think things have changed incredibly since then; I mean, there were TA courses, but not like there are now. (TA3, St Michael's)

This contrasts with the DISS research where 27% of TAs declared level 3 qualifications but corroborates Warhurst *et al* (2014) who indicated in Scotland 64% of TAs were level 3 qualified. There were no level 3 positions at both St Michael's and St Mary's yet at St Michael's 71% held qualifications above level 2 and at St Mary's the figure was 83%.

5.2.2 Training

All the job descriptions suggested TAs would attend training and this was discussed in interviews. Headteachers suggested TAs had access to training they requested or needed which was corroborated by several TAs. TAs appeared to have undertaken considerable training; sometimes as part of the whole school team (explored further in section 8.4) but also for specific interventions

or SEND which could be individual or as part of a class team. TA8 identified some training she had attended with her class teacher:

> Last year 'E' and I went on a training day for *'Talk Boost'*.[14] LA2 seem to have adopted this. (TA8, St Mary's)

Both HT1 and HT3 mentioned a training record which indicated TAs had taken advantage of training over the years and again this was reiterated by TAs. HT4 had invested considerable funds on upskilling her TAs to level 3 which she hoped empower them to be utilised correctly. When expected to deliver an intervention TAs were often sent on the relevant course although headteachers could also make use of school based expertise. Both HT3 and HT4 suggested they would not ask TAs to deliver interventions without the correct training hence HT4 had several TAs trained in each intervention. HT3 felt strongly that TAs needed the correct training for their roles stating:

> That's only fair; because that job is very demanding and very challenging. If you really don't know what you're doing, and there's no reason why you should if you have not been trained, then it's not fair to put them in that position. (HT3, Fernleigh)

Succession planning was also evident at St Michael's where TA2 was being trained as a HLTA ready for when TA1 retired. There were a small number of examples where training had not occurred. TAs at St Michael's were still waiting for training in relation to Information Technology (IT) which had been requested but not yet provided. TA9 moved to support in early years and no training was provided but HT2 allowed the team time to meet to discuss the Early Years' Foundation Stage (EYFS) early learning goal (ELG)[15] requirements and TA9 subsequently attended the LA moderation[16] days. HLTAs were asked to line manage others but only TA1 had received leadership training which encompassed a half-day course on leading teams. TA29 received no training and stated that the HLTAs:

> Were flying by the seats of our pants. (TA29, City)

In addition, TA9 started teaching phonics and had to learn what to do from the associated training book and videos, until she attended a course later. TA4 also learnt about a reading intervention stating:

> Toe by Toe[17], I just got given the book and I had to read it, but it's self-explanatory really [...] it was dead easy. (TA4, St Michael's)

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[14] Talk Boost is a speech, language and communication intervention
[15] Early learning goals are the standards set that a child is expected to achieve by the end of their first year in school in order to meet the standards for their age.
[16] The EYFS relies on internal assessments towards the ELG so LA moderation allows staff to ensure parity across schools
[17] Toe by Toe is an initiative to support individuals struggling with reading

Some of the TAs were initially employed to undertake roles connected with SEND and TAs without relevant qualifications or training were usually sent on relevant courses after taking on the support of a child with a specific need:

> Researcher: What sort of training had you had prior to that that made you suitable for that role?
>
> TA2: None.
>
> Researcher: None. Did you get some training afterwards?
>
> TA2: I did, yes. They sent me on autism courses. (TA2, St Michael's)

However, HT1 expressed this could be difficult in a small school where funding quickly became an issue and TA3 commented she had not attended SEND training in the past that would have been beneficial. Existing TAs who began supporting new children with a SEND were not necessarily sent on additional courses if there appeared no obvious need. TA4 stated:

> Well I'd already had loads of training […] because they sent you on courses for autism […] I knew her quite well because she was in the same class as my daughter […] I think I was pretty well-trained at that point, because I'd been here three years. (TA4, St Michael's)

One TA at Fernleigh was undertaking the dyslexia teaching certificate meaning the school no longer needed to use external providers for assessments. Supporting children with SEND also resulted in drawing on expertise from local special[18] schools and this was mentioned by both City and Fernleigh which included meetings, training and access to specialist facilities. In addition, TAs attended training with SENDCos and worked with specialist teachers who directly supported the children and the TA. TA2 suggested:

> His speech and language (SaL) therapist came in because she wanted Lego[19] therapy introduced […] She explained it needed doing, so I'd done it for a few weeks; then she said she wanted to come in to observe it. When she came in to observe it, she gave me a lot of feedback about what I was doing, what I needed to do differently. I was going in blind, and she gave me a pack as well. (TA2, St Michael's)

TA27 was particularly experienced in supporting children with SEND as she had previously worked at a special school and had attended a great deal of specific training there. Most TAs felt sufficiently trained to do their SEND roles but there were some exceptions and HT4 suggested she had more children with Education Health and Care (EHC[20]) plans than they were able to access training for. TA3 felt she had had not received adequate training:

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[18] Special schools specifically educate children with SEND
[19] Lego therapy uses Lego to encourage problem-solving and communication.
[20] EHC plans are a legal document setting out the special educational need and the support required

Not really. I think it's quite hard, isn't it? I think autism is the one that you get the most training; there seems to be training for autism. That seems to be the one. And I suppose, there's a spectrum, isn't there? [...] But, no, I don't think so. (TA3, St Michael's)

TA14 supported children on SaL plans and had attended courses. She had felt confident enough to raise an issue:

However, there is one problem that I've spoken to my SENCo about; is the speech training you go on is more to do with the language and the understanding, as opposed to the actual pronunciation of speech. Because I'm not a speech therapist, I'm not an expert in that [...] you don't think about how you're forming them sounds unless you actually break it down step by step. The speech therapists know how to do that, don't they? I spoke to my SENCo about it. She spoke to the speech therapist and they are now specifying in the actual care plan how to form the speech. (TA14, Fernleigh)

However, on the whole TAs felt trained and prepared to do their roles confirmed by TA29:

I would hope so when we've received loads *[of training]* over the years. (TA29, City)

Overall, they came across as confident in what they did which supports Rose and Forlin (2010), (see section 2.9) who suggest TAs are confident and competent if appropriately trained.

5.2.3 Knowledge

Job descriptions referred to supporting the curriculum and this was primarily what TAs were observed doing. TAs spoke of supporting a range of subjects which could include the early years' curriculum. Several TAs indicated they undertook research in their own time to support their roles. TA9 and TA26 both discussed conducting research in relation to early years and SEND whilst TA17 and TA27 referred to learning during their degree courses. HT3 also commented on TAs sharing ideas they found on the internet and TAs and headteachers referred to the experience TAs gained from the classrooms. HT3 felt the TAs knew the curriculum for the age group they were working in but if asked to move around regularly this would not be the case. HT2 indicated it was important for a TA to understand what could be expected of a child of a particular age and how they as TAs could best support them. HT1 also advocated gaining experience of a year group and developing expertise by remaining there although TA4 indicated moving classes helped acquire knowledge. Several TAs spoke of gaining experience over time of age specific expectations. By example, TA14 commented:

I'm staying put in the same year group which, actually, I think is good at this point because I've really grounded my experience in year one this year, I feel [...] I'd like to carry that through to next year, so I'm becoming more experienced. (TA14, Fernleigh)

TAs were also knowledgeable of school processes and an illustration of this was given by HT1:

> Nobody knows that reading scheme better than *[TA4]* does. (HT1, St
> Michael's)

TA26 also indicated less satisfaction previously when he had worked in three different classes. TAs also referred to areas of expertise that were utilised in the schools; TA28 made use of his history degree whilst TA1 had knowledge of forest[21] schools, music and Religious Education (RE). TA3 had a degree in environmental sciences which supported her role in forest schools. TA27 had brought with her several years' experience of working in a special school whilst HT4 also made use of a TA who was a French speaker. TAs spoke of difficulty with their knowledge base when the curriculum changed or when they were required to move age group or the school adopted a new approach such as City which was adopting a more creative curriculum[22]. TAs also explored their interests in extra-curricular clubs such as TA4 running the netball team and TA9 and TA29 organised gardening clubs. A lack of curricular knowledge was indicated as an issue by Blatchford *et al* (2012a) in the DISS research but TAs in all four schools, contend Blatchford *et al's* (2012a) findings and, on the whole, appeared capable within their roles, understanding what was needed and TAs did not appear out of their depth in any of the observations. TAs also discussed their knowledge in relation to SEND and both TA2 and TA4 indicating at times they felt they were more knowledgeable than their teachers, a finding expressed in other studies (see section 2.5). However, there was evidence in the schools that teachers were beginning to take on greater responsibility in relation to SEND and this will be explored further in section 7.4.

TAs also had knowledge of the assessment procedures in school and undertook assessment under direction of the teacher as well as autonomously such as in relation to interventions. TA14 was witnessed undertaking a formal 1:1 reading test for every child in the year group to check their level and testing also occurred during interventions, seen with TA8, TA15 and TA17. TA9, in early years, was observed recording progress against the ELG. TAs spoke of marking books and were observed doing so; some annotating that TAs had marked the work. TA17 and TA27 spoke of inputting to individual education plans (IEP)[23]. TAs also had curricular responsibility and in St Michael's TA1 led RE and at City Academy TA26 and TA28 had responsibility for a healthy school and eco school initiative respectively. Again, this caused an element of tension for TAs as they felt it was something teachers should be doing not them.

TAs also gained knowledge from others and gave numerous examples of how they learnt from teachers, including specialist teachers and TAs across the schools suggested they learnt from each

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[21] The forest school approach developed in Scandinavia enables children to learn in a safe and supportive natural outdoor environment.
[22] A creative curriculum is one where children learn through creative and active teaching strategies
[23] Children with SEND have IEPs which help target development taking account of their need.

other with examples given such as using computer programmes or school reading assessments. HT1 stated:

> There's been quite a lot of shadowing; it's try and use each other. (HT1, St Michael's)

HT1 was a mathematics specialist so tended to discuss mathematics interventions with the TAs rather than use external providers but TA3 indicated she would have liked the actual course instead but accepted this had financial implications. Learning from others was particularly pertinent in relation to SEND and could include taking children to nearby special schools, outlined by TAs from City and Fernleigh or by collaboration with specialist support staff regarding specific children. Specialist staff shared ideas for games, coached them on techniques and offered strategies. By way of example TA11 noted:

> Researcher: When you started working with the little girl with Downs' syndrome. Did you have any specialist or additional training to do that role?

> TA11: Not as such. I'd not been on a course but I spent a lot of time with our SEN coordinator and also with the lady who came in to work with 'B'. I did quite a lot of work and sat in an awful lot at the beginning to watch what they were doing. And when I had my volunteer afternoons, I worked alongside the TA who worked with her for that year, so I was learning off her as well. (TA11, Fernleigh)

On the whole this support was welcome and positive although TA15 supplemented the games given to her by the SaL teacher to stop the children getting bored and a SaL session was observed where the children were engaged and enthusiastic. HT1 wanted TAs in the review meetings with Educational Psychologists (EP) as it was usually them who would be delivering interventions. However, TA4 shared frustration that when she reported back to the EP something was not working she was told to continue doing the same thing.

The findings from the four schools indicate developments in TA practice. As outlined in section 2.9 TAs are still gaining knowledge from experience as per Blatchford *et al* (2009b) but there appears to have been an increase in individual training opportunities including training in SEND, which was reported as lacking or weak. There was recognition that TAs needed training in the interventions they delivered and this was often through official mechanisms although some internal dissemination existed.

TA27, who had several years' experience of SEND in a special school environment, was the only TA that indicated teachers were not always receptive to her suggestions. She was also well qualified just about to complete her degree and she commented:

> Some staff are very open and are very happy with the input. Some, not particularly very forthcoming because, obviously, they feel like I am trying to

> tell them how to do their job, and I'm not telling them how to do their job
> because what they're doing in terms of the planning and the curriculum that's
> different to what I'm doing. I'm trying to create an environment that is
> conducive for learning for every child in the classroom, and that can only be
> achieved when we've got the teachers on board. (TA27, City)

The results indicate in these schools there has been investment in TAs through qualifications and training and TAs have developed knowledge to support their roles. However, this intensification of their role has implications for teachers which will be reported in the next section.

5.3 De-professionalisation

The findings illustrate increased professionalisation of TAs; therefore consideration must be given regarding its impact on teachers. Although many of the developments in the role of TA were accepted there was some evidence of tension from headteachers and TAs and the implications for the schools. The HLTA role was disliked by HT2 as she felt it undermined the training teachers had needed to do their jobs. De-professionalisation of teachers was most evident because of whole-class cover by TAs as well as the sometimes indistinguishable features of teacher and TA work. The reliance on TAs in relation to SEND is elaborated further in section 7.4 but also evidences TAs increasing expertise.

5.3.1 Whole-class

Whole-class cover varied amongst the TAs but could be a key feature of their work. Level 4s were all undertaking class cover on a regular basis and were timetabled to cover teacher PPA. This often enabled them to make use of their expertise such as the HLTAs at St Mary's who took forest schools. However, other job descriptions also indicated an expectation of whole-class cover which is outlined in table 5.2.

School	Level 2/grade 5 class cover	Level 3/grade 6 class cover	Level 4/HLTA class cover
St Michael's	no	None employed (NE)	NE
St Mary's	no	NE	yes
Fernleigh	no	yes	NE
City Academy	Occasionally (lesson)	yes (short term absence)	yes

Table 5.2: Whole-class cover as part of job descriptions

Except for City, there was no expectation on job descriptions that level 2s would take whole-classes. Whole-class cover was undertaken at St Michael's by HLTAs and TA1 indicated she would have a TA with her for timetabled class cover. HT1 stated LA policy did not allow for level 2s to cover whole-classes so would never ask. HT1 said:

> We can't ask somebody to do a job that is not commensurate with the wages.
> You can't ask them to do level 3 activities if we're only paying a level 2 salary.
> (HT1, St Michael's)

This was confirmed by TA4 who did not cover but TA2 suggested on the approach to the Statutory Assessment Tests (SATS)[24] she covered classes but this tended to be the fifteen year fives of a mixed year five/six class but she was witnessed with the majority of the class whilst her teacher rehearsed the class play with small groups. HT1 justified this as TA2 was preparing for her HLTA assessment which required evidence of whole-class cover. TA3 indicated she occasionally covered but admitted this caused tension with other TAs:

> I don't mind; but it's a bit political. I used to work full-time and I was a level 4.
> And I'm confident […] with myself to do that. Sometimes if 'A' *(teacher)* is out
> somewhere and we're in the middle of something and we'll discuss it and
> she'll say, 'I don't want supply to come in and mess this up', and I'll say, 'Well
> I'll ask.' I'm always a bit careful, because the other TAs don't particularly like
> it. Because they think, we shouldn't – they think I shouldn't be doing that
> because you're only paid a level 2 […] we are friendly don't get me wrong, but
> I tread a bit warily but occasionally, I will say to HT1, I don't mind covering if
> you want me to. (TA3, St Michael's)

The tension was understandable, caused by a restructure four years previously which removed level 3 posts, which allowed cover, but the TAs interviewed stated occasional cover was acceptable. St Mary's only employed level 2 TAs and HT2 stated she might ask them to cover:

> Only for an odd hour, I would never ask them to do it for a whole day, if it was
> 'help we've got real problems I'm needed in the office could you cover, I've
> set that work out could you do that?' (HT2, St Mary's)

She added the TAs would be:

> Completely able to cope with that, as I'm sure you've spotted. (HT2, St
> Mary's)

TA8 suggested if she did occasionally cover the headteacher would check on her regularly during the session which was perceived positively.

HT3 stated grade 5s would not usually cover although if they did they would be appropriately supervised by a teacher who was not necessarily in the room and the open-plan nature of Fernleigh made it seem possible that a teacher nearby could adopt a supervisory stance. TA15 reported having covered previously as a grade 5 although knew they were not supposed to. HT3 also stated that they would pair TAs up for class cover if it occurred but she was aware of schools in her LA that would expect TAs on a grade 3 or 4 to cover classes:

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[24] SATs are the national tests undertaken at the end of primary school in England

As far as I'm concerned, they are being abused (HT3, Fernleigh)

HT3 indicated tension between what she felt level 3s should cover and what the headteacher felt:

Because what I had them cover is very different to what the head and deputy would. To me, grade 6s should be emergencies. If the teacher's off and we can't get supply […] That doesn't happen here unfortunately. They cover all the time. (HT3, Fernleigh)

There was some tension evident even with grade 6s covering classes and HT3 reported TA feelings were:

Mixed, very mixed. Some are more than happy to cover and love it. There is one in particular who really doesn't want to cover. (HT3, Fernleigh)

At Fernleigh Academy only grade 6 TAs were interviewed and TA 14 suggested:

It's as and when. I don't do it instead of a supply teacher, but if a teacher has got a doctor's appointment or maybe a training course for one day, I'll cover that. Or unexpectedly sick and we can't *[get]* our chosen supply […] I'd say probably once every three weeks or something […] one of our teachers is a literacy adviser for the school. She might just have to go into a meeting about that, so I might just cover a session for an hour. (TA14, Fernleigh)

During the observation day TA14 was observed discussing the next day's cover with a teacher and TA15 undertook short notice class cover due to a safeguarding emergency that needed her teacher who regularly checked everything was okay. TA15 commented:

 You get used to it. It's one of those things you just have to accept as long as I don't end up looking silly where it goes on for hours […] It's like, 'What do we do now and wonder what 'J'*[teacher]* will want' […] No, it's just part and parcel, isn't it? (TA15, Fernleigh)

TA17 stated she liked class cover as long as she felt prepared from the pre-lesson discussion with the teacher.

HLTAs routinely covered PPA time at City but job descriptions indicated level 3 TAs could cover for short-term teacher absences and level 2 TAs could cover for a lesson. Level 2 cover appeared for emergencies only but HT4 suggested they would try to double up TAs if it was required. She added that if TAs were asked to cover classes teachers would plan something in consultation that they were comfortable with. TA27, the only level 2 TA interviewed, confirmed she did not cover but would have been fine if asked and this was the feeling of the TAs in general who were interviewed. Outlined in table 5.2 level 3s could be expected to cover for short-term absences but TA26 suggested it had occurred very regularly the previous academic year. It appeared that this had often been at short notice and often poorly communicated which was the cause of his tension not the class cover:

> You come in to try and do your TA role. It's one little group. You've got it in
> your mind what you're doing; you've got the resources for what you're doing,
> you've already got the entire class on your own now. It's very, very daunting,
> you don't know which class or what sometimes or you're then spending ten
> minutes trying to find the planning and get your head around what needs to
> be taught. (TA26, City)

Whole-classes could also be taken by external sports coaches and this was evident at St Michael's, St Mary's and City and external trainers were often accompanied by TAs.

5.3.2 Role merge

There were numerous examples of where the word 'teach' was used in relation to what TAs did. Understandable for HLTAs, TA1 noted:

> I teach the Thursday morning. (TA1, St Michael's)

She had become an HLTA in order to formalise a role she was often undertaking anyway.

TA14 commented:

> I take the same level group from each class and then teach them together.
> (TA14, Fernleigh)

HT3 identified:

> They're teaching groups. (HT3, Fernleigh)

Yet headteachers were keen to distinguish a difference in role between teachers and TAs. HT3 stressed:

> They are qualified TAs but they aren't teachers; that's no disrespect to them
> but there is a difference there. Their training was different to mine for a
> reason. (HT3, Fernleigh, p. 13)

However, HT3 had encouraged TA17 to undertake the dyslexia teacher's certificate, soon to undertake the schools' dyslexia assessments; a role previously undertaken by an external specialist teacher. HT2 indicated her dislike of the HLTA role as teachers spent years training to do their job. Although she felt her TAs were capable, she considered she would be doing a disservice to both teachers and TAs, particularly without funds to pay them. The role merge was apparent in the more professional way that TAs were now referred to. HT2 felt that a TA:

> is a really expensive and incredibly valuable resource and unless the teachers
> understand how to make effective use of TAs, unless the TAs understand
> what their job should look like what we're going to get is either the very old
> fashioned washing the paint pots, doing the wet knicker job or they're sitting
> by the children who are struggling or TAs inappropriately being asked to take
> on the role of a teacher and none of those are the right position to be in. Now
> the team that works within a school should be interchangeable, but people
> have got specific roles that are what their job is about and teachers need to

understand how to make good use of TAs and TAs need to understand how
valuable their role is and how they are supposed to be working. (HT2, St
Mary's)

TAs were aware there was a role difference, but it was not clearly articulated what that was, with idiosyncrasies in the different schoolsTA14 showed an acknowledgement of her more subordinate position where she was told what to do each week:

They are the teachers, they are trained to plan and they know what they've
got to cover. (TA14, Fernleigh)

However, TA8 was one of the TAs who appeared more conscious of a difference and suggested the children recognised this too, knowing who to go to for different issues. TA8 actually referred to role difference several times but her previous career as a nursery manager, where she had control over staff and a large number of children, perhaps highlighted her position in the school. Although headteachers had at times been keen to stress TAs were not teachers, it was sometimes difficult to distinguish what TAs did differently once a lesson was in progress. In addition, TAs were involved in tasks that could be viewed as outside the remit of a TA. TA26 had taken on the role of 'healthy school coordinator' tension evident when he expressed he did not think this was appropriate and he was also observed writing the associated policy. TA27 was afforded autonomy and independence in her role (discussed further in chapter eight) but her 1:1 work with children would have been a teacher's role in the past without increased deployment of TAs in the field of SEND. She was given respect and status by the SLT and this was witnessed during her observation where she developed her own timetable after consultation with the deputy-headteacher and took the lead when dealing with a child during a violent outburst with the deputy-headteacher taking a supporting position. In addition, TAs often took the lead on SEND provision which will be explored further in section 7.4.

5.4 Discussion

Accountability and intensification of teachers' roles as part of the labour process is discussed by Apple (1988) and Hargreaves (1994) (section 3.2.4). Hargreaves (1994) identifies increased professionalisation for teachers is a result of growing complexity with their roles whilst Apple (1988) suggests professionalism comes from increased responsibility; the above findings indicate this could now be applicable to TAs. TAs have leadership roles, work in partnership with teachers and TA colleagues and develop areas of expertise and they are often working beyond the expectations outlined in the *national agreement* (DfES, 2003) and which should be expected for their pay scales. Further professionalisation is in evidence with the increase in qualifications they have including degrees. However, their increase in qualifications and training provides evidence of their exploitation as these qualifications are often higher than the level they are employed at; their roles and responsibilities often relating to the children with the greatest need. The acknowledgement

that their jobs are demanding yet they are underpaid for the expectations placed on them further highlights their exploitation. TAs are well-qualified for the level they are employed at, often more so which was in greater evidence in the smaller school. The increase in qualifications since the DISS (Blatchford *et al*, 2012b) is apparent and there was no evidence of TAs working in the schools without qualifications. TAs had responsibility for curricular areas and their own interventions. They developed themselves with training and gained knowledge from their own research, sometimes in their own time which Ozga and Lawn (1988) suggest is common in the labour process of teaching. The notion they are semi-skilled workers (section 3.2.4) seems unfair as many have undergone considerable periods of training and further CPD and are often overqualified for their roles. The increase in teacher workloads, brought about through constant innovation, is postulated as intensification by Hargreaves (1994). The findings from this study demonstrate work intensification is now also evident in TA roles where longer-serving TAs can make comparisons with their earlier career. Apple (1988) indicates intensification for teachers has resulted in increased workloads as teachers attempted to complete all the required tasks and this is now evident for TAs. The change in terminology from classroom assistant to teaching assistant goes some way to endorse this intensification. A move towards an increased instructional role and away from an administrative one was well documented by longer-serving TAs. However, Hargreaves (1994) also notes that utilisation of the term professionalism helps lure teachers into a position that allows their exploitation. he findings from my research suggests this can be applied to TAs

Of particular relevance for TA professionalism is the development of knowledge. Giddens' (1976) notion of 'technical' knowledge or Foucault's (1980) reference to expertise and their association with power help to illuminate reasons behind the growing professionalisation of TAs. The government white paper *'The importance of teaching'* emphasised the need for the deepening of teacher subject knowledge, emphasising its value alongside the need for discipline expertise (DfE, 2010) and TAs although not mentioned, have also become involved in this development. TAs were considered to be more knowledgeable than teachers in certain areas, b-rought about through training and experience as well as opportunities for discussion with experts such as EPs. Foucault (1980) suggests discourse allows for patterns of behaviour to be normalised (section 3.3.5) and hence TA expertise in areas such as SEND has been accepted in schools over time. This knowledge affords them some power, evident in particular with TA27 deemed experienced and well-informed by the SLT and given authority and autonomy. However, TA27 indicated this was not fully accepted by all teachers and her role created tension for some. Foucault (1980) outlines how professions maintain their status through discourse not accessible to those outside, hence perhaps teachers felt threatened by TA27's increased knowledge and the power and autonomy this created at their expense. Perhaps they were resentful of the position she had been afforded in school, although, as a TA, having lesser status than them in the school hierarchy, she clearly had an element of

responsibility and control over children from their classes creating confusion over the usual status quo. Good relationships therefore are clearly needed in order to work in harmony rather than conflict and dialogue, with recognition of skill sets, is needed for the good of the school and children within.

Giddens (1984) develops the concept of structuration (section 3.3.2) and this is useful to explore relationships between teachers and TAs. Classrooms are socially constructed and occurrences within are brought about through consultation and negotiation. Rules exist as to how they operate but interpretation occurs on an individual level and 'duality of structure' interplays. TAs do not need to be just reactive, rather they have choices and teacher/TA interaction depends on action, made possible as both possess relevant knowledge relating to children, the curriculum and how a classroom operates. The classroom structure depends on human action and the power held by individuals to shape the structure of the classroom and its practices. In classrooms teachers have overall control with capacity to alter them (Shilling, 1992), yet TAs too have agency, brought about by their developing qualifications, knowledge and expertise; handed to them by headteachers and teachers in an attempt to reduce teacher workloads and on the whole it appears welcome.

Layder (1994) suggests trust is built up over time in relation to individual expertise, instigated through long periods of training that experts often have (section 3.3.5). However, for TAs there may not have been prolonged training but instead sustained, regular training and many had become well established in schools over time which allows trust to be developed. Corroboration was apparent with evidence of continued blurring of the boundaries between teachers and TAs as TAs were teaching. However, TAs are confident in their roles and a variety of reasons could exist for this. They appeared to possess the appropriate knowledge and capability to do what was asked of them. TAs are trusted and often considered the experts, taking the lead in a range of areas, sometimes more generically across the schools such as in interventions and SEND whilst sometimes more specifically such as forest schools. Tension was most in evidence regarding TAs teaching whole-classes and different in each school. Embraced by some headteachers and TAs yet not all; the implication is one of exploitation of a poorly paid workforce. In addition, perhaps the development of class teams creates greater consistency and stability and TAs are sometimes reticent to move year groups or work in unfamiliar territory. However, this should not be criticised as teachers would also be likely to express similar disquiet when asked to move. The development of class teams (section 8.2.1) has allowed TAs to access appropriate training alongside teachers for that class as well as allowing the acquisition of knowledge and skills for that age group through experience and working in partnership with teachers.

Labour process theory is also useful to examine the professionalisation of TAs with reference to the concept of deskilling (Braverman, 1974) (section 3.2.4) which is an integral component in the de-

professionalisation process for teachers. Professionalisation of TAs is inextricably linked to the de-professionalisation of teachers. The proletarianisation of teaching Ozga and Lawn (1988) suggest results in a loss of skill alongside reduction in autonomy, increased supervision and reskilling of specialists. The process of reskilling and deskilling discussed for teachers now includes the upskilling of TAs who develop expertise in intervention work and SEND which would previously have been a reskilling aspect of teacher work. In addition, Braverman (1974) suggests breaking down a production process into its constituent parts reduces costs and increases productivity; by making greater use of TAs in aspects of the school process, productivity is increases whilst savings are made. Using TAs to deliver interventions not only works to upskill them but as they are cheaper to employ helps schools balance budgets. Deskilling is a management decision and the SLT decide which courses and skills they wish to develop, controlling who has the skills. Deskilling in teachers' work Acker (1999) suggests is possible due to increasingly routine work with less opportunity for professional judgement. Although interventions are often standardised with routine formulaic delivery, suitable for less qualified staff such as TAs, for TAs they involve upskilling, a move away from less skilled administrative tasks. Deskilling of teachers could also apply to a reduction of curricular knowledge and other aspects of teacher work such as SEND, some of which is now undertaken by TAs. TAs taking whole-classes was a weekly practice in both St Michael's and City where the HLTA role allowed for PPA cover. Although there was evidently some working with the core[25] curriculum, it was often restricted to subjects where the TAs were considered to have appropriate knowledge hence HLTAs at St Michael's were qualified in forest schools and one held a degree in environmental sciences. HLTAs timetabled for whole-classes usually took the same subjects hence TA1 covered RE for which she was considered the expert. Galton and McBeath (2010) identified HLTAs feeling inadequately prepared for what they did but in contrast to their work, this did not appear the case in St Mary's and City. The use of external providers for sport in three of the schools again meant teachers were no longer teaching physical education (PE) and so the government intention of upskilling or reskilling teachers in relation to sport (DfE, 2019a) did not happen in reality. TAs were also quoted as feeling more knowledgeable in relation to SEND and this was evident through access to EPs and how they were utilised. Wilson and Bedford (2008) suggest teachers may feel threatened by the developing TA role but there was little evidence of this tension on the whole. An exception was TA27, although given status by the SLT, reported some reservation was apparent from teachers. However, she was relatively new to the school and perhaps needed to become recognised and respected for her skill set. Deskilling of teachers then runs parallel with the upskilling of TAs.

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[25] core curriculum often used to refer to numeracy and literacy

Whole-class cover created the most tension for TAs. Tension was in evidence particularly for TAs taking whole-classes who were not at the appropriate grade for this role. Job descriptions, identified in section 3.3.4 as a means of control could be used to TAs' advantage in relation to their exploitation regarding class cover but on the whole, this did not appear to happen and the flexible interpretation of whole-class cover was accepted. TAs acquiesced to requests to undertake short-term cover which enabled the smooth running of the class and avoided disruption for the children, calling upon characteristics associated with women's work which will be explored further in section 6.4.1. The surveillance culture Foucault (1977) portrays in a negative way did not appear to be the case when TAs were working independently with whole-classes where surveillance was viewed as positive and supportive.

5.5 Conclusion

The research indicates an increased professionalisation of the TA role through the intensification of their work and an increased expectation of what they do. TAs are leading others as well as leading learning whether in relation to small groups or taking whole-classes. In addition, TAs are now better qualified and often working in posts for which they hold higher qualifications than are required. TAs reported accessing training for their roles which was either from external providers or from more experienced colleagues. On the whole TAs felt knowledgeable and capable in their regular roles but this did not necessarily extend to areas outside of their usual work patterns. This gave them power and agency to shape their working conditions. De-professionalisation of teachers was in evidence as TAs often took the lead in certain areas. As TAs developed their skill levels and expertise teachers were arguably deskilled in relation to aspects of the curriculum when TAs or outside trainers taught specific curricular subjects or took responsibility for SEND. The exploitation of TAs appears possible because of the deep connections and loyalty that develop towards the school and children which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

6.0 Chapter Six: Work versus Non-work

6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues to examinethe work of TAs which was found to have similarities across the schools as well as individual idiosyncrasies. Much of TA work involves interventions and SEND, undertaken with varying degrees of autonomy, and that aspect will be examined in chapter seven. This chapter focuses on the pedagogical and non-pedagogical nature of TA roles and the intensification of their work. This involves their direct engagement with children, including behaviour management, as well as the administrative duties they engage with. Much of their work involves collaboration and an examination of working relationships allows reflection on the relationships of female TAs with male teachers. In addition, it explores the additional work TAs undertake without remuneration and the associated discussion follows. The formal side of TAs pastoral work is reported before presenting the results in relation to the non-work of TAs with particular emphasis on caring and mothering of not only the children, but the teachers too. The position of male TAs is considered in relation to work and non-work. The tension evident often draws on the association with women's work and female characteristics from which opportunities for exploitation arise.

6.2 Work

TA work incorporates pedagogical and administrative duties and includes not only the work undertaken for remuneration but also the additional unpaid work they do, often associated with women's work (see section 3.2.1). Working relationships are examined with attention given to the impact gender has and the tension this creates.

The hours TAs worked varied with 28 of the 46 TAs considering they were full-time employees. Nearly all the TAs at City indicated they were full-time whilst all the TAs at St Michael's were part-time. A full break down in each school can be seen in appendix eleven. In interviews it became apparent that TAs' hours had altered over the years and many had begun on part-time contracts with hours increasing as the needs of the school changed and an example is offered by TA15:

> I've worked various hours. When I first started nine years ago, the 15 hours
> for three hours every morning soon turned into every morning then a couple
> of afternoons. And then at one point, I was doing every morning and four
> afternoons. (TA15, Fernleigh)

TAs could be found as subject leads, taking whole-classes, supporting children with SEND both as part of a group and 1:1, general in-class support as well as taking interventions. Administrative roles tended to be secondary to their pedagogical employment. The focus in this chapter will be on the more generic aspect of their role as whole-class and intervention work is covered in chapters five and seven respectively.

6.2.1 Pedagogical role

The direct pedagogical support of children was an expectation in all job descriptions and was evident in fieldwork observations. TAs' knowledge of the children was extensive, including academic and personal information. TAs worked directly with children and could be found issuing out instructions, asking questions, demonstrating techniques and reinforcing class routines such as reminding them where to leave homework. They organised children as appropriate and throughout group work they reiterated the task, issued further instructions, asked questions, gave examples, helped with structure or answered questions as required. In addition, group work involved reminding children of work-related expectations such as writing the date on the top of work. TAs spent time in general conversation with children during the day which helped extend their vocabulary. Certain activities facilitated this better such as the breakfast club undertaken by TA15, the lunch-time club taken by TA27 and during free-flow[26] in reception with TA9 and TA27.

TAs in all schools used their initiative to support children and introduced a range of visual aids to learning. This involved using ICT such as an iPad or Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) to show children something or modelling[27] examples on a whiteboard or flipchart. TAs spent time demonstrating what was required which involved sounding out words to help with spelling and modelling numbers and letter formation to form cursive handwriting. TAs supported children by scribing ideas for them to help speed up their thinking. A range of numeracy support materials were also employed and TAs were witnessed using number lines, shapes and counters. In addition, TAs made use of the displays[28] in classrooms as well as showing children how to set their work out in their books.

TAs used questioning extensively to draw information from the children and regularly used strategies to help children work things out themselves such as using phonics in spellings as well as saying words carefully so children could hear the phonemes. When TA26 was asked for the number for that day's short date he suggested that the child went through the months to work it out. TAs encouraged children to support each other and TA1, TA8 and TA26, were observed doing this. Criticism was made in the DISS research (see section 2.5) regarding TA questioning hence Russell *et al* (2013) developed a guide to aid this which moves from lower order (*remembering, understanding and applying*) to more advanced questioning (*analysis, evaluation and creating*) in order to develop children's critical thinking. During the eight observations the exact wording of TA questions to children was often identified and they were regularly witnessed using questions which would qualify as lower order examples from this guide. Higher order questions were also noted for TA2,

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[26] free-flow operates in early years and allows children to move freely indoors and outdoors choosing activities as they wish
[27] modelling involves demonstrating how something is done
[28] primary schools in particular have displays on the classroom walls of useful information as well as celebrating children's work

TA8, TA14 and TA27. Interestingly, TAs at St Michael's had recently undertaken training on questioning as part of the *'Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants'* (Sharples *et al*, 2015) initiative being promoted by their LA so may have been aware of this specific advice but it is not known if the other TAs were. Questions relating to the highest category of creating were not evident in any example questions recorded in the data collection. TAs used questioning to feed in the steps required in a process and were observed giving children thinking time before stepping in with a further question or an answer. TAs were observed giving prompts to encourage ideas. A good example was TA2 who was working with children to design a witch's potion and she suggested children think of movement, smells and sounds as well as body parts to help develop their design. TAs worded questions making use of correct terminology alongside an explanation. TA15 referred to vertices as the 'pointy bits' and used both the term and description throughout her work with the children in relation to the properties of shapes.

TAs checked the work children did and advised on its accuracy at the time of completion and often asked children to read their work out loud. They examined work and with statements, questions, or physically drawing attention to something, helping the children self-correct. They marked work during lessons as well as after the lesson was complete. TA1 was witnessed directly advising children on strengths and areas for development and TAs were seen encouraging children to improve what they had done. TA2 and TA14 were observed after a spelling intervention and 1:1 reading activity respectively, giving focused feedback with next steps. TA2, TA8, TA14 and TA15 were involved in more formal assessment which was mainly in relation to intervention work.

TAs were sometimes not allocated to groups in the class and might circulate, using their initiative to help children or respond to questions and when observed working in lieu of a class teacher TAs did this a great deal. As TA9 worked in early years she too often circulated around the class responding to children as the need arose. Due to it being the start of a new academic year TA26 and TA28 were not assigned to groups for much of the day and moved round the room using their initiative to assist where they were needed. TA15 identified that she would usually gravitate to 'my little bunch' whilst TA11 had a usual group she went to who did not settle easily. TA3 and TA10 spoke of spotting those who needed assistance.

6.2.2 Behaviour management

As part of their pedagogical role TAs were involved in behaviour management and modelled behavioural expectations in support of or alongside teachers. TAs were seen supervising children outside classrooms in areas where issues could arise such as in the cloakrooms and they spoke of dealing with low level disruption which allowed teachers to continue delivering lesson content; TA11 suggested she knew who to watch. This was witnessed in all the TA fieldwork observations where TAs positioned themselves next to certain children or circled round the class watching what

children were doing, their presence, eye contact or visual signals keeping or getting children on task. TA26 commented:

> I know which children to try and keep calm; otherwise the whole lesson goes off. I know to pinpoint some of the boys on that side, some of the girls over there, just to keep them ticking over, because as soon as they lose focus, they're straight on harassing whoever's next to them, shouting stuff out, so it all starts falling apart. So [*teacher*] then just teaches and I keep them on track, because I know who's going to struggle with what. (TA26, City)

TA27 was observed working with the most challenging children so teachers were able to concentrate on the rest of the class and overall TAs were constantly engaged with keeping children on task. On the whole TAs felt children behaved relatively well for them although TA9 and TA10 indicated some were aware of the hierarchy and although rare, did not behave as well for non-teacher adults. TAs at Fernleigh indicated knowledge of suitable strategies and knew a consistent approach was important. A variety of strategies were observed in all the schools including positive reinforcement and positive punishment outlined by Doherty and Hughes, (2009). However, TAs suggested that higher up the school behaviour management was more challenging. TA17 said:

> I would say further down the school they've got far more respect for a TA than they have probably by the time they're in year six […] they're harder to rein back in at the moment. (TA17, Fernleigh)

City Academy appeared to have the most challenging children which was why TA27 was being trialled in a unique role, making use of prior experience. HT4 acknowledged there were a number of children with extremely difficult behaviour, unable to be in school full time. TA26 explained poor behaviour in the school had brought about an early transition for year five pupils and the year six team, himself included, had taken them on early in the previous summer term due to their challenging behaviour. TA26, a male TA, had become known in school for effectively dealing with poor behaviour and was regularly requested to deal with issues. Tension was evident as he was often called away from his class which annoyed him, although he felt that TAs doing this allowed teachers to carry on teaching and offered less disruption for the class as a whole. TA26 spoke of being injured and a violent incident with a year three child was witnessed during the observation of TA27. TA26 took it upon himself to play football outside at break-times and lunch-times as this was when many behavioural incidences occurred, often spilling into the classroom. He acknowledged that at break-times if no one was with them the children often got 'angry', easily 'exploding'.

6.2.3 Other work-related tasks

TAs reported involvement in other work-related tasks of a non-pedagogical nature and named activities such as classroom and resource preparation, photocopying and displays and these were seen during the fieldwork observations although HT3 commented:

> If you are using them for putting up displays and cleaning pots then they are
> not going to have an impact. (HT3, Fernleigh)

However, some TAs stated they rarely got involved in tasks such as displays although TA16 stated she had in the past; for TA17 she was more likely to be undertaking planning if there was some spare time. TA14 suggested displays would be the 'last priority'. During the observations TAs worked tirelessly, instinctively knowing what needed doing; proactively finding jobs from opening windows and mopping wet floors to watering plants and IT troubleshooting. They prepared resources, set up and tidied classrooms; using their initiative, always busy and much of what they did had not been discussed or prearranged with teachers. As an example, TA28 commented:

> There's always something I need to be doing. (TA28, City)

This included numerous tasks not specified as their role or written in job descriptions. TA9 was observed bringing fruit in after break and stated:

> It's not my role. I don't know who else would do it. (TA9, St Mary's)

TAs spoke of being involved in other duties which included accompanying children off-site on trips, door duty, first aid, running the school council, breakfast clubs, supervision outside at break-times and extra-curricular clubs after school and at lunch-time. Further examples were observed of the variety of responsibilities such as witnessing TA26 writing a school policy, which again caused some tension and a further example of exploitation. He recognised this was something he should not really be expected to do, and the intensification of TAs' roles has been outlined in section 5.4. St Michael's formalised what TA26 did in his unpaid time and utilised TAs at lunch-time because, as identified by TA26, this was often where issues occurred which interrupted learning time. HT1 stated:

> We asked TAs to work out on the yard because I wanted skilled staff at social
> times. (HT1, St Michael's)

Job descriptions indicated an expectation that TAs would be involved in pastoral roles. St Michael's outlined they could be called on to support emotional and social development. St Mary's identified an expectation for TAs to help children play co-operatively, resolve difficulties and raise self-esteem. Fernleigh described that TAs should encourage social interaction as well as take on personal and social care whilst City cited pastoral, social health and welfare needs. TA9 suggested the school ethos was about having a caring attitude to the emotional development of the children. Nurture (see section 2.6) was an important aspect of this provision and specifically mentioned by staff at St Michael's, and Fernleigh, where it was used for children who were deemed to need more focused support for behavioural or social issues. Breakfast clubs, run by TAs, were an aspect of this kind of support and mentioned at City and Fernleigh. At Fernleigh HT3 advised it offered:

Transition from the chaos and bedlam at home. (HT3, Fernleigh)

It had been borne from a realisation that some children:

Had a bag of crisps thrown at them in the car. (TA15, Fernleigh)

TA15 revealed that safeguarding issues had come to light during breakfast club which she had followed up appropriately. TA26 had offered support in the past in the form of art therapy which had been helpful for children. TAs' pastoral role identified as work on job descriptions is distinguished from the more generic caring side to their role discussed later in section 6.4.

6.2.4 Relationships with other adults

For TAs in schools, relationships with other adults are an important aspect of their roles as few work in isolation although autonomous working is evident and will be discussed in chapter seven. Job descriptions referred to working with others and all four job descriptions indicated TAs were required to feedback to teachers. Establishing professional relationships was outlined in some guise on all the job descriptions except the Level 2 at Fernleigh Academy. There was evidence of good relationships across schools in general as highlighted by HT2:

There is a very good working relationship between the TAs and the teachers
(HT2, St Mary's)

From the interviews there were very few examples of relationships being anything but 'good' and TAs spoke highly of the teachers they currently worked with. They suggested good relationships were about mutual support, respect, trust and being listened to; the latter three Wilson and Bedford (2008) had reported as skills required of TAs by teachers. TA15 indicated it was about being a confidante and this echoes Doherty (2004). Good relationships meant collaborative meetings where TAs' opinions were respected and the opportunity to offer honest feedback although TA8 suggested some TAs lacked confidence to share information with teachers. TA4 and TA14 noted teachers would consider their opinions and TA3 stated she could discuss lessons; if:

It went really well or perhaps it didn't but we have a good relationship. In fact, I couldn't do that with every teacher. (TA3, St Michael's)

Being shown appreciation featured for TA4 and TA11 who rated a simple 'thank you' highly as well as teachers undertaking more mundane classroom tasks such as photocopying. For TA28 good relationships increased his motivation to come to work. TA26 suggested it was about understanding each other and:

If you get along with that person, you both understand each other, you don't mind chipping in because you know you're going to get that back. (TA26, City)

For TA26 and TA28 it was about time spent together building up an understanding of what was needed which then meant less supervision was required. There was also evidence of teachers and

TAs connecting on a more personal level which was seen in the observations and an example witnessed was TA14 who asked after her teacher's sister who was in hospital. However, there was also evidence that good relationships may not always be possible, indicated by TA29 who stated:

> I'm lucky at the moment because the teacher, we get on. (TA29, City)

In addition, TA15 stated she would like to return to year six but only if the current male teacher moved. However past events could have contributed to this:

> Mr X leads the singers and I just sort of plod the tune, up until I bring the
> trombone. Then I can play that. But this Christmas, I was plodding this tune
> away. He says, 'Oh, Mrs TA15, stand up' he says 'I'll play.' I thought 'Right, get
> on with it then.'(TA15, Fernleigh)

However, on the whole TAs came across as feeling valued in line with Docherty (2014) and good working relationships could be as a result of the equality of status that seemed evident which was reported by Tarry and Cox (2014). There were few examples of when TAs felt they were treated as if they were in a subordinate position. TA8 feared this could happen the next academic year with her new pairing with an inexperienced male teacher although she clearly rated him:

> He's brilliant, super … he's so good in early years and key stage one, he's
> super (TA8, St Mary's)

She feared dealing with children's hygiene issues could become her sole responsibility, and this would clearly cause dissatisfaction, the tension evident due to gender.

> I don't want to become and wiper and swiper. (TA8, St Mary's)

Both male TAs from the study of 46 were interviewed and subtle differences in their responses could be attributed to their gender. TA28 suggested he might be asked to move furniture around school whilst TA26 had become known for sorting out behavioural issues in upper KS2; both of which could be presumed because they were male although this was not delineated by them. TA26 indicated:

> If there's a problem with a particular child then 'right, okay, TA26'll do it' …
> Once you get recognised for it then you're stuck with it kind of thing. But then
> it becomes part of your role and it's difficult. And you can't say no if
> someone's struggling. (TA26, City)

TAs worked with cover[29] teachers and offered continuity for children if their regular teacher was absent. HT1 indicated TAs would be the school adult working alongside external sports' coach and TA26 was observed discussing key individuals with an external trainer. Observations undertaken for TA8, TA9, TA27 and TA28, saw them working with a cover teacher, sharing knowledge regarding

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[29] cover teachers are not the regular class teacher; they could be supply teachers if the regular teacher is off sick or a teacher used frequently to cover PPA

children's capabilities, class routines and the location of resources. Children were more likely to gravitate to the TAs on these occasions; by example children with TA8 were observed going to her to 'complain', bypassing the regular cover teacher. HT4 indicated the TAs were often a constant feature when PPA cover was being implemented, important to have the regular TA in class who:

> Knows the children, has been in there all week, knows who's having a good week, whose cat's just died, whose mum's just gone on holiday and not coming back for 2 days and they're feeling a bit wobbly, who else is giddy as a kipper. (HT2, St Mary's)

There was indication that relationships with other TAs were respectful, supportive and friendly. There was talk of friendship by TA29 and the enjoyment of social events by TA1 and TA10. For HT2, good relationships meant TAs would be more involved in collaborative planning. TA15 suggested more experienced TAs would help less experienced ones and TA16 referred to another supportive TA as 'brilliant'. TA2 suggested limited space and resources needed good relationships, with consideration for others' needs being vital for effective working. On the day of TA9's observation she went out for lunch with TA10 and they had been doing this for many years. TA27 offered help to other TAs with classroom displays and TA26 indicated he would support colleagues if they were struggling. Also demonstrating consideration for colleagues, TA26 did not request a specific role during performance management at the end of the previous academic year as he planned to leave at some stage and did not want to deprive someone of a role they may have wanted. TAs encouraged each other to go home at the end of the day rather than putting in unpaid hours. Friendly exchanges were observed between TAs and between TAs and other staff in school such as caretakers, secretaries, midday supervisors and kitchen staff. As with their teachers, conversations were not always about work and exchanges relating to their personal lives were observed between TAs before school, at break and at lunch-time. TA4 discussed when she had swapped role with another TA who was struggling to cope with the child she was supporting. There was little to indicate relationships were anything but positive although TA3 suggested she was wary of offering to cover classes as the other TAs did not like it as identified in section 5.3.1.

Both TA1 and TA29 occupied leadership roles. When TA1 took on the role as TA manager, she stated she felt:

> A bit funny at first because I've been here so long and I'm friends with them out of the school. Socially, we're friends. That was quite tricky. We've had some people, some TAs who are quite strong characters. I didn't think I was going to be able to manage them, so that was awkward but yes, we've got along. (TA1, St Michael's)

However over time, with support from the head, this was now accepted although she commented:

> They make a joke of it and take the mickey out of me. (TA1, St Michael's)

TA1 indicated that TAs came to her with smaller concerns but approached the headteacher with larger issues where TA1 did not have the authority to make the decisions. During the fieldwork observation she was witnessed undertaking her leadership role as she discussed timetabling with a TA as well as updating another who had missed the morning briefing. As she led the class for the day, she was regularly observed informing her TA as to lesson content and directed her during the session. There appeared more conflict at City Academy in relation to HLTAs as managers and HT4 was dealing with a system she had inherited on taking the headship a few months previously. One HLTA did not want to line manage others and the head felt another did not have the skills to do so, clearly creating a tension that the HLTA job description carried this expectation although this was not the original remit in the HLTA standards (TDA, 2007a).

6.2.5 The additional unpaid work TAs do

Questionnaires revealed TAs are contracted in terms of hours per week, paid an hourly rate, yet interviews and observations revealed a considerable amount of unpaid overtime was undertaken within their roles. This was witnessed during the fieldwork where TAs came in early, worked over their lunchbreak and stayed late. On the day they were shadowed, seven out of eight TAs either arrived early or stayed later than their contracted hours and those with more than a half hour lunchbreak were observed doing extra unpaid work. This was also acknowledged by headteachers:

> They certainly do more than they're paid for […] TA7 does loads of extra stuff for the school play. TA2 does loads; TA1 and TA3 do lots and lots with the outdoor area and water the plants. We still have TA4 who goes for *[the]* netball team. (HT1, St Michael's)

HT3 considered that the TAs were doing more than their contracted hours:

> Without a shadow of the doubt. (HT3, Fernleigh)

However although HT4 acknowledged TAs came in early to miss traffic she felt not all started before their contracted hours. St Michael's was the school where this was observed the least as the part-time staff finished earlier than the children which encouraged them to go home:

> But it is more of a culture of I work these hours […] If you finish at 12:00, you don't go then and stay till 3:00. (HT1, St Michael's)

However TA4 reported this meant she felt 'awful sometimes' because she could be 'halfway through an activity'. TA1 stated she had stayed late in the past but was less willing to do so now as she was:

> Just older and wiser. I think it will get done tomorrow. If I don't do it, somebody else will. (TA1, St Michael's)

However in her HLTA capacity, TA1 admitted going into class early, as a teacher would, in order to set up. HT1 was cited as reminding TAs to go home, whilst at Fernleigh TA15 said her teacher often told her as well as TAs prompting each other.

TAs readily justified why they worked additional hours. Most were now paid to come into school before the children did but TA9 came in earlier to avoid the traffic whilst others came earlier because they had work to do. For TA27 this was usually an hour earlier. Many stayed later in order to tidy up, get ready for the next day or prepare resources. They could stay in order to discuss progress or discuss the next day; TA8 stayed as she took pride in what she did, wanting the classroom to be a well-organised successful learning environment. The time varied significantly between the TAs ranging from up to twenty minutes for TA3 and TA17 to an hour for TA10 and TA11, although TA11 often stayed as her child was in clubs after school. TA29 commented she had stayed two hours extra recently. TAs ended up doing additional work at lunch-times:

> You'll run over because things need filing away and sorting out, then
> something might need getting out for the next lesson. You don't just walk
> away from it. (TA10, St Mary's)

TA26 and TA27 suggested there was no real expectation that they undertook additional hours but they were expected to be effective in their jobs which TA26 felt needed additional time. TAs undertook considerable planning in their own time, discussed in section 7.4. Lunch-time was also a time to debrief the morning or undertake additional activities and much was in TAs unpaid time. TA8 was observed testing a child, alongside her teacher, assessing suitability for an intervention and TA9 listened to additional readers, justifying this as they would not be heard otherwise. The tension this created was recognised and TA9 indicated:

> You're not getting paid for it; I mean other people think you are mad. (TA9, St
> Mary's)

There was an element of justification at times if they did *not* do additional hours. TA11 suggested it was not an issue if she did not attend (unpaid) at staff meetings although usually did and TA14 justified her non-attendance was because her own children would be home from school. TA9 felt there was an expectation to attend staff meetings even though they were not paid and she commented she might not stay very late if she had an appointment. TA17 defended taking a full hour at lunch now as she went home to her new dog but added she now came in early and left later. TAs were very aware of how much teachers did outside of contact hours which seemed to instigate their willingness to help and discussion of how hard their teachers worked was raised by TA8 and TA9; the culture of care for children extended out to their teachers.

On the whole TAs did not view the unpaid work in a negative way and TA8 did not feel 'put upon' but there were a few exceptions with valid reasons and tension evidenced in their subtle awareness

of their exploitation when too great an expectation was placed on them. TA4 sometimes felt rushed to get her own lunch in the allocated time. She stated:

> We don't come upstairs until 12:05, 12:10. They want you outside half-past, and I think at the very beginning they caused a lot of friction because, for example, certain times of the year we go swimming, and I don't get back until 12:20, and the rest are expecting to go out at half-past. I'm like, 'Hang on a minute; I've not had my dinner.' (TA4, St Michael's)

TA26 gave considerable extra time because of football but then objected to how much extra time he needed above allocation in order to run the lunch-time club meaning he would miss his own lunch. The issue was about an expectation he would do this rather than about his usual willingness to freely give up his additional time. TA26 objected to the additional work he did on account of some TAs not working as hard as he did; their lack of engagement with unpaid overtime being the issue not the fact that he did it. He did sometimes feel taken advantage of but on the whole he was a believer in:

> If you don't do more than you need to then you don't get back more than what you expect. (TA26, City)

TA16 also felt aggrieved when there was a discussion about her hours:

> There was a quibble that they were paying me for half-an-hour more than I was actually here with the children, and that didn't go down very well with me, because all the years here, I used to come in at 8 o'clock and still be here at 5 o'clock, but nobody ever said 'What are you doing in at 8 o'clock?' and 'What are you going home at 5 o'clock?' But, they were quibbling about half an hour, when actually, I was doing more and they got it wrong, and I just thought it was a bit sad after all the years. I actually brought that up and said 'What about all the planning?'(TA16, Fernleigh)

TA29 sometimes objected to the additional work she did but did it because:

> I enjoy my job. I enjoy working with children. I enjoy the staff. (TA29, City)

When asked if she would still do the additional work without the good relationship that she currently had with her class teacher she stated:

> I probably would because I'm not doing it for her. (TA29, City)

The additional hours TAs give to staff meetings will be discussed further in chapter eight.

Most of the additional unpaid hours TAs did were related to how they felt about their jobs; tension created from a need to be professional but not having sufficient allocated time to do what was expected or needed. Being treated with respect came across as a motivator for TAs in St Michael's and also mentioned by TA16. TA16 considered her personality made her 'go over and beyond' whilst TA14 wanted to 'do a good job'. There was reference to job satisfaction as a reason for doing additional hours:

> I take pride in what I do… I like what I do. (TA8, St Mary's)

> I love my job. (TA2, St Michaels)

TA27 spoke of enjoying what she did and of being proud of her work. TA28 specified that this was the first job where he felt he had a good work/life balance as he did not take anything home. However TAs did also mention job satisfaction could be affected negatively and an example for TA8 when she did not know what was happening. It was also reflected in discussions regarding school restructures as well as feelings of unjustness when comparing their commitment to that of others which has been outlined earlier in this section.

6.3 Work - discussion

TAs, introduced into schools in such large numbers, were expected to help reduce the workload of teachers, but teaching unions are again reporting excessive workloads (NEU, (2018), a point acknowledged by the government (DfE, 2019b). Teacher contracts allow for time outside of contact hours yet hourly paid TAs have become entrenched in the same culture of long hours prevalent in schools; this extension has created tension for them. The results suggest TAs are intrinsically motivated, driven to work longer hours than should be expected out of love for the children and loyalty to colleagues and the school, outlined in section 6.2.5. Many began in the schools initially as volunteers, already embedding themselves in an ethos of unpaid work. The guilt they appear to exhibit when they could or did not do more is similar, arguably, to the guilt expressed by teachers who identify feelings of inadequacy in the jobs (Nias, 1997; Galton and McBeath, 2002; Loh and Liew, 2016). Hargreaves (1994) expresses guilt as endemic of the teaching profession; the research presented in this chapter demonstrates this must also be associated with TAs. Teachers, Hargreaves (1994) reasons, felt guilty as there was always something to think about, always something to do and the notion of being busy was certainly a sentiment expressed by the TAs. An attentiveness to care Hargreaves (1994) maintains is what drives teacher guilt and to this should be added TA guilt which was in evidence for TAs most noticeably in their willingness or availability to work beyond contracted hours in order to fulfil their roles and support children and teachers.

The intensification of their role and increased professionalisation outlined in section 5.4 links strongly to the commitment of TAs and the unpaid hours they do. This additional work that many of the female TAs undertook could also be seen as a natural extension of their role as women, who have long been expected to produce much unpaid labour in their domestic roles in the home (section 3.2). In addition, the fact that TAs appear to care so deeply about the children enables them to be exploited; a point Acker (1999) raises in her study of teachers' work (section 3.2.2). Isenbarger and Zembylas (2006) suggest teachers' caring operates in many guises and this was observed with the TAs where they exhibited 'pedagogical caring' in relation to academic achievement as well as 'moral caring' in the explanation of values as well as 'cultural caring' where

they reinforced class routines. The necessity for TAs care was particularly required when TAs were supporting cover teachers as the children gravitated to the TA, perhaps because they were familiar and therefore seen as more approachable but adding to the pressure to take greater responsibility in this role. Edmond and Price (2009) indicate that teachers no longer had time to take on the pastoral care of children and it is a common role for TAs (section 2.6) and this was also the case outlined earlier (section 6.2.3), very much a role for the TA. In addition, they are increasingly taking responsibility for areas outside of job descriptions and this is becoming the norm. The TA role as originally envisaged in the *national agreement* (DfES, 2003) was not recognisable and intensification (section 3.2.4) of TA work was clear. Already referred to in section 5.4 with its links to professionalisation, TAs roles have developed considerably since first inception and intensification, discussed by Apple (1988) or Hargreaves (1994) is now associated with TAs too. TAs are now time pressured like teachers, complaining of missing lunch and increased work-loads including accountability measures such as record keeping and planning. However, unlike teachers there can be no pretence that the intensification is contracted as TAs are hourly paid.

Teacher- TA relationships were important to help promote TA agency and the extent to which they could do this dependent on the teachers with whom they worked; TAs reported being treated with respect and equity. An analysis of teacher-TA relationships involves examining the relationship between autonomy and dependence between the actors. Giddens (1984) considers the relationship between actors is fluid, needing reciprocity between them and the resources they are able to manipulate. This was seen in the way teachers and TAs interacted, teachers not always taking the lead; consulting with TAs and affording them some power, often relying on TAs' knowledge in relation to the children with whom they worked most closely. Standard practices had been agreed in classrooms and teachers and TAs knew the expectations of the working week. TAs were observed as partners but at any stage teacher or TA agency could alter this balance. However, it was clear that classroom negotiations occurred quickly and even the TAs at City, who were observed at the start of the academic year, were settled and already operating from an established position. However it has to be acknowledged that the teacher who leads the class has overall responsibility and any position TAs have in that class is one borne from negotiation where they start from a lesser position of power. Power, Foucault suggests, is embedded in society, ingrained in social connections and operates through practice (Pylypa, 1998) and the position and status of TAs can be negotiated through classroom relationships and the practices of the classroom and the school. Classroom routines are usually accepted and normalised and TAs are usually willing to initiate self-control and conform but tension occurred when TAs felt they were not treated fairly or with respect and although unusual created animosity and a feeling of unjustness.

The obvious link to the socially constructed roles expected of men and women was apparent. Outlined in section 3.2.2 there is an expectation that men in schools exhibit more masculine traits whilst women are expected to adopt caring, nurturing and mothering roles. Although gender relationships had not been identified originally as a particular area of focus the impact of gender did arise. Only one TA shadowed worked with a male teacher but that was one of the male TAs so there were no direct observations where the gender of teacher and TA was different. Gender did feature negatively in relation to male teachers and the perceived injustice for how TA15 was treated by a male teacher impacted on her willingness to return to work alongside him. TA15 gave a sense that male teachers were more likely to reinforce the hierarchy highlighted in how she reported she was treated. The fear indicated by TA8 that she might be expected to take on more stereotypical female roles, reinforced the imbalance of power by calling on female characteristics (section 3.2.1). Should this emerge it would serve to emphasise the gendered stereotypes that can exist although this was an anxiety rather than the reality (section 6.2.4). There was however recognition that she had limited power in relation to this; out of her control which placed her in a subordinate position which was something she did not currently feel.

There was evidence of TA26 taking on stereotypical roles such as with behaviour and football but he did not attempt to distance himself from female aspects associated with his role (section 3.2.1) and his caring side was evident and referred to too. However, Skelton (2000) found male teachers often exerted their masculinity through football and this was definitely applicable to TA26. This was evident in the role he had assigned himself with regard to the boys and football at break-times, but also in the role he had been assigned by others regarding behaviour. Skelton (1997) suggests female teachers are seen as authority figures unlike other female adults and with it they are given respect and de-gendered in the eyes of boys, less likely to misbehave. However female teachers at City (section 6.2.2) appeared to have elevated TA26 into an authority position to deal with difficult children, although this was not specifically stated as boys. An application of the 'glass elevator' effect, although without a physical job promotion with associated remuneration, TA26 had been elevated by female teachers which may well have increased his status as a TA with regards to the children too.

The subtle shifts in power relating to others created tension for TAs and areas of uncertainty and indicated that different teachers had the capacity to take away TA agency and replace it with greater control and less autonomy. These concepts are explored further in chapter seven.

6.4 Non-work

There was much evidence of the TAs undertaking examples of non-work (section 3.3), traditionally associated with mothers and their role in the home and connected to their relationships with children; often accounted for their willingness to work unpaid hours. This section illustrates the

mothering role adopted by the TAs in relation to the children and offers insight into the motivation behind their work. The discussion which follows will elaborate on the association of their role as women's work and its links to emotional labour. In addition, it examines male TAs working in a role that aligns more closely with women's work and how they still adopt the characteristics of care.

6.4.1 The 'mothering' side of TA relationships with children

Much of the TAs' work involved children and this was reflected in job descriptions, discussed in the interviews and observed in practice. Both TA29 and TA8 specifically stated they preferred working with children to other aspects of their jobs. The City Academy and St Michael's HLTA job descriptions indicated an expectation to establish good relationships with children; the latter probably stems from a link to standard one of the HLTA standards (TDA, 2007a). Other TA job descriptions used language such as 'help', 'care' and 'support'. Children appeared to like their TAs and enjoyed chatting with them, as evidenced by numerous examples in the field notes. Children often approached TAs at the start of the day to share news and when TAs were outside at break-times children gravitated to them. TA1 suggested:

> Playtime is a time to feel that small hand in mine or listening interestedly to those children who want to sit and chat (TA1, St Michael's)

TA10 stated:

> I always take the time to listen [...] just watching the dance in the playground that they've put together shows I'm interested in what they're doing. (TA10, St Mary's)

TA2 undertook lunch-time duties and acknowledged children wanted to play with her 'all the time' which was also witnessed. Generic conversations were observed at the end of the day as children were getting ready to go home. Across the schools TAs greeted children with 'good morning' and said 'goodbye' at the end of the day. Extra-curricular clubs, witnessed at City were popular and provided ample opportunities for TAs to chat as did breakfast club at Fernleigh. TAs were familiar with the children in their care, taking time to make personal connections and children shared information with them as they began school in the morning. Children demonstrated they liked their TAs such as when a child drew a picture for TA14 during an inside lunch-time. In all schools the children appeared to trust their TAs; comfortable to entrust them with personal possessions or by telling them their problems. By example TA10 spoke of children confiding in her:

> One of the year four boys - 'Could I have a word with you about a relationship problem?' I went, 'Oh, okay', and it was just another girl in the class; I just felt it was nice that he could come and chat to me about it. (TA3, St Mary's)

TAs were observed speaking to the children with affection. For example TA8 used the term 'sweetheart' when addressing one of the children she worked with and there were examples of humour and jokes. TA4 suggested:

I can have a laugh with all the children, but *[be]* quite strict. (TA4, St
Michael's)

TA26, the only male TA observed for a full day in the study, often undertook a more masculine role outlined earlier in section 6.2.2 but felt care was an integral part of his role:

The children know they can come to me about anything and I am there
to care, help and assist them. (TA26, City)

TAs helped the children navigate the school day and their caring nature was seen in many ways from filling water bottles in hot weather, sorting out conflicts, locating lost items, supporting them through social times and helping them develop confidence and resilience; as would be expected, not just from mothers but fathers too. The academic year following the observation, TA15 moved to year six and became responsible for the menstruation talk to the year six girls where she assured them they should locate her if needed. In her eyes this was her responsibility, which she appeared to relish, as one of the class teachers was male, the other a young female without children. She felt she reassured them and confidently stated the girls were more likely to talk to her than their own mothers.

TAs modelled social expectations such as manners and constantly offered praise for achievement which was both generic such as 'good girl' (TA8) as well as often specifically in relation to learning such as 'that was a lovely read and you were fluent' (TA14). TAs often formally held first aid qualifications but were also observed offering sympathy, suggestions or support when children were unwell or had sustained minor injuries before school, break-time or lunch-time. For a more serious injury TA26 was witnessed checking the child as the day progressed. In addition, TAs confirmed children had washed their hands before lunch and after going to the toilet or had cleaned their teeth after breakfast club. Some of the observation days were hot and TAs reminded children to apply sun cream as well as making sure they had water. For forest school TA1 ensured the children had hats and made use of shade. The examples above would undoubtedly be characteristics of the role of parent which in school time are undertaken by TAs.

In class TAs played a crucial role in helping children develop relationships with each other and there were examples described in interviews as well as observed where TAs helped children develop empathy and collaboration. They appreciated that teachers were busy and they could be an extra pair of eyes watching out for children who needed support. TAs also undertook a nurturing role, helping children to develop socialisation strategies. For example TA27 saw her current role of helping children with challenging behaviour as vital to help them self-regulate. She stated:

My passion is helping the children overcome barriers to be able to live a life
that is very much the same as their peer groups, otherwise, why should they

be at a disadvantage? Why should they not have the same opportunities?
(TA27, City)

In class support saw TAs encouraging social skills such as turn taking and sharing. TA27 was observed supporting a reception child with autism and showed great patience and dedication. Receiving very little interaction from the child she chatted and praised his actions all morning and responded to his needs. When he began drinking from the water tray she rushed to get him a drink, checked for spare clothes when he got wet and fed him at lunch-time. She showed great affection towards him, giving him cuddles and was visibly thrilled when the child finally smiled at her. TA15 was also observed feeding a reception child at lunch-time. TAs were also observed helping keep children safe in the classroom, playground and wider environment. Examples included TAs reminding children to keep all four chair legs on the floor and tidying up coats on the floor that were a trip hazard. In addition, specific safety reminders were issued during forest school at St Michael's as well as the climbing rules on the equipment in their playground. TAs positioned themselves well when on playground duty, so they had a good vantage point. TA2 took two children out of school onto the lane and ensured she briefed them in relation to safety.

6.5 Non-work discussion

Section 3.2 emphasises the nature of non-work closely aligning itself with domestic and family roles and this section will discuss in more detail the caring and nurturing aspect of TA work and the extent to which they are employed in emotional labour. The caring, motherly role, outlined in section 3.2.2, once the responsibility of teachers, has now been extended to TAs and this section will expand the discussion around this expectation of women's work. The results indicate that the TA occupation appears to make use of characteristics associated with mothering not only with the children but in relation to the teachers themselves. TAs work tirelessly in support of their teachers, taking on a nurturing and caring role there too; taking pride in the classroom domain and working to help make the busy lives of teachers easier. Should TAs not have particularly good relationships with teachers their commitment still existed due to their desire to support the children. The TAs gained enormous satisfaction from their work with children but for many TAs it was also about supporting their overworked teachers and helping reduce workloads and stress for them. The emotional support offered by teacher colleagues, Kinman *et al* (2011) found helps reduce emotional strain and improve job satisfaction. The above data suggest this is a role taken by TAs too, their presence as another adult in the room gave teachers support not just physically but emotionally too; someone to share the burden of the demands of the job. TAs in this study were certainly not motivated by extrinsic monetary rewards and stated as such and TA pay is low, as is often associated with women's work (section 3.2.1). However, competition in the work-force can also keep pay scales down and headteachers never struggled for applicants for the role of TA, many of whom were over qualified for their jobs. The job of TA is a popular and attractive one because it

works so well for mothers caring for their family. At 50%, a smaller percentage than Roffey-Barentsen and Watt (2014) found, the job had directly supported their role as mothers; working alongside the care of their own children who were also at the school. However, many of them continued at their schools after their own children had grown up and left and could fall into the category of workers describes as 'stickers' by Burchell and Rubery (1994) usually a little older, female and content with their jobs. Their job satisfaction was heavily associated with the pleasure that they found in working with children, an indicator of their intrinsic motivation and a key feature of their work. There were minor tensions evident when TAs felt exploited but this was infrequent and on the whole, although exploitation was in evidence through the link between non-work's association with the domestic and family labour, this was accepted by the TAs as they enjoyed their jobs. Female TAs were happy to undertake 'women's work' alongside other women where they perceived they were being treated fairly and not exploited for their female characteristics. Aspects associated with mothers also allowed TAs such as TA15, opportunities to carve out a niche and utilise their motherly characteristics to their advantage, assigning them subtle levels of power and giving them agency. Gender sometimes allowing opportunity to use female characteristics to their advantage, having a positive impact on status and their power. The demographics show very few of the participants were men or under 36 (see appendix eleven) possibly identifying the role is less attractive to these groups. The notion that women use their mothering skills in this role aligns with Woolhouse's (2015) work on SENCos who tended to be female, teaching for some time who considered being a SENCo would not be attractive to men or younger teachers. This prejudice could also have dissuaded people from undertaking this position. However, much of the existing literature refers to women in teaching roles exhibiting mothering and caring traits and female TAs have clearly adopted this too.

Emotional labour is also associated with female professions and teaching is a profession that requires and values a high investment of emotional labour (section 3.2.3). The findings in this research suggest this should be extended to TAs including male TAs. Having similar contact with children as teachers, TAs are required to invest considerable emotional engagement in such matters as lesson preparation and behaviour management for which they are sometimes taking the lead; the tension created by this expectation can take its toll. It could be argued TAs invest more emotional labour than teachers as some of the female TAs report it is more challenging for them to deal with troublesome behaviour. Children do not behave as well for them as they do for teachers resonating earlier research by Williams and O'Connor (2012). At times the merging of the non-work role with TAs' work role allows for exploitation of their goodwill to work extra unpaid hours or undertake duties that should not be the remit of TAs. Surface and deep acting, a key component of emotional labour, was also evident in the TAs roles. TAs did the job from a desire to care for and nurture the children and therefore fully embraced what was required in order to do this well. They

readily brought into the organisational policies and practices, following the guidelines on behaviour outlined in job descriptions and school rules and deep acting was the norm for day to day work. However, there was also evidence of surface acting with the children which was used to express disappointment in exaggerated ways to help the children learn social norms reflecting moral and cultural caring (section 6.3) Hochschild (1983) suggested surface acting is likely to take an emotional toll but the requirements in school is not dissimilar to the role taken by parents and its use a fundamental aspect of helping children learn the social rules required to navigate life and so the impact must be reduced.

It had been hoped the two male TAs would volunteer for greater involvement in the research in order to further diversify the data and both agreed to interview whilst TA26 agreed to be shadowed. The literature suggests (section 3.2.1) tension exists for men employed in traditional female roles but the two male TAs appeared to rationalise their roles albeit in different ways. TA26 appeared to exhibit traditional masculine characteristics. Corroborating Skelton's (2003) work with male trainee teachers and perceptions of men teachers (section 3.2.2) as well as Woolhouse's (2015) indication that male teachers undertake disciplinary roles, TA26 was involved as an enforcer of discipline and was concerned with the perception of others regarding his work. He presented as authoritative and with it accessed power that can be associated with masculinity for some men. However, although in year six, he exhibited similarities to the male trainees working in KS1; emphasising the caring aspect of his role, he asserted his credentials to work in a traditionally female environment. However, TA28, preferring to work with younger children although recently moved to year four, presented in interview as gentler, less dominant. Perhaps he mirrored the male trainees who chose to work with younger children; comfortable with his masculinity and accepting of how he may be perceived. He too, regularly referred to helping the children, clearly believing this was a fundamental aspect of his role TA26 also affirmed his masculinity through football. Children at City, as Skelton (2000) found, often had fights because of football and his presence prevented this. Connell (1983) suggests football is a mechanism by which men can uphold their masculinity and affords them power. TA26's association with football perhaps raised his status in the eyes of the boys and this positioning helped explain his success in dealing with behavioural issues.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined aspects of TA work in relation to the support they offer to children, teachers and the school. The intensification of their role was apparent; like teachers, often working longer hours in order to fulfil the needs of the job; the guilt endemic for teachers has evidently spread to TAs. At times this created tension when TAs felt exploited but their commitment continued out of loyalty to the children and their teachers. TA27 worked in a unique role, afforded agency and status by the SLT which not all teachers appeared comfortable with creating tension in

her position in the school. TAs reported good relationships with their teachers where standard working practices were negotiated and embedded. TA agency was evident and power afforded to them as teachers' reliance on them in a range of ways was evident. Collaboration between female TAs and male teachers showed the potential for a hierarchical relationship calling on the perceived natural characteristics associated with women which created tension and had the potential to place the TAs in a lesser position. However, on the whole teacher-TA relationships were rewarding and fulfilling.

TA work is often assumed to be driven by their mothering instinct, incorporated into women's work which creates tension as this is easily exploited and accounts for the unpaid hours. Their work can be seen as an extension of their domestic roles and 50% of the TAs had been connected to their schools through their own children. TAs are heavily involved in the pastoral care for the children including the formal capacity such as nurture groups. The naturally associated characteristics of women and care were utilised throughout their days. Yet, this does not exclude the male TAs who had different motivators but still clearly cared deeply about the children and in so doing identify their fit into a predominately female workforce which could undoubtedly cause tension. TA26 exhibited male characteristics, played out through football, which helped elevate his position amongst female teachers and children and developed his power and authority to deal with behavioural issues. Overall, TAs are intrinsically motivated by a desire to care for the children and their teachers and TAs undertake roles outside of the expected remit out of their deep feelings for the organisation. Emotional labour is a component of their work, alongside teachers, but deep acting is the norm as TA work is driven by the desire to help children. Work and non-work it appears are inextricably linked for TAs and how TA work is controlled alongside the autonomy they can fashion from their expertise will be discussed in the next chapter.

7.0 Chapter Seven: Control versus Autonomy

7.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the extent to which TAs are monitored during their work and explores where control and autonomy are in evidence. The chapter presents first the formal mechanisms of control apparent in job descriptions, performance management, observations and timetabling. Discussion follows each of these subsections in order to ensure key points maintain prominence. A final overall discussion relating to control follows showing the clear links to a culture of surveillance and power. In contrast the chapter also offers findings and discussion into how TAs afford autonomy in their work. A combined discussion is also included as agency has particular prominence for both. At times their autonomous working also added to the tension linked with the de-professionalisation of teachers which has been covered in chapter five.

7.2 The evidence of control

7.2.1 Job descriptions - findings

Job descriptions, (see section 2.7) setting out role requirements, should be an expectation for employees, yet are arguably a means of control and one of the layers that operates in schools. The findings show each school had TA job descriptions identifying the main duties expected. Job descriptions were requested from headteachers and were in various formats (see table 7.1) with

School	format	LA or school specific	Named job descriptions	Box for signature and date	Date of creation
St Michael's	Hard copy	LA	no	Yes (TA) No (HLTA)	Yes (TA) No (HLTA)
St Mary's	Hard copy	LA	no	no	no
Fernleigh	Hard copy	LA	yes	no	no
City Academy	Electronic	school	yes	yes	no

Table 7.1: Characteristics of job descriptions

St Mary's and St Michael's appearing outdated, evident through dates or they looked old fashioned in style. Fernleigh's was the most dissimilar because their LA used the same format for jobs under their control; albeit Fernleigh was now an academy. On the whole job descriptions had similar content, although some had more detail than others but anonymity does not allow further illumination. All schools, except City, included a sentence which suggested post holders could be asked to do other duties not mentioned yet deemed appropriate for their level. All of City's, as well as St Michael's HLTA job description, still followed the format suggested by DfEE (2000). In addition, an earlier expectation that schools would develop their own using guidelines provided by DfEE, (2000) was not in evidence in any school. HLTA job descriptions identified line management as a potential responsibility and this was the reality where these posts existed. Neither academy had deviated from the LA job description although City had added the school logo and removed the LA name. Compliance with LA guidelines became clearer when explored further in interview.

Job descriptions were discussed with TAs and headteachers, the latter's perspectives will be examined first. HT1, HT3 and HT4 indicated they had little autonomy over job descriptions and attempts to adapt them appeared to be a difficult process. Headteachers gave the impression the effort required was not warranted, evidencing the control being exerted from outside influences. HT1 suggested:

> We would perhaps alter it, but we would then have to send it back to HR[30] for
> them to approve it because obviously we can't ask somebody to do a job that
> is not commensurate with the wages. You can't ask them to do level 3
> activities if we're only paying a level 2 salary. (HT1, St Michael's)

This was particularly pertinent for St Michael's where there was most evidence of TAs' consciousness of job descriptions. A school restructure around four years previously had reduced all TA roles to level 2 requiring all TAs to reapply for their jobs. HT1 described it as a 'bruising process' whilst TA4 referred to it as when the school had to 'demote us.' Schools also needed to deal with internal processes and HT3 suggested governors preferred them to align with the LA. Academisation was acknowledged to give Fernleigh greater flexibility in the future; a sentiment supported and added to by HT4:

> Well the City Council used to control to some extent the job descriptions that
> you could give out and it was a great big long-winded process if you wanted
> to say – 'I want this job description, but want this in it.' Things are changing
> now. We will go to the job descriptions that we've got and see if they meet
> the needs and if they're not, because we are an academy now, we have more
> flexibility to say, 'Well actually that doesn't work for what I want.' 'As a Trust,
> have we already got one?' And if not, we can look at devising one. (HT4, City)

When questioned HT2 suggested she would not necessarily ask for a new job description from the council for a new appointment preferring all staff to be on the same one; hence explaining its outdated appearance. HT3 on the other hand, did request updated job descriptions and therefore kept a file with them individually named. HT2 had mixed feelings about whether TAs should have more specific job descriptions if they were working with children with SEND as:

> It is a good idea because you will be tailoring the job description to that
> particular child. However, if you employ somebody solely to be the TA for a
> particular child, then when that child leaves that person automatically
> becomes a person who is made redundant. (HT2, St Mary's)

HT4 acknowledged that TA27's job description needed amending and suggested another TA working with SEND also had a generic job description. In addition, regarding her school's job descriptions, she felt potentially they needed some adjustments in order to make them more relevant for the different schools in the MAT:

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[30] human resources

> I do feel they possibly need tailoring a little bit more to each individual school, rather than being really generic… in a staff meeting … we will say … what does that look like at City Academy? (HT4, City)

From the TAs' perspectives, across all schools, it was evident many began on temporary contracts with their hours altering dependent on the needs of the school and themselves. Temporary contracts are not unusual amongst the TA population, appearing to have been common in the past (DfEE, 2000) and still evident more recently (Bovill, 2017). Most TAs considered their contracts in terms of hours worked and all TAs stated their contracted hours on the questionnaires, but their awareness of their job descriptions was not so clear. The questionnaires asked if TAs had job descriptions (figure 7.1), affirmed by 89% of them.
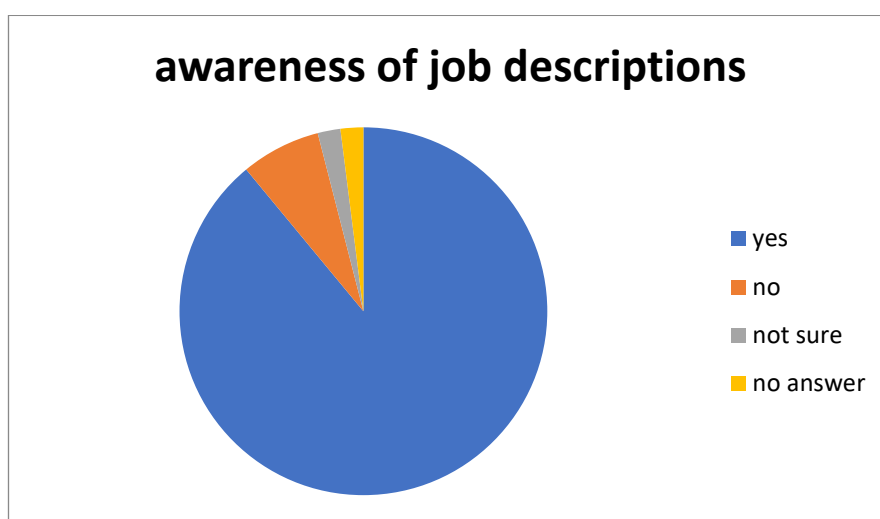
Figure 7.1: awareness of job description

However, conversations with headteachers indicated all TAs had job descriptions regardless of whether they realised this. The 16 TAs interviewed added some further clarification when needed. TA27 from City Academy had answered 'no' as she was currently trialling a new potentially higher paid role which did not align with her contracted job description, the one provided by HT4. Many TAs, when asked, were somewhat vague about receiving job descriptions although had answered 'yes' on the questionnaires. Examples of this could be found in all schools and two are presented:

> I think I would have but I can't remember… I must have been given it at some point. (TA2, St Michael's)

> Not really. It's 18 years; I don't really remember getting *[one]*. I know my job was totally different then to what it is now. (TA29, City)

On the whole the more recently appointed TAs were aware, apart from TA8 at St Mary's who stated in interview she had not received one, although had answered positively on the questionnaire and is included as the initial 'yes' in figure 7.1. There were examples from all schools, apart from St

Michael's, of TAs (TA11, TA16 and TA26) who reported having generic job descriptions which at times had not reflected the SEND nature of their role.

 The observations of the TAs also demonstrated job descriptions did not always resemble reality and there were numerous examples of TAs taking on roles that were not clearly defined. In interview the TAs were asked what they did which was not on job descriptions but examples did not easily come to mind, demonstrating their lack of familiarity. At St Michael's TA1 had responsibility for forest schools[31] alongside TA3 but this was not mentioned on the HLTA job description which was integral to their role. In this school all TAs were involved in lunch-time supervision, again not identified on job descriptions. In City Academy TAs held responsibility for extra-curricular clubs and there were numerous other examples observed or outlined included sorting out the free fruit children are entitled to in KS1, visiting local nurseries, ordering stock and shopping for and organising a breakfast club. HT3 also indicated first aid and flexible working would be missing from job descriptions alongside class cover but flexibility was mentioned at both grade 5 (level 2) and grade 6 (level 3) whilst class cover was an expectation at grade 6, showing her lack of familiarity with the documents too. Both TA26 and TA28 at City appeared aware their role was more complex than identified. TA28 stated:

> It's the thing about everything you do every day, isn't it? It could be helping a
> kid with his shoelaces, helping a kid with a problem, or they've got a cold or
> they're not feeling well. There's the whole role model aspect to it as well,
> presenting acceptable behaviour and standards. I think that underlies what
> your specific job title and duties say. There's always something going on that
> you may be having to go and help out, even from lifting bookcases upstairs.
> (TA28, City)

7.2.2 Job description - discussion

Job descriptions are a method of control which Ducey (2002) suggests are a way employers can execute power over an employee; the more rigid a job description, the more leverage there is to control a person's working environment. Basford *et al* (2017) highlight a lack of clarity in relation to the TA role and this was supported in relation to the variances of job description and observed in reality. Unlike Ducey's (2002) research with health care workers, there was a lack of rigidity in the job descriptions and their interpretation in classrooms and schools varied with TAs acquiring niche elements, often working unsupervised. Generic job descriptions Ducey (2002) adds allow for flexible working and the opportunity to work with employees in creative ways to best suit the needs of the organisation which also has the potential to preserve employment. This was the case at St Mary's where HT2 deliberately kept TAs on generic job descriptions to help mitigate against automatic redundancies for TAs employed in a SEND role. There was evidence to suggest flexible

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[31] Originating in Scandinavia, forest school is a process where learners are educated through hands on experiences outdoors

employment in each school where many of the TAs operated from the same job descriptions yet worked in very different roles; most obviously TA27. The HLTA job descriptions at St Michael's did not reflect the creative way the HLTAs were employed in relation to their forest school role but by maintaining a generic job description it allowed the school to adjust this as required. Unlike Ducey's (2002) participants who would not readily undertake unpleasant jobs which were not outlined on job descriptions, TAs accepted unpleasant aspects of their work such as changing children after *'accidents'*; not specifically referred to on job descriptions although could fall under an umbrella phrase such as 'children's personal needs'. Tension between teacher and TA roles is evident here; a role expected to be more likely to be undertaken by TAs did not occur automatically. Several TAs described this as a shared responsibility with class teachers and is an indication of TAs operating as equals. The hierarchical nature of the classroom places teachers with greater authority and therefore power; equal status is a result of teacher agency and the strength of the personal teacher-TA relationship. Job descriptions outline an expectation of *'support to teachers'* which does place them in a subordinate position which could be applied how teachers wished.

Had the schools been required to rely on job descriptions to outline precisely what TAs did on a daily basis the job descriptions would have been unwieldly documents as a TA role was observed to be extensive and varied and subheadings such as *'support for children'* cannot indicate the depth this requires or indeed manifests itself in reality. In addition, some LAs, required to bring job descriptions in line for roles deemed similar under single status[32], have produced job descriptions that do not always adequately reflect what happens in schools and this was particularly the case for the job description at Fernleigh. As Ducey (2002) suggests job descriptions as part of the labour process not only fail to fully outline what employees truly undertake, often they obscure it. This creates tension, as vague job descriptions allowed for interpretation that could work for or against the TAs, exerting control or not. In the post-Fordist world of education depicted by Menter *et al* (1997) there is a need for flexible, multi-skilled employees, capable of adapting to the needs of their environment; a rigid TA job description in schools would arguably jeopardise this process. Tension could have arisen in relation to misemployment but TAs seemed relatively happy to undertake whatever work was necessary regardless of whether it fitted with their job description or not. Their willingness to undertaking roles outside of their formal job descriptions could indicate not only a lack of awareness as to content but also indicating a lack of importance. Although job descriptions could be viewed as a means of control, the exertion of this was in limited evidence or indeed

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[32] single status was a national agreement between employers and trades unions to instigate equal pay across a variety of jobs deemed to have equivalent value

required as the TAs enjoyed their jobs. However, the lack of rigidity in its usage also facilitates opportunities for exploitation; the expectation for TAs to undertake whole-class cover created genuine tension which is identified in section 5.3.1 and discussed in section 5.4.

7.2.3 Performance management - findings

Performance management in schools (see section 2.4) is a further means of employee control. These findings outline the extent to which this occurred for the TAs. All four schools undertook performance management with TAs although no school made use of job descriptions to set targets. Headteachers identified performance management was undertaken with TAs' line managers so this varied in each school (table 7.2).

School	Who conducts TAs' performance management?	Who undertakes HLTAs' performance management?
St Michael's	HLTA (TA1)	HT1
St Mary's	Headteacher (HT2)	X
Fernleigh	SENDCo (HT3)	X
City	Phase leaders and HLTAs	HT4

Table 7.1: Line management responsibility

However, some confusion was evident amongst the TAs and only the TAs at St Michael's confidently identified who undertook their performance management. The TAs appeared compliant with the process, as exampled by TA2:

> I'm quite happy that we do have them because it's not the only chance but it's a good opportunity to voice any concerns. Especially this is why I'm doing the HLTA, because through the appraisals, it's monitored more what your next steps are going to be in your career. (TA2, St Michael's)

Appraisals for TAs appeared relatively new in all schools, particularly Fernleigh; its introduction to bring parity with teachers but as teachers had performance management more frequently the system still lacked cohesion. Headteachers suggested performance management gave TAs a voice and opportunity to discuss careers and TAs agreed:

> It just gives you that voice in an official format. (TA14, Fernleigh)

It also gave opportunity to set targets and the HLTAs who line managed had their own performance management first before completing appraisals with TAs. Tension was evident at Fernleigh where TAs appeared cynical, suggesting a level of tokenism; they appreciated targets needed setting for the process to work but these had been generic:

> *[In a previous job]* You would set specific targets and you either met, exceeded or fell short. If you met you're pay would go up one percent If you

exceeded you might go up by four percent [...] whereas here I feel like it's quite vague. So we've just had a review and it looks like we haven't met our targets but then hopefully by the end of the year we will do. But I don't know what's going to change to make me meet targets. As I said to HT3 'I can't work any harder than I am now' and she said, 'No it's just because we're part way through the year.' The targets are the same for everybody I think. I personally would prefer if they're more specific to me because you feel like you can do more to work towards it really, but then even if you do, it doesn't make any difference. (TA17, Fernleigh)

HT3 reinforced the TAs' comments and acknowledged that the mid-year review, where TAs were told they had only partially met targets, had caused some anxiety. She clarified to TAs:

I said, 'If what I put is fully met, then I have to give new targets.' (HT3, Fernleigh)

There was still a settling in period there and for City Academy where HT4 suggested it was:

A somewhat messy process at present. (HT4, City)

She knew it needed some adjustments as the responsibility given to each of the HLTAs varied and the process had also given rise to tension as TAs in early years did not like being line managed by someone working elsewhere. Performance management also gave TAs opportunity to discuss changing classes with headteachers making the final decision. There were examples in all schools where TAs wishes could not be accommodated but these TAs seemed clear and accepting of the justification. By way of example TA28 had been moved from KS1 to KS2 against his preference:

Because I've got a history degree. So I was told that that kind of knowledge and support would be put more to use at key stage two level [...] so that was the main reason. (TA26, City)

TA9 was stoical about movement:

It doesn't bother me, I've been everywhere. I know some people don't like it. (TA9, St Mary's)

TA2 recognised movement in her school was particularly problematic:

I'll probably be in class three because no one else likes going in there. (TA2, St Michael's)

At the same school TA4 noted:

Some of the TAs don't want to move, and they *[the management]* say 'well if they don't want to move it's tough'. (TA4, St Michael's)

However, the headteacher at St Michael's seemed to prefer developing key stage expertise and was:

Not a huge fan of TAs' systems where TAs moved around all the time. (HT1, St Michael's)

Rohr (2016) proposes job descriptions can be utilised in performance management but this was not the case. HT1 had visited another school, alongside TA1 to help devise their system but also made use of a paper sent by the LA whilst HT3 utilised a document from the National College for Teaching and Leadership. HT4 suggested they used existing standards for teachers (DfE, 2013) and HLTAs (TDA, 2007a) but said:

> You've got this big void then when it comes to the TAs. (HT4, City)

Headteachers indicated they would have been interested in the TA standards (DfE, 2015) proposed by the previous government and the fact they were abandoned HT3 found 'insulting'. HT1 specifically stated:

> We could use them on our performance management. (HT1, St Michael's)

Whilst HT2 suggested:

> It raises the standard, standing and status of TAs; professional standards say
> we're expecting a professional job. (HT2, St Mary's)

These standards have now been published without government support (section 2.4) so the schools may be making use of them in performance management.

7.2.4 Performance management – discussion

Through discourse, performance management for TAs is now the norm and although not a statutory requirement is recommended good practice by school support service, The Key (2017) which indicates this is the guidance from the DfE. Basford *et al* (2017) found the process not readily accepted with TAs exhibiting resistance but this was not the case here. TAs from all schools readily accepted it, embracing it as a positive process, providing a formal platform from which to discuss careers, training and preferences in role. The process was rationalised by headteachers and TAs as one that provided a platform for discussion and TAs valued the perceived opportunity of being given a voice. It was not regarded as a controlling mechanism although recognised by some TAs and headteachers as needing development. However, for some TAs it revealed an emerging underlying tension as previous careers enabled comparison where it had operated more clearly, linked to promotions, hence appearing tokenistic. Some TAs were also cynical as it appeared less robust than for teachers, creating tension; involvement in the process giving them status but also reinforcing their lesser position compared to teachers, once again on the periphery. In addition, pastoral power (section 3.3.4) has enabled the process of performance management to be perceived as beneficial for the TAs, promoted and perceived as concerning their well-being. However, performance management also enabled headteachers opportunities to justify and promote their own preferences, employing a subtle exertion of Lukes' (1974) second view of power (section 3.3.6) where actors fail to realise their best interests can be ignored whilst there are limited sources of action open to them. Power is with headteachers who are in control of the process and therefore

influential in the decisions. Perhaps the introduction of performance management had been promoted as one benefitting the TAs and was certainly championed as such by the DfEE (2000) and supported in later research with HLTAs as important for professional development (Wilson *et al*, 2007). In so doing Lukes' (1974) third form of power has been exerted; the TAs having been persuaded to accept the process and to even desire it although it may not necessarily support their self-interest. Tension exists regarding what they want and what is best for the school, for the children and so they acquiesce albeit believing they could ask for change.

7.2.5 Observations - findings

A third means of control is the process of observation and these occurred in all the schools with all headteachers noting TAs would be observed delivering interventions or as part of the teachers' observations, HT1 as example stated:

> We do do observations with TAs, not lesson observations, but if I do an observation of the teacher, the teaching assistant will be observed as part of that. (HT1, St Michael's)

HT4 also noted they were used for performance management purposes. TAs also acknowledged the process:

> I have observations on occasions. (TA28, City)

When a school inspection loomed, TA1 requested a lesson observation in her capacity as HLTA, worried she might let the school down and an indication of the pressure some TAs felt in their roles:

> Before we had an OFSTED due, I did say 'I think someone should come and watch my lessons.' And they did. (TA1, St Michael's)

In all schools the SLT were visibly present, in and out of classrooms; informal 'drop ins' were mentioned by HT4 as well as 'learning walks' by HT1. TA8 also suggested the headteacher was seen regularly around school and this did not come across negatively:

> She's always in and out of classrooms. That woman has her finger on the pulse. (TA8, St Mary's)

TA27 who worked across the school in a 1:1 capacity also confirmed the presence of headteachers around school:

> I think they discretely come in, pop their head out… I think that they do it indirectly, so almost coming and making sure that I am working with the children, and I think as well it'll be what's fed back as well from the teaching staff. (TA27, City)

7.2.6 Observation – discussion

TAs are now routinely observed alongside teachers both informally and formally bringing them in line with the surveillance culture which has operated for some time for teachers. There were open-

plan aspects to all but City Academy which made informal observations an easier process, an enactment of the panopticon gaze (see section 3.3.4) but the SLT at City were in and out of classrooms several times each day; doors not acting as a natural barrier. The panopticon gaze a metaphor for transparency around the schools where SLT could readily see and know what was happening and in so doing influence how staff behaved. In the more open areas where TAs usually work (Wardman, 2013), they could be readily observed and there was potential for constant scrutiny by members of the SLT. In these cases, they were away from the watchful eye of class teachers but more likely to be observed by the SLT moving around the schools. The possibility that a member of SLT may suddenly appear subtly encouraged self-discipline as there was always the possibility this may happen which Foucault (1977) suggests aided self-regulation, an important aspect of a surveillance culture. Although TAs did work unsupervised in bespoke rooms the internalisation of concept of the panopticon gaze and its culture of surveillance enabled self-surveillance to be the norm, internalised and materialising through practices in the school (Foucault, 1977) and TAs were still witnessed to be compliant with school policy in these areas. Foucault (1977), when discussing the panopticon in relation to prisoners, indicated it encouraged compliance because of fear of punishment. Disciplinary procedures do exist in schools for staff but much of TA conformity may have been driven by internalisation of the disciplinary procedures but was also driven by a desire to do what was best for the children. The ethos of formal observations, engrained into school culture for teachers, was also seen as becoming more common for TAs where the majority were observed on their own merit. Contributing to the creation of a disciplined environment TAs were also encouraged to self-assess their own performance and were aware of their accountability which Ball (1993) describes as a normalised process for teachers, now becoming the same for TAs. This again created tension between the expectation of teachers and TA roles.

7.2.7 Timetables - findings

Control of TAs can also be evident through timetabling hence the eight TAs shadowed were asked for timetables. Some had individual timetables and some, assigned permanently to a class, worked as per the class timetable (table 7.3).

School	TA	Class	individual
St Michael's	TA1		√
	TA2		√
St Mary's	TA8	√	
	TA9	√	
Fernleigh Academy	TA14		√
	TA15		√
City Academy	TA26	√	

		TA27			√

Table 7.2: TA timetables

TAs discussed the fluidity of these documents and those observed towards the end of the academic year in St Michael's, St Mary's and Fernleigh reflected how timetables had changed since the start of the academic year, altered due to the changing needs of the school and children. TA27, at City, in particular had a very flexible timetable dependent on which children were deemed to be most in need of support. On the observation days for TA2, TA9 and TA15, flexible timetables were witnessed and alternative activities were being undertaken those days for part or all of the day. Some TAs did not have their own timetable; assigned to one class only they were deployed in accordance with class teachers' wishes.

7.2.8 Timetables – discussion

Timetables, another aspect of control Foucault (1977) discusses in relation to the control of time in prisons, were in evidence in all schools. Timetables are a means by which discipline can be instilled as they identify individual's movements throughout the day. TAs' timetables supported the school routines, helping to embed discipline and control for staff and children, organising their time and encouraging the notion of needing to be busy and TAs were rarely still. However, timetables also encouraged the TAs with the ideology of self-management; knowing what was required they constantly looked for what needed to be done. Timetables helped develop docile bodies, (see section 3.2.5) enabling subtle coercion and an acceptance of time, space and movement and overt methods of daily control were therefore reduced. Timetables, an example of Foucault's (1977) surveillance culture (see section 3.3.4) ever present leading to the subconscious encouragement of TAs acting in a manner required by the school. TAs acceptance of individual timetables or class timetables and the frequent changes that occurred was another indication of how they acknowledged school systems.

7.3 Control discussion

The control of TAs through the means outlined is part of a larger picture. Foucault was interested in how people were managed and how power is evident amongst members of society (Ball, 2013). Foucault (1977) suggested governmental control makes it possible to watch and manipulate organisations and the surveillance culture that exists for schools through OFSTED and the LA or MAT help reinforce this. Although LAs now have reduced power because of devolved responsibility to schools, headteachers seemed reticent to make changes that went against LA directives particularly outlined in relation to job descriptions. The surveillance in existence in institutions Foucault (1977) suggests ensured their obedience to external forces so LAs' directives are willingly incorporated into school practices. The ever-present possibility of inspection ensured schools' compliance, particularly those performing below standard, the external panopticon gaze

encouraging acquiescence. The processes witnessed in school which exerted control on TAs were possible because of Foucault's concept of discourse (see section 3.3.5). The schools had established rules and routines through which the social practices and behaviours of individuals operated. Over time the mechanisms of control in the form of job descriptions, performance management, observations and timetables had been normalised, accepted as part of school practice. TAs were given job descriptions routinely when they began work which identified the expectation for their role. As they became embedded in their schools they operated within the systems of annual performance management which often included lesson observations as part of that process. Timetabling, a routine expectation in classrooms, also operated at an individual level for many of the TAs aiding the panopticon gaze. Headteachers were readily able to locate staff in the schools should they wish and so aiding self-discipline, the ultimate goal.

The key structures of control in evidence in the schools rely on acceptance by the TAs and this had occurred. Power (section 3.3) is exerted on them, encouraging the emergence of Foucault's (1977, p.136) docile bodies where TAs are pliable and capable of being 'manipulated, shaped, trained.' Through discourse schools are designed and developed with systems that encourage the maintenance of order and encourage compliance of structures. Consultation through the performance management process positions TAs in a receptive position and enables their manipulation for the perceived good of the school. Strict means of control for TAs was not needed in any of the schools; where they were compliant with the shared values and visions. Ultimately what they did was driven by a desire to help the children achieve and not out of personal gain and this aided their compliance with school systems.

However, at times it is possible for TAs to actively resist both the overt and subtle mechanisms of control and there were opportunities for TAs, subordinate actors in schools, to exert some power. Action and power according to Giddens (1984) (section 3.3.2) are interlinked; power coming from the capacity to initiate action. Performance management presents a structure whereby actors' actions are constrained and in so doing gives a platform from which TAs can begin to negotiate change. Headteachers and TAs felt performance management gave TAs opportunities to express preferences, affording them some power to negotiate their position in the school. Through these consultative processes TAs had negotiated themselves into roles they liked; undertaking activities they enjoyed. Only by action could TAs begin to organise their roles in a way that suited them but there were several examples of the compromises TAs had to make for what was perceived as the greater needs of the organisation. TAs were compliant with requests for change by headteachers which predominately went unchallenged, compliance perhaps, as suggested by Bachrach and Baratz (1962), because employees did not wish to appear disloyal to the organisation or perhaps the process of consultation, Coulbeck (2009) advocates, leads to greater loyalty. Again, the TAs

enjoyment of working with children aided this process. However by encouraging commitment and loyalty allows the opportunity for exploitation (Hutchings *et al*, 2009; Graves, 2014) and in so doing creates tension in school over the needs of an individual employee and the needs of the school as a whole and it appears in schools actions are viewed as having the best intention for the children. However, schools are still hierarchical in nature even if consultation does take place. Headteachers and TAs are aware headteachers hold the power (Lowe and Pugh, 2007) with their wishes taking precedent over the wishes of others (Parsons, 1967). Polsby (1963) also argued the amount of power an actor had was in proportion to the amount of change they were in a position to make. Through performance management, some TAs at St Michael's had real power whilst rendering others without as the headteacher would not move a TA to a different class unless it was mutually agreed between the TAs in question. This inevitably created tension but it was the headteacher's preference to develop TA expertise. By adopting this stance she could reduce TA movement influencing both structure and agency by doing so but also reducing conflict as it was not her who overtly had to make a decision to move someone that may cause upset. In the other schools movement could be a possible source of tension and hence dissatisfaction for those wishing to move but it appeared to be accepted; again, placing the needs of the organisation above their own requests. Any argument for or against TA movement in school was discussed with line managers as part of performance management and compliance encouraged through what was best for the school and children. TAs appeared very loyal to children which aided acquiescence with the values and beliefs of the school. The overt means of control could and should have created tension for TAs who were subject to the same systems as teachers yet clearly paid less although sometimes doing the same job but on the whole, they conformed to school routines born from well created discourse. Discourse here being Foucault's (1980) interpretation of the word where those seen as having greater knowledge formulate the basis from which the school is organised and create the truths and norms over time to which the TAs adhere.

7.4 Autonomous working

The autonomous working of TAs (see section 2.8) was observed in all schools when TAs supported children with SEND or lower ability. HT2 spoke of the way TAs were sometimes used:

> TAs are used to support the least able and are often left to their own devices and teachers don't interact with those children at all and it's something we've been working and thinking about for a long time is how to make effective use of TAs to ensure that all our children get equal access to the teacher. (HT2, St Mary's)

HT1 also indicated this was not an acceptable way to deploy TAs:

> One of my worries is some of my TAs end up with the low ability children all the time. We try really hard but at the end of the day, the children often need

the extra support. I do try and say to the teachers, 'You need to work with all ability groups'. (HT1, St Michael's)

HT1 and HT4 clearly noted an expectation that teachers would plan for TAs working in classrooms which included any necessary differentiation. Nevertheless, HT4 felt teachers were not differentiating enough in some classrooms but both HT3 and HT4 believed that TAs should be capable of undertaking adjustments to the planning for their groups if needed:

> They do have autonomy over that group work; it's not spoon fed. (HT3, Fernleigh)

> I would expect the teacher to provide some resources but also expect the teaching assistant, if they know that he would benefit or she would benefit from having some cubes or something additional - they go and get those additional resources. (HT4, City)

TAs supported this viewpoint and spoke of differentiating or adapting work allocated for less able children or those with SEND and this was mentioned by TAs at St Michael's, St Mary's and City. TA4 spoke of her teacher and said if:

> He's given me an activity to do and it's too easy for them, I'll make it harder. (TA4, St Michael's)

TA14 commented she had autonomy to adapt the planning given her by teachers:

> They give me the planning but I teach that the way that I feel works. (TA14, Fernleigh)

TAs were observed doing this and an example was TA2 who was observed making adjustments to the activity allocated for the children with SEND and praised by her class teacher for her ingenuity. TAs spoke of working with specialist teachers in relation to SEND, developing work autonomously afterwards:

> We'd go through work together. She would say to me, 'We go down that route, [...] so I'm going to do it this way; if you can see another way that works because you are with her all the time.' We did get together a lot [...] We worked quite closely really. (TA11, St Mary's)

TA15 had met with the SaL teacher to:

> Just have a chat to her on her own without the little boy being there; giving us some guidance. (TA15, Fernleigh)

TA17 also indicated her initial role, supporting a child with SEN, involved gathered ideas from her class teacher which she would later use independently:

> She was really good. She gave me lots of ideas and was really supportive. (TA17, Fernleigh)

TAs also found themselves taking a formal role in relation to children's progress and could take the lead in meetings for children with SEND which included with external agencies at St Michael's:

> **TA2**: When educational psychologists come in, I do communicate with them. We'll sit down and they implement strategies and things like that that I go over.
>
> **Interviewer:** Is the teacher with you?
>
> **TA2:** Not always, because they're normally with the class. (TA2, St Michael's)

This was corroborated by HT1, demonstrating the vital role played by TAs for the inclusion of children with SEND:

> If I have any review meeting with educational psychologists I try as much as I can to get my TAs in, because again, it's the TAs who'll be delivering those interventions really. There's no point in her telling me for me to tell them. They may as well have that conversation directly. (HT2, St Michael's)

At St Mary's TAs helped set targets for children with SEND whilst at Fernleigh TAs inputted into IEPs and met regularly with the SENDCo to discuss assessment results. TA17 indicated she wrote IEPs. The tension here between what TAs now do that teachers used to is discussed in section 7.5.

The questionnaires indicated nearly all the TAs were involved in interventions (section 2.5) and this was reinforced through the fieldwork and interviews. Some interventions were formal and others bespoke for an individual or group. In the observations five out of the six TAs timetabled for interventions were observed doing them. The TAs not taking interventions were TA1, the HLTA at St Michael's and TA9 who worked in early years at St Mary's. TA11, at St Mary's, indicated some of her intervention sessions were planned by the teacher but the questionnaires indicated it was more usual for TAs to plan them. Interventions taken by TAs were numerous and varied; not always on the key areas of SEND, literacy and numeracy although this was often the focus. However, TA17 led a nurture group whilst TA26 was about to start taking a healthy eating initiative. TAs fed children's progress back to teachers and by example TA2 did this:

> Verbally; at the end of the session. I write it as well on my notes, so they've got it and it's all recorded in my file. (TA2, St Michael's)

There were also examples of when this did not occur as frequently with TA4 at St Michael's suggesting it was weekly. TA14 and TA15, both at Fernleigh, did not report back but both indicated records of progress were filed and could be readily accessed with TA14 suggesting teachers would see progress in class. TA27, at City, liaised with teachers on occasions and constantly saw SLT around school so felt they knew what was happening. Like TA14 and TA15, TA28 also kept records of progress for his interventions and this enabled him to report back at formal progress meetings:

I need to present their progress reports, so, I tend to keep them … and
present the evidence at the end when we have a session. (TA28, City)

At City, HT4 expected TAs to be answerable for outcomes and progress for their intervention groups. She stated about TA interventions:

If we notice that they're delivering the intervention and at the end of the
however many weeks that it runs, that person's not had the impact that
everyone else has had - we then go back in right, in what's not working here,
is it that the child they'd been working with's been absent, is there a staff
absence that's causing it to not have the impact, or is it that they've not
grasped the delivery of it and how we can support. (HT4, City)

Intervention groups were not witnessed at City Academy, but it had several bespoke intervention rooms as did all the schools although these were not utilised on any of the observation days. TA28 commented:

It's usually outside … like a 1:1 in one of those courtyards. (TA28, City)

The TAs were asked if they undertook any of their own planning and this was evident for the majority. TA1, employed as an HLTA, did all her own planning for forest schools but was allocated PPA time each week as well as a full week at the start of each term. This meant she could be fully prepared as her allocated weekly planning time was often taken up with marking. TA3 also undertook considerable planning as she too was responsible for whole-classes when she took forest school sessions. TAs were responsible for planning their own interventions. HT3 spoke of a TA (who did not complete a questionnaire) who was allocated time to undertake planning for her 1:1 work and TA26 received an hour for organising the healthy school initiative. TAs planned formal interventions which were relatively straightforward due to their prescriptive nature, but other more personalised sessions were also planned by TAs.

I take all the children that are pupil premium, generally I will either liaise with
the class teacher to see what they've done in numeracy and literacy, and then
if there's anything that needs to be picked up from that morning's work, I will
do that; I do the planning. (TA16, Fernleigh)

She suggested she had a great deal of autonomy over what she planned, making use of a range of programmes she was aware of because of many years of experience. She stated:

I'll think 'Oh, *Rapid Maths*[33] - yes, that will cover that bit that I need' or 'Oh, *ALS*[34] - that will cover that bit that I need'. So, it's very much dipping in and out of lots of things.'' (TA16, Fernleigh)

TA3 always made sure her teacher had a copy of her planning:

> I put it in *[TEACHER'S]* file … so it's there for anyone to look up, but no one has ever asked to look *[it]* up. (TA3, St Michael's)

On the whole TAs undertook planning in their own time, either at home, or in opportune moments that presented themselves; evident in all schools, examples were:

> It's whenever you've got free time, lunch time, when the kids are doing a bit of silent reading or something. (TA26, City)

> I will go home and I will sit and plan. (TA16, Fernleigh)

Their reasons for doing this were discussed in section 6.2.5 where the additional time they give to their work in school is outlined.

7.5 Autonomy discussion

The examples above illustrate TAs had a great deal of autonomy, particularly when delivering interventions, which they usually planned and undertook away from classrooms. TAs' agency was evident in their SEND and intervention work as they were able to actively contribute and shape their work. Adding to their professionalisation, they were given considerable freedom to interpret and develop ideas as they wished. TAs appeared to embrace this way of working and the tension that might have been evident from TAs adopting roles that had previously been the remit of teachers was not in evidence, although pertinent to teacher deskilling discussed earlier in section 5.4. TAs were afforded great independence in relation to SEND; often planning or adapting teachers' plans, having the autonomy to do this, which they did readily and with confidence. Structures in place in the schools allowed TAs to work in this way and appeared well established when teacher–TA relationships were also well established. Blatchford *et al* (2012b) advised greater monitoring of TAs was needed but many of the TAs worked through programmes of study with little teacher intervention.

Houssart and Croucher (2013) suggest two models of TA management exist, (see section 2.7) and applying the model where TAs contributions are valued evidently enabled TAs to take on responsibility in areas of SEND and intervention work illustrating the credibility they afforded.

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[33] Rapid maths is a multi-sensory approach aimed to help children catch up with their peers in maths at KS 2.

[34] Additional Literacy Support (ALS) was introduced shortly after the Literacy Strategy and aimed to help pupils in KS2 who had already fallen behind

Through these TAs are able to carve out a niche and in so doing, are as Giddens (1984) describes, able to subtly alter the balance of power (see section 3.3). Their knowledge and autonomous working in these areas gives them some power albeit teacher agency in classrooms could quickly alter this if teachers wish. Layder (1997) proposes a group's dominance and power are developed and cemented over time by their ability to defend and stabilise their position. Many of the TAs had been in schools for a number of years building up skill and ability in relation to their areas of expertise and hence able to develop autonomy and some power. TA27, who was new to the school, had not yet built this trust with teachers and she expressed the tension that could be evident in the elevated position she had been assigned by the SLT. Headteachers respected TAs' ability to make the right decisions and the relationships in classrooms reinforced this position. Friedman's (1977) 'responsible autonomy' (section 3.2.5) clearly shapes TA work; often there was limited supervision with opportunities for them to use their own initiative. However tension is evident as TAs have autonomy yet are required to be accountable too, outlined at City where there was an expectation of presenting results, a means of control. This again should more readily be expected of teachers, aiding the argument for the professionalisation of TAs presented in section 5.4. TAs official positions in school should not require this and is an area of tension in the reality of the teacher and TA role illustrating the intensification of their work. Assessment Layder (1994) describes, is a means of teacher surveillance and is extending to TAs. Ultimately TAs were able to perform in an autonomous way because they complied with subtle forms of control that were in existence. TAs spoke passionately about the children and the nature of their work encouraged them to identify with the aims of the schools and to accept the structures in place. Again, although this autonomy and responsibility was readily accepted by the TAs, it creates a tension around their employment. TAs should not be expected to become as accountable as teachers because of the responsibility this autonomy affords them but in doing so assists the argument for their place as professionals.

7.6 Conclusion

TAs are under similar methods of control as teachers with job descriptions, performance management, observations and timetables and the surveillance culture in schools has been firmly extended to their work. Job descriptions are interpreted flexibly as TAs' main concerns regard the children. Performance management is viewed positively albeit tokenistic and lacks parity with teachers. Observations of TAs are the norm, whether as an individual or alongside teachers and the surveillance culture fully includes TAs. Timetables are also in existence; forming a further layer of surveillance help encourage docile bodies, accepting of the structures in schools underpinned by a desire to help the children. However, even within the systems of control, TAs do have some power; lack of strict adherence to job descriptions allows for them to carve out niche roles, whilst the structure of performance management gives actors a platform from which to shape their environment. There was evidence that teachers are beginning to take greater responsibility in

relation to SEND but TAs are afforded considerable autonomy through SEND and intervention work. An expectation for them to be able to plan or alter work set for these children indicates tension between their role and that of the teachers. At times they are accountable to senior leadership for the progress of the children for whom they work with autonomously. TAs may have been identified as being in subordinate positions in school but there was evidence of agency and opportunity to influence their position through performance management and their relationships with teachers.

8.0 Chapter Eight: Inclusion v Exclusion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter explores TAs' inclusion and exclusion in school working practices. Unlike previous chapters inclusion and exclusion will be examined together as evidence of one invariably meant the absence of the other. The TAs provided examples which illustrated where they felt fully included as members of the school or class teams but there were also instances of feeling excluded. Of particular relevance are the opportunities TAs had to communicate and collaborate with their teachers about lesson content, staff meetings and their access to whole school training. Tensions will be highlighted as appropriate throughout and discussion will follow the presentation of the findings.

8.2 Teacher - teaching assistant collaborative working practices

8.2.1 Time to meet and talk

According to Bush (2011) primary schools are typically collegial where teachers work co-operatively with colleagues to determine pedagogy and the headteachers in the four schools encouraged team-working with all but HT2 mentioning class teams in their schools. HT1 noted:

> We've tried really hard to develop the class teams and give it time in staff
> meetings to do that. (HT1, St Michael's)

HT3 also talked about cohort teams:

> I want them *[TAs]* to feel valued as part of the team. That to me is key; that
> they are part of that cohort team; that it is not them and us. (HT3, Fernleigh)

HT4 mentioned phase teams with regular meetings and TAs were expected to contribute. St Mary's also appeared to support class teams as TAs were assigned to year groups. Data from the fieldwork observations showed TAs were constantly in discussion with teachers throughout the day. Conversations were for a range of reasons from administrative support to clarification as to what scaffolding[35] or methods to use when working directly with children. Exchanges were also about lesson content, group configuration, individual children and assessment. TAs contributed during these dialogues, offering opinions which were valued and acted upon. In interview TA9 noted:

> She will take your word; she'll accept your opinions. (TA9, St Mary's)

Whilst TA14 identified her teacher would take:

> On board your opinions, making you feel you're part of the team, letting you
> know things that are happening that you might not been there to hear,
> respecting your opinion, asking your opinion. (TA14, Fernleigh)

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[35] Scaffolding, first used by Jerome Bruner in 1976 means what support is offered and in what format it takes

After a discussion between TA8 and her teacher during the observation the teacher stated:

> Two heads are better than one (TA8's teacher, field notes, St Mary's)

In interview TAs confirmed they met with teachers daily to find out what was happening, occurring prior to lessons at St Michael's, St Mary's and Fernleigh. Sometimes this could include the week's plan and came across as deliberate and unrushed; by example:

> We have a rough overview. So at the start of every week we go through basically what we do for the week […] because this is my second year of teaching year six now […] so I already have a rough idea where we are going with things. (TA26, City)

> We'll discuss it at the end of the day or in the mornings; it depends on what the lesson is. (TA2, St Michael's)

TAs at St Michael's and Fernleigh were paid to start earlier than the children in order for these conversations to take place whilst at City TAs' contracted hours were staggered with some starting early whilst others stayed later giving a longer period of support available to teachers. During the field observations TAs at all schools, apart from TA27 who worked more autonomously, were seen discussing forthcoming lessons with teachers before children arrived. All TAs were observed at least once during the day reporting back after activities regarding children's progress which was corroborated in interview. Exampled by TA27:

> I try and get in a little snippet. Like the end of a lesson, if there's that time where the children are beginning to tidy up or at lunch-time, the end of the school day, I'll go and I'll say, 'Well, while I was working with that child today'… I make a mental note of feeding it back. (TA27, City)

TA9 noted she and her teacher wrote notes in a book relating to EYFS progress and TAs might also write notes in children's books or on teachers' plans. TA2 identified:

> I write it as well on my notes, so they've got it and it's all recorded in my file. (TA2, St Michael's)

HT1 commented:

> I'd hope that planning would be a document you'd see annotated. (HT1, St Michael's)

TA17 identified that working with older children also allowed for some in-class discussion. TA8 and her teacher were observed implementing a preliminary assessment together with a child which would decide whether she was suitable for an intervention; TA8 took the lead whilst the teacher took the supporting role. However, these dialogues regarding lessons and children also occurred in TAs' unpaid time, which is explored in more detail in section 6.2.5. TAs recognised the feedback they provided was important and helped inform teachers' planning.

> I'll always go back and say how they've done and what I feel the next step
> is. (TA16, Fernleigh)

At Fernleigh HT3 felt strongly about ill-prepared TAs but was aware this was happening:

> You cannot walk into a classroom at nine o'clock when the lesson's started
> and be expected to know what to do. (HT3, Fernleigh)

However it was not uncommon to see this dedicated pre-lesson discussion time utilised in other ways and at Fernleigh the two TAs observed, through choice, had begun doing additional activities for some of this time. TAs also found out lesson expectations through listening to the teachers' introductions; sometimes sitting by targeted[36] children or doing another task in earshot. The importance of listening to what was being said was corroborated by HT3 and this afforded what Rubie-Davies *et al* (2010) referred to as 'tuning in'. However, Rubie-Davies *et al* (2010) were somewhat derogatory of this process suggesting this was the main way TAs picked up their pedagogical knowledge but HT1 and TAs justified it as a valuable process. HT1 stated:

> The expectation's that teaching assistants will be in the class for the
> introduction of a lesson. They're not expected to do jobs and then come and
> teach. The idea is that you've seen the teaching sequence for that. (HT1, St
> Michael's)

Support for tuning in came from TAs; illustrated by TA8 who indicated:

> I find nine times out of ten it is a really important thing to sit and listen as the
> teacher is introducing because you don't know what feedback the children
> are giving, you don't know how far they've gone in the discussion, what
> they've come up with; how else do you then take it ? […] Yes I'll be on the
> periphery and I'll be cutting something out, but generally always listening.
> (TA8, St Mary's)

TA8 was also observed making notes during the introduction which she used to aid her afterwards. The discussions teachers and TAs had are all further examples of the good relationships they had which were discussed in section 6.2.4 and give a sense of being included, their contributions valued.

8.2.2 Planning

Planning with teachers on a regular basis was difficult as TAs were not routinely released with teachers for PPA time and this offered a rare demarcation of the boundary between teacher and TA work. HT3 commented that teachers and TAs planned together at Fernleigh but this was not fully corroborated by the TAs there. TA14 stated:

> No, I don't plan with the teachers; they are the teachers, they are trained to
> plan and they know what they've got to cover. (TA14, Fernleigh)

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[36] TAs often sit by children who struggle to remain focused

Job descriptions in all four schools indicated an expectation that TAs would contribute to planning and several TAs acknowledged they were consulted regarding this, able to offer their thoughts for consideration. TA15 suggested:

> They will ask for my opinion, how things have gone and who to move on.
> (TA15, Fernleigh)

TA27 and TA28 commented their teachers' planning was emailed out and TA28, named on plans sent the week before, was able to offer ideas and if:

> She thinks it's a good idea she's more than happy to take those ideas on
> board. (TA28, City)

TA29 also discussed the planning with her teacher:

> She'll come in with the planning, but if it's not working or something's wrong
> I'll give her suggestions and she'll say, 'What can we do?' (TA29, City)

TAs in three schools identified they did get involved in long-term planning with teachers in school time but it was not mentioned by St Mary's. However, both TA8 and TA26 indicated that weekly planning with their teachers would have been difficult as their teachers often planned at home, doing other things in PPA time. In addition, TAs could be covering PPA time and this was the case for TA1 and TA29, both HLTAs which corroborates Houssart's (2013) research. TAs not being released alongside teachers during PPA time was justified by HT2 who indicated TAs provided continuity in the class.

Although TAs did not plan with teachers there was an expectation by some of the headteachers that they would have access to their teachers' planning. This was provided through a combination of emails and often physical availability in the classroom. HT4 stated:

> I would expect the plan on the side, every single day, with any notes on it so
> that if anything's changed on the plan, the TA can come in and they can see
> any changes that have happened. (HT4, City)

HT3 expected plans to be emailed to TAs whilst HT1 expected TAs to be named on plans with content shared in some format. HT2 did not specify how planning was to be shared by teachers as there was no expectation for them to write lesson plans:

> Most of the staff here are so experienced, because the reality is when you are
> an experienced teacher you are not writing down the minutiae of lesson
> plans, because you don't need that.(HT2, St Mary's)

This was recognised by TA8 at St Mary's but left her feeling ill-prepared, creating tension for her as she preferred planning in advance:

> I like to know what's happening to be fair. (TA8, St Mary's)

However, she thought her teacher would do a plan if she asked for one, which was also corroborated by TA10 in St Mary's. TA4, supporting a male NQT, had planning from him at the start of the academic year which ceased as the year progressed. She too felt ill-prepared which caused tension in her relationship with her teacher but he shared planning again after a discussion with her line manager. In contrast, TA15 had declined plans in advance, preferring to be told in the morning with a more prolonged discussion on a Monday. The two HLTAs who were interviewed were working from teachers' plans in order to deliver whole-class teaching so for them detail was of paramount importance. TA1 expressed a preference to deliver lessons that were stand-alone rather than relying on concepts taught the previous day by the teacher. However, the tendency for TAs to have access to planning in some format does not appear to have always occurred. TA29, a TA for 16 years, reflected:

> Sounds ridiculous but you didn't used to get to see the planning before.
> (TA29, City)

For her planning was about feeling included:

> You've got your planning so you're more involved. You're more able to do
> your job (TA29, City)

Interestingly, although teachers did not usually plan with TAs, HT2 talked of ensuring NQTs did to aid their awareness of how to best use TAs.

In relation to collaboration between teachers and TAs the findings indicate TAs are benefiting from greater inclusion and hence greater agency in the process. Unlike many studies outlined in section 2.9 the findings here show that TAs did have access to planning in some format in the schools although this could be via a verbal discussion. TAs did appear to feel there were sufficient opportunities to meet and specific paid time was allocated for this in three out of four schools although could also be in TAs unpaid time as per section 2.9. Headteachers felt class teams helped aid a sense of inclusion. Also in section 2.9, exclusion is apparent in relation to joint planning and these findings corroborate this, evident for long-term planning meetings only.

8.3 Staff meetings

All schools had a regular staff briefing which required TA attendance, described by HT1 as 'housekeeping' and this was in TAs' paid time. These types of meetings were witnessed for TA1, TA14 and TA27 at St Michael's, Fernleigh and City respectively. TA attendance at after school staff meetings was different in each school and whether they were paid or given time-in-lieu varied. At St Michael's TA contracts had been rearranged so that TAs were paid to attend staff meetings each week where the focus was CPD. This allowed TAs access to whole school discussions regarding training and policy. Attendance at staff meetings was also written into the St Michael's HLTA job description but not the level 2. St Mary's' job descriptions suggested TAs should attend some staff

meetings and in-service training (INSET)[37] but the findings suggest the atmosphere there made TAs feel welcome at them all. HT2 stated:

> It's not a requirement, I don't insist but in my experience as a head, if you can give them the option to come to staff meetings they feel properly part of the team and they don't then feel that they're an add-on and a second class citizen. (HT2, St Mary's)

At St Mary's TA inclusion in staff meetings and cluster[38] meetings was appreciated albeit unpaid and all the TAs interviewed attended. TA8 suggested:

> She's so inclusive with the TAs, there's no talking down to us. (TA8, St Mary's)

At the end of her observation she went to the staff meeting after school. Whilst TA11 stated:

> She includes the TAs in everything so I think you've got to give a little bit back as well haven't you? It's got to work both ways. (TA11, St Mary's)

Fernleigh job descriptions identified attendance at staff meetings may sometimes be required and this was corroborated by HT3. Lack of remuneration was the main reason cited for not attending regularly although TA14 added she had family commitments which made it difficult to stay outside her contracted hours and only TA16 routinely went. However, TA17 indicated that when a message stated *'all welcome'* there was an expectation of attendance for which HT3 suggested they would be given time-in-lieu although TA14 suggested she had been offered pay in the past. TAs at Fernleigh also had a separate TA meeting every half-term where HT3 passed on information she felt was of interest to the TAs such as the DISS findings and the proposed TA standards. No other school still had separate TA meetings although both St Mary's and City had in the past.

In relation to staff meetings City was the school where the conflict between being included or excluded was most evident. HT4 indicated she would pay or give time-in-lieu when she wanted TAs at staff meetings and this was corroborated by TA26 who suggested attendance was part of the contract but not routinely required. HT4 clarified that previously it had been compulsory but many were not relevant for the TAs; if they wished to attend they could. TA28 talked of being invited if needed but TA27 disputed this suggesting they were not always invited when decisions were made that affected them. Exclusion from meetings had a negative impact. As TA28 stated:

> Sometimes it's important *[AND]* we don't get invited and we can come in and go 'ah right, everything's changed.' They changed the behaviour policy overnight, we came in the next day and we didn't really know what's going on. (TA28, City)

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[37] INSET is an acronym used in schools (IN-Service Training) which are the five training days that teachers undertake where children are not in school

[38] Ccuster meetings occur in LAs providing an opportunity for staff to meet from different schools. They could be in relation to an age group or a subject

Another example of where their exclusion had bearing was expressed by TA26 and related to the marking policy which got changed in a staff meeting where they were excluded.

In relation to staff meetings there was a mixed picture and findings both support and differ from existing research (section 2.9). Both St Mary's and St Michael's appeared to fully include TAs in staff meetings although only St Michael's paid which is unusual. Identified as common, City TAs appeared to be actively excluded or discouraged from the majority of staff meetings but there was an indication they would be given time-in-lieu or paid when their attendance and therefore inclusion, was required.

8.4 Whole school training

Inclusion in staff meetings provided access to whole-school training which typically took place at this time. TAs who did not regularly attend staff meetings could be asked to attend if it was deemed relevant and important which usually meant the meeting included some relevant training. HT1 specifically mentioned whole school training at St Michael's which took place in staff meeting time. HT4 indicated TAs were asked to attend the teacher INSET days for which they were paid. At St Mary's TAs were included in area cluster meetings and TA8, TA9 and TA10 commented they were the only school in the meetings where TAs were present. HT4 talked of TAs accessing whole school training as well as sending whole year groups on training, including the TAs, when there was a specific need for that year group. HT3 also discussed some of the collaborative training all her staff had been on in the last twelve months. She suggested:

> If it's a big twilight[39], the TAs are invited, and they always come. When I did the dyscalculia training, they all came because they wanted *[to].* They like to be updated. (HT3, Fernleigh)

However, a further example of where TA27 perceived there to be exclusion was cited by her:

> Sometimes I miss training that's just for teachers and not for TAs and we're not necessarily invited to that training. (TA27, City)

She valued training and appears to have wanted to be invited:

> I find any course useful, if I'm honest. (TA27, City)

Dissatisfaction was evident for both TA26 and TA27 relating to training instigated by the MAT where TAs were originally invited, but due to restrictions in numbers they were no longer able to go. There were also examples of sharing training they had attended, with class teachers. At St Mary's the TAs had all recently undertaken training with the LA which TA8, TA9 and TA11 then discussed with their

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[39] twilight training takes place at the end of the school day after the children have left and usually lasts a couple of hours

teachers. Both TA8 and TA9 referred to changes that had occurred in class as a result of feeding back the training they had had.

The importance of including TAs in training or choosing to exclude them (section 2.9) clearly displays the power SLT have over the subordinate actors in schools. The findings here indicate that TAs were included in whole-school training, often accessed through staff meetings, and at St Michael's, Fernleigh and City would be paid or given time-in-lieu when they were required. However at City there was also evidence of TAs being excluded from training events deemed unnecessary by their headteachers; their power exercised to avoid unnecessary inclusion helped reduce TA exploitation. However, this was inconsistent and haphazard perhaps as a result of a period of change as it settled into the MAT.

8.5 Discussion

TA inclusion or exclusion is arguably part of the power structure functioning in school which Foucault (1972) suggests operates at all levels; its execution significantly influences TA inclusion and exclusion. The tension between inclusion and exclusion also links to notions of professionalism and professional boundaries and the expectations and sometimes confusion between teachers and TAs in terms of their professional status (discussed in chapter five). Headteachers clearly have significant power in relation to the overall decision-making in schools (Polsby, 1963; Scott, 2001; Sharp and Meeson, 2009) and therefore can impact on which staff members to include or exclude and in what. TAs, identified as periphery workers (section 3.3.1), continue to be placed in a precarious position, dependent on how headteachers involve them in whole school processes and how they facilitate the liaison between teachers and TAs. UNISON *et al* (2016) suggest headteachers have the power to raise the standing of TAs in schools and this was evident in the recognition by them of the importance of class teams and TAs' roles within them. Additionally, St Michael's placed TAs alongside teachers in relation to training as it was part of their contracts to attend staff meetings where this took place. Although mentioned by HT2, HT3 and HT4, it was observed at St Mary's too where general TAs supported just one class in many instances showing a commitment to building teacher-TA relationships that must work for the benefit of the children. In classrooms teachers have some autonomy on how to work with TAs further and therefore power to include or exclude them at that point. However, the importance now placed on TAs having paid time for discussion with teachers, indicates that headteacher power has been executed in a way that raises TA status further, showing recognition that this liaison is important. Lowe and Pugh (2007) found TAs recognise they have limited power in school yet Polsby (1963) suggested the amount of power an individual has is linked to the scale of change they can make. Class teams seemed to aid the development of a sense of respect for the TAs who appeared valued, appreciated and important in the class decision-making processes evident in their inclusion in long term planning as well as the

way teachers sought their opinions and respected their initiative and innovation. Whether intended or not, this created a feeling of inclusion and worth amongst TAs.

Stevenson (2007) outlines how autonomy in classrooms is given to teachers which therefore provides opportunity for them to exercise their power, evident in their decision-making around planning. Although planning was denied to some TAs there was no indication of any malicious intent but as some headteachers did not require planning to be shared gave opportunity for TAs to be placed on the periphery once more. Highlighted by TA8 as a cause of workplace tension, she remained ignorant of what was to come until discussion with her teacher. This afforded her less time for personal preparation and the lack of preparation of TAs has been widely criticised (e.g. Blatchford *et al*, 2012b; Docherty, 2014; Roffey-Barentsen and Watt, 2014). However, in a time where Unions cite teachers complaining of increasing workloads (NEU, 2018) headteachers are no doubt loathe to insist on formal planning, particularly as it is not required by OFSTED (Her Majesty's Government, 2018). Although TA8 felt her teacher would do this she appeared reticent to ask, perhaps in acknowledgement of how hard her teacher worked already, perhaps promoting feelings of guilt if she were to add to the workload. Inclusion was further in evidence as teachers and TAs had time to meet which gave TAs agency and the opportunity therefore to influence their work and that of others affording power as indicated by Polsby (1963). In addition, TA agency was also evidenced by TAs declining plans in favour of face to face conversations. Foucault's (1972) (section 3.3) suggestion that power is everywhere and operates through everyone is demonstrated in the inclusion and exclusion of TAs where they could be positioned with openings for greater agency and with it more power, or not.

In relation to staff meetings and training, again the decision-maker, according to Parsons (1967) has the legitimate right to make decisions for the organisation; in this case the headteacher in relation to the school and can decide who attends meetings and training and who does not. For TAs at St Mary's the open invitation to attend staff meetings created a genuine sense of inclusion as members of the whole school team; encouraged to access networking and training alongside teachers. This was embraced and provides them with a sense of equality yet it arguably allows for the exploitation of their labour, as Acker (1999) contends, is often the case with women in caring roles. The intention from the headteacher was about inclusion and making them feel valued but unlike St Michael's did not pay. There was inconsistency across the schools regarding inclusion in staff meetings and although tension was evident at Fernleigh, it was most notable at City. At Fernleigh, although TAs were able to attend staff meetings if they wished, HT3 gave the impression that often there was no relevance, and this would no doubt have been shared with TAs. However, this still created tension as TAs appeared to feel as if they should attend and TA14's feelings of guilt were most in evidence, justifying at length her inability to go. Guilt already highlighted in section

6.3 because of the intensification of TAs' work. The separate TA meeting at Fernleigh in paid time was an attempt to ensure all TAs were informed of key processes but it separated them and emphasised their different status. At City the confusion between inclusion in staff meetings on some occasions yet not others impacted on their presence or not in whole school training as this usually occurred at these times. It could be argued that this is not exclusion when headteachers saw some meetings as irrelevant for TAs but at City this came across as divisive and an area of considerable tension; TAs felt it gave the impression that they were not as important as teachers. On the occasion cited in the interviews their exclusion was made worse by the fact they had originally been requested to attend and felt quickly dispensed of when it was realised there was insufficient space for their inclusion. Perhaps this was caused by recent academisation and the settling in period that was taking place and a period of change was discussed by staff and the headteacher, more noticeable by some than others. However, this could have been something that would become more usual as the power the headteacher had at City was reduced in favour of the preferences of the head of the MAT. With the blurring of boundaries between teachers and TAs often apparent, their exclusion from staff meetings and hence training with pedagogical relevance is questionable when much of the time TAs were observed undertaking similar roles to teachers albeit consulting with teachers when needed.

Being able to attend meetings appears to give TAs agency as they are afforded occasions to act and opportunities to initiate change as Martin and Dennis (2010) identify, which sits outside performance management where they have been granted a voice (section 7.2.3). TAs could also be classed as what Giddens (1984) describes as a 'human resource' able to influence the action of others, in this case their teachers and appeared to do so; teachers did respond to suggestions from TAs. However, Layder (1997) suggests that resources are undeniably a source of power as access to them can be denied. Although it was never suggested as intentional, some TAs were denied access to planning which research suggests has been common (section 2.9) and contributes to TAs' lack of power and reduces their agency. TA4 during the school year had access to planning denied when her teacher stopped sharing it, probably unintentionally. Her own agency, encouraged in performance management, had reinstated this for her but not all TAs would act so confidently. Additionally, opportunities to meet with teachers has also encouraged TA agency and with it a greater sense of inclusion and less indication they are peripheral members of the school. Nevertheless, although most TAs had contracted opportunities where they could meet with teachers daily, this could still have been denied them had the teachers chosen. However, the fact that three out of four schools now gave contracted time it would have been more difficult, needing deliberate intention from teachers. Of consideration is that in order for TAs to have some influence on classroom events they often need to willingly provide their own unpaid time and without doing so have less input into teachers' assessment or planning or only have limited awareness of the day's

events; rendering them in a less powerful position in front of the children but also less able to assist them which was revealed in section 6.2.5 as a key motivator.

The structural design of schools suggested by Layder (1997) (section 3.3.4) was one that afforded opportunities for surveillance, but this could be extended to the structure that allows access or not to meetings, whole school training and planning as well as headteachers requests or not to have planning visible in classrooms. This regulates and, if denied, reaffirms TAs' lesser position in school. Teachers are fully included in these events yet for TAs, reported throughout chapter five as often undertaking similar roles, do not necessarily have to be given the same opportunities as teachers; it depends on headteachers and class teachers too. Luke's (1973) radical view of power (section 3.3.6) is in evidence; TA meetings at Fernleigh can make it possible to restrict the topics to 'safe' ones described by HT3 as those with relevant for TAs. By not being involved in the key decision-making which occurs in staff meetings TAs are not involved in the wider decision-making of the school, hence having less influence. The tension evident from TAs at City where they were excluded from the decision-making regarding the marking policy was palpable, yet was a key topic where they should have been included; allowed influence as it affected them as much as the teachers and their opinions should arguably have been sought. When TAs were specifically requested to attend meetings it is possible these could be described as 'safe' topics; ones usually involving training where TAs would be expected to acquiesce to the latest concepts just as teachers would. However, for TAs attending meetings infrequently there could also be a lack of familiarity with the process which would place them in a lesser position, less likely to challenge the status quo; not a deliberate ploy but one that has that effect. A more inclusive approach at St Mary's and Fernleigh meant TAs could be present at all meetings should they choose although it was only TAs at St Mary's who appeared to do this routinely. At St Mary's and St Michael's, the smaller schools, there appeared a greater sense of inclusion. Small schools of one-form entry or less perhaps allows for greater unity and camaraderie which encourages closeness and there was a real sense that staff were friends and this was mentioned by the TAs. At St Michael's TAs were paid to be there, a clear display that they and their contribution was valued. Being the smallest school perhaps created an even greater sense of belonging and the headteacher fully embraced the need for all staff to be familiar with policy and process. Perhaps smaller schools result in greater inclusion, it being less easy to lose sight of individuals and how collaborative working is needed more keenly to make the school function. Perhaps also, resources there are more stretched, so a greater sense of loyalty, cohesion and unity encourages greater collaboration too but at the same time allows potential for greater exploitation, although this was not observed to be the case.

8.6 Conclusion

The power of headteachers was evident, encouraging working practices in accordance with the needs of the school. The research findings indicate there is a commitment by headteachers to encourage class teams where teachers and TAs work together, developing expertise where needed. Although TAs do not appear to be present in teachers' PPA time they often have the opportunity to contribute ideas and have access to planning before lessons. It was recommended by Blatchford *et al* (2009b) that in the absence of timetabled planning time other designated face-to-face contact was necessary so that instructions could be imparted and feedback exchanged ensuring that TAs were better prepared and this was happening in the four schools. Three of the schools (Fernleigh Academy, City Academy and St Michael's) had begun to recognise the importance of allocated time for teachers and TAs to meet and had altered TAs hours in recent years to allow them paid time in school before children arrive or after they have left. Feedback was a little more haphazard but TAs still found occasions in which to do this, although less likely to be in the designated paid time. All this gave TAs' agency and opportunity to influence their environment and this was observed in their in-class work as well as from their interviews. The smaller schools appeared to encourage greater inclusion of the TAs in staff meetings and whole-school training although only St Michael's routinely paid. The largest school, now a member of a MAT, was more at the behest of a higher power that influenced the inclusion of TAs as full school members or not which created dissatisfaction for them.

9.0 Chapter Nine: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The previous four chapters have presented the findings and associated discussion for the identified tensions. This chapter concludes the thesis, reflecting on the objectives set at the start of the research and brings the findings together in light of the research question and sub questions posed in chapter one. The contribution to knowledge is outlined, recommendations for practice and recommendations for future research are made whilst limitations of the study acknowledged. Finally, the thesis closes with a reflection on my personal journey, including my presence in settings and how undertaking the research has impacted on my professional practice.

9.2 Reflection on my learning journey

The seed was sown for my doctoral journey at a conference several years ago where I listened to the findings from the DISS project. Already no longer working in primary schools, I was teaching undergraduate TAs at a sixth-form college and now teach undergraduate education students at university; the learning from my research has great relevance. Studying at this level has enhanced my teaching as I now have a greater understanding of the research process and can offer better advice and guidance when supervising student research work. In addition, I can better empathise as I too experienced many of the issues they encounter such as undertaking work alongside study and juggling the pressure of family life. I also faced issues of comprehension, as do many of my students and struggled to understand the theories I needed, finding power and the work of Foucault particularly difficult, facing doubts over my capabilities causing me to question my ability. However, enlightenment finally occurred, and a draft theoretical chapter was written. However, as I re-read it prior to analysis I realised I needed greater depth and understanding and re-wrote it immediately prior to analysing my findings which added to and aided the analysis greatly. The actual content of the study also has relevance as the majority of my students undertake school-based placements during their degrees, often taking on a TA role in schools. In addition, many take up employment in schools as TAs or continue to postgraduate study in education, with the intention of becoming primary school teachers. My research will help illuminate the tension that can exist for TA employment and help me to raise my students' awareness whether they become TAs or teachers of the future; they can support the importance of TA inclusion in the class team and encourage their inclusion in training and school decisions. Undoubtedly, I will disseminate my findings and like the presentation that sparked my interest to take this journey, I may fuel the desire in someone else to further explore our understanding of TA work and their relationships.

9.3 Reflection on my presence in the schools

In all schools the headteachers were welcoming and accommodating of the requirements for the research and allowed independent access throughout the school after complying with safeguarding

procedures. In addition, they supplied all documents requested as did the TAs themselves. To begin the research in each school the TAs were all called to a meeting by the headteachers where I was left to fully introduce what the meeting was about and there was little prior understanding. TAs appeared a little suspicious and great effort was made to put them at ease and allow comprehension regarding the intentions of the research and my interest. The two smaller schools made me feel more comfortable but these were also the schools with a closer personal connection which may have aided this process. In the larger schools I felt overall less included, although the TAs themselves who were shadowed were always welcoming. Lunch-times were spent in the staff-room alongside TAs and teachers. My position as an ex-primary school teacher and now a university lecturer no doubt impacted on the power relationship which was why throughout the observations every effort was made to be friendly and supportive of the TAs and the children and led to an invite to an end of term event at St Michael's. The experience of being back in primary schools was enjoyable and led to a conclusion that when my studies were over I would give something back to the school community by becoming a school governor and this has now happened in one of the schools which so kindly accepted me into their world for a short while.

Whether the research impacted directly on the eight TAs I shadowed must be considered. Inevitably they could well have queried their position in the school and the questions asked of them may well have impacted on their own perceptions of what they did and why. However, fundamentally it was evident how the care of the children influenced their actions but they may well have questioned themselves as to how their actual roles reflected their job descriptions and how they worked with the teachers as well as how they were included or not in the practices of the school.

9.4 Reflecting on the research objectives

Reflection on the research objectives indicates the study realised its intention, achieved through the sub questions which provided further direction. The first objective was to investigate the characteristics of the TAs in each school. Access to the TAs was gained via their line manager and facilitated in a meeting where questionnaires were administered in order to gather background information. Time was taken to explore each school through the school websites, OFSTED reports as well as observing the school in action during the visits. The second objective was to observe the experiences of TAs in order to understand their roles and relationships. Eight observations occurred in total, two in each school. Observations were arranged to start from the point TAs arrived in schools which was often prior to their contracted hours and usually ended when they went home, again often after their contracted hours had been completed. Notes were taken throughout in order to maximise the data capture. The third objective was to explore the reality of TA work as perceived by TAs and their line manager. This built on the observations and sixteen TA interviews were conducted, four in each school which included the TAs who were observed. Line managers

were also interviewed which in three of the schools meant the headteacher, whilst at Fernleigh was the SENDCo. The interviews enabled further depth to be obtained regarding the nature of TA work and their relationships with other staff, enabling clarification when needed regarding practices observed. The final objective was to analyse TA work in relation to institutional, local and national policy. This encompassed researching literature in the field of TA work; ascertaining the governmental position relating to TA employment as well as obtaining pertinent school-based documentation. The objectives set were appropriate and enabled a detailed picture to be captured in each school as per the overall aim.

9.5 Answering the research question and identifying the contributions to knowledge

The findings and discussion identified and explored four sets of tensions; professionalisation versus de-professionalisation; work versus non-work; control versus autonomy and inclusion versus exclusion. This section presents each sub-question and draws on information from chapter five to eight to highlight the most significant conclusions. It also emphasises the contribution to knowledge by identifying where the research supported existing knowledge and where it produced contrast or developed what is known about teachers but had not been identified in relation to TAs.

9.5.1 Professionalisation versus De-professionalisation

This tension, predominantly addressed in chapter five answered sub question one: *What qualifications, training and knowledge do TAs have that enable them to take on their roles and responsibilities and how does this impact on teacher work?* In contrast to earlier research such as the DISS (Blatchford *et al,* 2012b) TAs hold qualifications above level 2 which are commensurate with the roles they do and, in many cases, they are overqualified which was particularly in evidence in the smaller schools, highlighting their exploitation There appears to be growing stability in TA roles with attempts by SLT to give more sustained employment with specific classes which assists the development of curricular expertise. On the whole, in contrast to much previous research (Galton and McBeath, 2010; Webster *et al*, 2011; Houssart and Croucher, 2013) and corroborated by headteachers,TAs feel they have been trained for the roles they undertake. The reference by Menter *et al* (1997) to them as semi-skilled workers seems inappropriate. Increasing professionalisation of TAs is also in evidence through increased accountability and intensification of their roles, evidenced by longer serving TAs. As Hargreaves (1994) found with teachers, utilising the term professional endorses their exploitation.

 TAs were undertaking their own planning, leading their own sessions and keeping their own records as well as presenting results to headteachers. Galton and McBeath (2010) found HLTAs were often inadequately prepared for the whole class teaching they did, yet in contrast the HLTAs in St Michael's and City appeared confident in what was asked of them. Increased TA knowledge

may well contribute to the notion of their professionalism and they are considered to be more knowledgeable than teachers in certain areas. Brought about by training and through discourse TA expertise around SEND and interventions has been accepted and affords them some power. Past research has indicated TAs supporting in SEND are often ill equipped (e.g. Symes and Humphreys, 2011; Maher and McBeath, 2013) but this did not seem evident as TAs on the whole felt well prepared to undertake what was asked. The knowledge they have acquired and through Foucault's (1980) concept of discourse has been normalised and can afford them some power, not necessarily at the bottom of the hierarchy as previous research has found (Emira, 2011; Mansaray, 2012; Graves, 2014). However, this contributes to teacher deskilling, which is exacerbated at times by HLTAs taking whole-classes, where they tend to take on curricular areas that teachers no longer teach or had never taught. TAs without additional HLTA status, as found by Hancock et al (2002) and to some extent Emira (2011), are also routinely expected to take on some whole-class teaching and this is written into level three job descriptions. Whole-class cover created tension, a key area that demonstrates intensification and allows for TA exploitation. TAs appeared to welcome the surveillance culture in schools when taking whole-classes which they saw as supportive and unlike research by Roffey-Barentsen and Watt, 2014) usually felt confident to do with few considering they were being exploited. The reskilling that could have occurred for teachers is replaced by the upskilling of TAs and by breaking down the production process enables savings to be made Wilson and Bedford (2008) suggest teachers could feel threatened by increased TA knowledge but on the whole this did not seem apparent apart from recently appointed TA27 at City who was perhaps still establishing her credentials in her role. In addition, duality of structure is in evidence and helps explain the teacher/TA relationship where TAs have agency. TAs have power and knowledge in relation to the children, curriculum and school that helps them operate from a valued position and relationships between teachers and TAs, on the whole, appeared equitable. Teacher agency often placed TAs in a relatively equal position and teachers did menial jobs in the class too; not just TAs.

9.5.2 Work versus Non-work.

This tension, addressed in chapter six, mainly answers sub question two: *What are the key components of TA work and how does 'caring' impact on how they go about it?* TAs worked hard, unpaid at times, in order to fulfil their roles. Unpaid work did not create tension itself but what was important was a sense of fairness in how they were treated. Some TAs did voice the opinion they took on roles that should be undertaken by teachers, shedding further light on the intensification of their role. In Scotland Warhurst et al (2014) found TAs were taking on a frontline pedagogical role and this was the case in the four schools too and illustratesthere was now less time for the administrative roles that were originally envisaged in the *national agreement*. They accept heir exploitation out of a desire to assist teachers and children. As Mackenzie (2011) identified, female TA work seems to draw on the natural characteristics associated with women's work which this

study found extended from care for the children as discussed by previous researchers into TA work (Dunne *et al*, 2008; Chambers, 2015) and extended to care for their teachers. My research indicated that bonds were strong with children and children gravitated to them when cover teachers were in the classroom. With some minor exceptions, TAs felt children worked hard for them and behaved well but the links to Fraser and Meadows (2008) who also found there to be some distinctions between teachers and TAs are noticeable. Work is driven by their mothering instinct but male TAs are also keen to assure their credentials to work in a female dominated environment. In contrast to Hutchings *et al* (2008) where stereotypical behaviour is in evidence such as the caring women teacher and the humourous male teacher, the male TAs volunteered care was an aspect of their roles. Unfortunately, there is an indication that TAs' female characteristics are being exploited by male teachers; whilst some female TAs could be seen to collude for others it creates tension however, needs further examination. Acker (1999) discussed the exploitation of women teachers and there were examples of where TAs felt exploited but accepted events due to their commitment to children and colleagues. In addition, my research shows one of the male TAs appears to have been elevated by female staff into a position where he regularly dealt with difficult children; his exertion of his stereotypical masculine characteristics through football, as Skelton (2012) found with male teachers, may have also raised his position with the children which aids this process. These areas need further investigation due to only two male TAs in the study.

Tension occurs when TAs feel unfairly treated, taken advantage of but often this was not about their misemployment or deviation from job descriptions, although exploitation regarding whole-class cover was vocalised. Rather it came when they feel there was a lack of acknowledgment for what they do or when they feel unappreciated, cohesion with others important for their work. This also created tension for HT3, the school SENDCo, who also felt TAs were unfairly exploited regarding this issue. The two schools where the HLTA roles existed expected them to line-manage other TAs which generated some tension for them as they had not felt equipped to do the role; a point echoed by HT4, nor have sufficient authority to make decisions. All four schools indicatedthe TAs invest considerable emotional labour in their work, borne from their love of their job and children and deep acting is the norm although this emotional investment facilitates their exploitation. Burchell and Rubery (1990) writing about the labour market identified a class of workers they described as stickers, often older, female and content with their roles and the majority of the TAs were female and had often been in post in the schools for long periods of time indicating a stable workforce and continuity for the schools.

9.5.3 Control versus Autonomy
Control versus autonomy was predominantly captured in chapter seven and answered sub question three: *To what extent is TA work monitored and controlled?* Formal control mechanisms exist and

are evident through job descriptions, classroom observations, performance management and timetables; long in existence for teachers but now prevalent for TAs. These routines occur and are perpetuated by a managerial discourse which establishes procedures and processes in schools. As found by Farrell et al (1999) job descriptions were often quite generic and vague but there was little day to day awareness of them so their content was immaterial. TAs do what is asked or they feel needs doing regardless of job descriptions; their motivator is the children. A lack of consistency as to the implementation of performance management for TAs as reported recently by the NEU (2020) is not in evidence in my research, albeit relatively new. is Viewed positively it does create tension as there still lacks parity between TAs and teachers and TAs at Fernleigh suggested it appears tokenistic. However, my research illustrates erformance management gives the structure from which TAs can formally exert some power and initiate action, hence potentially drive change but they are still restricted by their own desire to do what was thought best for the children and hence they can easily be manipulated by headteachers exerting their more powerful status. Performance management is therefore variable, dependent on individual contexts and there was an inconsistent picture presented. School hierarchies still mean TAs are subject to the power of others and their status is fragile. TAs all undergo some method of formal observation during the school year either independently or as part of teacher deployment during theirs placing them under the panoticon gaze Foucault (1977) related. Timetables exist for TAs either on an individual level or as part of the class timetable if they support only one class. This embeds them in the surveillance culture that Layder (1994) suggests has existed in school systems for teachers for some time and places them firmly within the control mechanisms of the schools. In line with previous research TAs are involved in delivering interventions (Webster and Blatchford, 2015), undertaking their own planning (Hancock *et al*, 2010; Warhurst *et al*, 2014) with autonomous working in evidence particularly in relation to children with SEND (Webster *et al*, 2013; Lehane, 2018). In my research,TAs undertake intervention work with limited supervision and feel they are knowledgeable in these specialist areas leading to considerable power/knowledge.Tension exists between their role and the role of teachers as they do lead learning for some children. TAs do not always report back to teachers particularly regularly, but have brought into the accountability instruments described by Hargreaves (1994) in operation for teachers and exert control mechanisms on themselves, keeping records that are readily accessible to others as well as the accountability expected as they now report back to head teachers as was purely the remit of teacher sin the past. This autonomy contributes to the power TAs have in relation to their knowledge and skill set but also creates tension in their employment as they undertake roles previously the remit of teachers. My research clearly illustrates the culture of control and monitoring long in existence for teachers is firmly in existence for TAs. My research also indicates TA interventions have given TAs agency; they are in

control of aspects of their roles and in carving out a niche have developed some level of power, respected and trusted with decision making.

9.5.4 Inclusion versus Exclusion

The final results and discussion chapter addressed the dichotomy of inclusion versus exclusion and predominantly answered sub question four: *To what extent are TAs fully included as members of the pedagogical team in schools?* TA inclusion or exclusion is part of the power structure functioning in the schools. Headteachers hold the power as to when and who to include or exclude and this impacts on TA status. Although TAs at all schools are involved in weekly staff briefings during their contracted hours their inclusion in staff meetings, which is where much training takes place, confirms previous research in that TAs do not always attend for a variety of reasons such as not being invited (Devecchi and Rouse, 2010) or bring held outside working hours (Devecchi et al, 2012). However, my research shows an improving picture is in evidence although again also evidences exploitation. TAs at St Michael's, the smallest school, attend staff meetings in paid time and are often invited to meetings with EPs. Job descriptions indicate an expectation that TAs may be required to attend some staff meetings. St Mary's engenders a culture where TAs are made to feel welcome at them all and Fernleigh encourages TAs to attend certain meetings deemed applicable. TAs who do not attend staff meetings voluntarily in unpaid time felt the need to justify their non-attendance, evidencing their feelings of guilt but the inclusive nature with which they are treated means they are complicit in their own exploitation. Guilt, integral to the teaching profession (Hargreaves, 1994) is now a fundamental aspect of TA work. However, tension was apparent at City where TAs report they are not always invited to training and meetings that directly impact on their practice which leads to them feeling ill-prepared when changes occur and an undercurrent around consistency exists. Pay or time-in-lieu was offered when attendance was compulsory but being contracted for staff meetings sends out a strong message that TAs are valued, full members of the team. Attendance in these meetings affords TAs agency, understanding their schools better and part of the change process. Inclusion in training, advocated by Huxham and Vangen, (2005) as increasing cohesion and by Wilson *et al,* (2007) as increasing their feelings of worth is pertinent but my research indicated this was still not standard practice.

Similar to existing research (e.g. Webster et al, 2011) no TAs planned regularly with teachers although significantly different either having planning shared with them in advance or, in all schools except St Mary's, allocated paid time to discuss forthcoming events, as was recommended following the DISS research (Blatchford, Russell and Webster, 2012b). St Mary's still relies on TA's unpaid time. A lack of shared planning or time to talk leaves TAs feeling ill-prepared and created anxiety in their work. Collaborative working between para-professionals and teachers was advocated by Giangreco *et al* (2010) and my research indicated a commitment to class teams to aid

working practices. Class teams, which included teachers and TAs, gave TAs stability and opportunity to be part of the decision-making process in the class and this inclusion appears to create a sense of worth and again affords TAs' agency, able to influence their immediate environment. Previous research indicated teachers were ill equipped to deploy TAs (e.g. Wilson and Bedford, 2008) but my research indicates the development of class teams seems to aid their effective deployment. In support of existing research (Chambers, 2015; Bovill, 2017) at times, TAs are undertaking similar roles to teachers but my research suggests, when excluded from training, it places an additional challengeif excluded from training opportunities to the already high expectations placed upon their practice. Inclusion helps to balance out power and creates opportunities for TA agency where they are able to use skills and knowledge to good effect. St Michael's, the smallest school, appears to exhibit the greatest sense of inclusion whilst City, the largest, the least. Perhaps at St Michael's resources are more stretched meaning a greater sense of unity is required in order to fulfil external expectations.

Overall ,TAs are more powerful than they realise and possess knowledge and skills that teachers do not have. Schools legally need teachers but TAs can be readily discarded or contracts altered if the environment changes. However, the TA job market is competitive and demand for the role high; popular amongst women as it works well alongside their role as mothers. TAs are motivated by the children and use characteristics often associated with women regarding nurture and care and this allows their exploitation in relation to the intensification of their role.

9.5.5 How has TA work changed?

The transformation of TA work since the *national agreement* (DfES, 2003) and later associated polices is apparent. TA work has altered beyond recognition with intensification evident in their roles where they work alongside and sometimes in place of teachers. Increased professionalisation brought about through qualifications, training and experience has altered the position of many TAs in schools and given them credibility and expertise. However, exploitation, in relation to whole-class teaching, as level 3 TAs and sometimes level 2s are increasingly finding themselves in this position. TAs are subject to the same control mechanisms as teachers including accountability for the impact of their intervention work. TAs' work also predominantly includes direct contact with children with limited administrative work as part of their paid role. Their work often draws on the characteristics associated with women's work, such as a caring nature, which has long been argued as a facet of teacher work and allows for their exploitation and accounts for their unpaid hours. TAs are increasingly included as part of the school team and involved in staff training but the nature of staff meetings can still mean they are excluded or not remunerated and appears an area of great contention. The pandemic of 2020 has also potentially impacted further on TA work as schools attempt to create socially distanced groups of children.

9.6 The juxtaposition of theory

This study could not be analysed using one theoretical perspective and it was necessary to incorporate elements of several theories in order to fully analyse the findings; different theories being needed to fully analyse each sub question. The intensification of the labour process addresses TA work where upskilling has been made possible through training and knowledge acquisition; often, leading to intensification with increased workloads made possible due to better knowledge. Knowledge also intertwines with power and gives TAs agency to shape their work and their position in the classroom alongside teachers. Intensification of TA work is also possible because of its association with women's work and exploitation is conceivable due to the association of female characteristics such as nurture and care. Already, caught up in a culture of unpaid work through beginning as volunteers, TAs also express feelings of guilt for not doing more, yet most already work beyond their contracted hours. Female traits were acknowledged as part of the job by male and female TAs but women did not want to be exploited for these by men in positions of authority. Power interplayed once again where male teachers could more specifically impact on female TAs. Gender also positioned a male TA in an elevated position although he was undertaking a role so often associated with women's work. However, high investments of emotional labour are required by TAs regardless of gender which places them firmly in the realms of women's work. Power also operates to enforce the management tools of work, the panoptical gaze particularly pertinent in schools. The overt displays of power such as job descriptions and performance management are accepted by TAs and although some scepticism is evident with some of these tools, a lack of challenge in relation to the appropriateness of job descriptions provides opportunity where exploitation as part of the labour process occurs and intensification becomes evident. Performance management, observations and timetables allow for exertion of managerial power whilst encouraging its acceptance with offers of perceived, yet limited agency. The instigation of power in these ways encourages TAs self-regulation and compliance where the primary motivator relates to the good of the children and therefore the school. The interplay between power and its acceptance interplays with women's work and their characteristics of care for others. Autonomous working allows power to interact with TA agency but also again brings in labour process as intensification now has TAs, at times, being as accountable as teachers. The power of headteachers also links with structuration and encompasses the amount of delegated power to teachers. How TAs are included in classrooms as part of the labour process of teaching relies on classroom relationships and the structures in place that enable teacher and TA agency to operate.

9.7 Recommendations for practice

Conducting research in four different case study schools supported comparison and illuminated practices in some that would be beneficial to all primary schools and recommendations for school-based practice are identified below:

- Good connections between teachers and TAs enhances mutual respect and allows for a greater exchange of ideas (Chopra and Uitoo, 2015) and aids their recognition of each other's skills. The creation of class teams (section 8.2), therefore supports this process and appeared to be working successfully, aidingTA inclusion in the classrooms, increasing their knowledge and enhancing their agency and self-worth.

- Good working relationships between teachers and TAs has been advocated as assisting a sense of belonging and supporting collaboration (Symes and Humphreys, 2011). Devecchi and Rouse (2010) also indicate effective collaboration is helped by good relationships. My data indicates that TAs were confident in in their class teams (section 8.2) gaining increased knowledge and expertise and establishing them in this way mitigates against constantly needing to upskill in their own time (section 5.2.3). They had become familiar with their teachers and teachers and TA skills could complement each other.

- Despite research indicating that time for teachers and TAs to plan together is beneficial, time for collaborative planning continues to be rare (e.g. Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015). However, the justification for TAs not being released for planning time with teachers is understood as they are often employed in a capacity to provide continuity for children with cover teachers (section 8.2). Yet, opportunities for medium-term planning would strengthen the sense ofinclusion and assist TA's preparedness and agency and encourage team cohesion. This should be encouraged.

- Webster *et al* (2013) identified the value of adjusting contracts to afford teachers and TAs time to talk. This was occurring in three out of four schools which aided TA preparation (section 6.2). Bovill (2017) suggests TAs are still working unpaid hours outside of contracted time and for some TAs in my research this was the case. Yet if school practice around contracted hours can be correctly managed this should not occur and St Michael's, the smallest school, contracted in such a way which limited opportunities for this to happen. It is therefore recommended that schools examine contracts and actively promote a culture which limits opportunities for exploitation of TAs' goodwill.

- Despite recommendations by the DfEE (2000) that TAs should be included in staff meetings research suggests this is still not routine practice with a variety of reasons cited such as not being paid (e.g. Devecchi et al, 2012) or not being invited (Devecchi and Rouse, 2010) and training often occurs in staff meeting time (Burton and Goodman, 2011). My research indicated TA inclusion in staff meetings and whole-school training was still erratic and not routine policy in three out of the four schools (section 8.3 and 8.4). However, the school where TAs were contracted to attend staff meetings and training aided their inclusion as

members of the school team and ensured they received the same training as teachers; aware of school processes, pedagogical enhancements and policies. In addition, across the schools, TAs indicated that invitations to these meetings aided theirsatisfaction although again allows for exploitation if unpaid, which sometimes was the case. The data suggests TAs were often leading learning either independently or as part of class teams and having access to the same opportunities for training as teachers would be beneficial to their work but there should not be an expectation that this is in TAs' unpaid time.

- Slater and Gazeley (2018) identify teachers often transfer responsibility to TAs in relation to children with SEND. My research indicated this still held merit (section 7.4) but it was evident teachers were also working with these children which will help give TAs greater variety in their work and extend their skills further. Thisshould be encouraged as it may aid parity of outcomes and expectations for all children and low expectations of children with SEND was highlighted by Webster and Blatchford, 2013b) as an issue.TAs still appeared to hold considerable knowledge regarding this group of learners but by encouraging teachers to work with all the children ensures they have greater awareness of their whole class.

- Despite the original intention that whole-class teaching would only be undertaken by specialist TAs such as HLTAs or cover supervisors (DfES, 2003) in all schools except St Michael's, there was evidence that level 2 TAs were being used to cover whole-classes (section 5.3). This practice should be discouraged, regardless of what policy dictates in that setting or LA. TAs at this grade, despite many being willing, supported and seen as capable by their settings, should not be exploited in this way.

9.8 Recommendations for future research

The research highlighted areas for future research in relation to the area of TA work. Firstly, there is limited research in the area of male TAs, only present in one school, and an exploration of how they make sense of their place in a predominantly female environment that places value on traditional female characteristics. Secondly, how male TAs maintain their masculinity in school settings could be examined further and the glass elevator effect and significance of football are worthy of further investigation. Thirdly, how children respond to male TAs compared with female TAs could develop the significance of gender in this work place would adding to work which exists in relation to male teachers undertaken by researchers such as Skelton and Woolhouse (section 6.3 and 6.5). Fourthly, none of the TAs shadowed worked with a teacher of the opposite gender and this appears worthy of additional research The relationships between the TAs and the teachers they directly supported came across in a positive way but the interviews hinted at tensions between female TAs and male teachers (section 6.2.4). In these cases, gender appeared to impact on their

roles, where hierarchies might be in greater evidence or a requirement to take on stereotypical female roles which did not impact on relationships with teachers of the same gender. Fifthly, differences became apparent between larger schools and smaller schools and further investigation between school sizes could be examined with a view to ascertaining if the size of the school was important or whether the differences were due to other factors such as location or leadership. The smaller schools appeared more inclusive with greater cohesion but this may not be the case in all (section 8.5). Finally, the interviews sought opinions from TAs and line managers and could be further enhanced by incorporating teacher interviews, adding another dimension to the research and further aiding triangulation. Work has been undertaken which explores the nature of such topics as TA management (Basford *et al,* 2017), TA mentoring (Burgess and Mayes, 2007) and TAs position in the school hierarchy (Watson *et al*, 2013) but it warrants further exploration as thedynamics between teachers and TAs appear to be changing and more attention could be given to their knowledge, skills and agency and the balance of power between them.

9.9 Limitations

As with any research limitations were evident. Firstly, the research cannot be generalised and merely gives a snapshot as to practice at the time in the four schools which took part in the research. Secondly, the four schools may be atypical in how they work with TAs and the fact they allowed access for the research indicates they must feel they are treating TAs well. Inevitably there should be consideration regarding bias; from a female researcher examining women's work through to the bias due to the preconceptions embedded through my successful relationships with TAs both as a primary school teacher and teacher of TAs on undergraduate degree courses. Thirdly, despite assurances that information would not be fed back to headteachers, there has to be deliberation as to whether TAs were completely truthful. Fourthly, TAs who volunteered to be shadowed were arguably confident of their practice so were not necessarily a true reflection of TAs in the school as a whole. Finally, all the TAs observed directly worked with a teacher of the same gender and an observation that incorporated a pairing with the opposite gender could have proved insightful in relation to teacher/TA relationships.

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Appendices

Appendix one	What is a teaching assistant?
Appendix two	TA questionnaire
Appendix three	Typed examples page from field notes
Appendix four	Interview Schedules
Appendix five	Pilot TA questionnaire
Appendix six	Pilot interview schedule
Appendix seven	Pilot observation schedule
Appendix eight	University ethics committee approval
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Appendix ten	TA consent letter
Appendix eleven	Characteristics of the school
Appendix twelve	Example page from coding book
Appendix thirteen	Codes assigned to themes

Appendix one: What is a teaching assistant?

A distinction needs to be made regarding TAs and support staff in general. The DfES (2002a) identified 16 categories of support staff utilised in schools and these roles can be seen in table A.1.

Teaching assistants	Administrative staff	Librarians
Nursery nurses	Premises manager / staff	Learning mentors
Science technicians	Catering staff	Connexions personal advisers
ICT/technical support staff	Music specialist	Midday supervisors
D and T technicians	Language specialists	Bursars / business managers
Bilingual support assistants		

Table A.1: categories of support staff in schools (DfES, 2002, p.48)

Jackson and Bedford (2005) argued the list was 'somewhat simplistic', not taking account of external support offered to schools such as parent helpers and educational psychologists (EP); the focus firmly on the paid employees in the schools. Blatchford *et al* (2008) also offered distinct categories and distinguished between physical, administrative and pupil support; producing seven groups (see table A.2).

TA equivalent	Teaching assistant Higher level teaching assistant Classroom assistant Learning support assistant (LSA) Learning support assistant for SEN Nursery nurse Therapist
Pupil welfare	Learning mentor, home liaison, education welfare officer, welfare assistant, connexions advisor, nurse
Technicians	Information Communication Technology (ICT) manager, ICT technician, librarian, technology assistant, science technician
Other pupil support	Cover supervisor, bilingual support, midday assistant, escort, midday supervisor, language assistant, exam invigilator
Administrative staff	Bursar, secretary, administrator, office manager, attendance officer, Personal Assistant to head, data manager, exam officer
Facilities staff	Cleaner, cook, other catering
Site staff	Caretaker, premises manager

Table A.2: categories of support staff (Blatchford et al, 2012, p. 50)

As indicated above, several titles for TAs existed despite in 2000 the New Labour government identified TA was the preferred term for those in paid employment working in support of teachers and stated it:

> 'Includes those with a general role and others with specific responsibilities for a child, subject area or age group' (DfES, 2000, n. p.)

However, the TA equivalent terms Blatchford *et al* (2012b) identified in use were still a consolidation of terms used previously and Lowe (2010) suggests that during the 1990s an even wider variety existed. However, the term TA still tends to be the most common; chosen in the DISS project (Blatchford *et al*, 2012b) and was the term used by the majority of the participants involved in my research.

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Appendix two: TA questionnaire (school name)

Please **circle** the most appropriate answer when applicable.

Name	
Contact email **(please print)**	
Age range **(please circle)**	18 – 25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56 & over
Gender	Male / female
Who is your line manager(s)?	
Maths and English GCSE grade (if applicable)(please circle)	Maths A* A B C below C Other English A* A B C below C Other
qualification – please state what in eg **Foundation degree in maths A** levels **in Biology, and French and so on** **Level 3 STALIS**	Full degree in _____ Foundation degree in _____ Level 3 in _____ Level 2 in _____ other
Do you have HLTA status?	Yes/No
If yes, since when (year)	
How long have you worked as a TA? (years)	_____ years
Have you worked in any other career?	Yes/No
If so what?	
How long have you worked at your current school?	_____ years
Do you have children in the school?	Yes/No
Did you have children in the school in the past?	Yes/No
Are you employed full time or part time?	Full time / Part time

How many hours do you work each week?	
How did you get the job? (e.g. saw advert; heard from someone; started as volunteer)	
How would you describe the main duties you undertake on a daily and weekly basis?	
What level are you employed at? (e.g. level 2; 50% level 4 etc)	
Which key stage do you work in?	Early Years Key Stage 1 Key Stage 2 (please circle)
Recent CPD (last 2 years)	
What percentage of the CPD directly relates to your current role?	
Do you attend staff meetings?	Yes/No/sometimes
Do you have annual appraisals with your line manager?	Yes/No
Are you set annual targets?	Yes/No
Is this monitored at intervals in the year?	Yes/No
Do you have a job description?	Yes/No
Do you have a regular timetable?	Yes/No

Thank you for your time

Appendix three: typed examples from field notes

TA 15

8.50	Sorting out b/fasts for 2 children
8.50	Buttering etc bagels. Checking what chn want Giving b/fast to chn. Asked what drinks they want? Explained why they couldn't have tea [too hot & not enough time] As chn ate b/fast general chat. Asking q of children about their weekends etc. Kept conversation flowing with the 2 chn as they ate. Listening attentively to what they have to say.
8.55	[Chn asked who I was] Reminded what doing all week [Off timetable all week – textile week]
8.57	"gather your stuff & enjoy your week have a good day and see you tomorrow"
8.58	3 more customers Guessing what chn wanted " Got it right"
8.59	Getting breakfast ready [bagels] "what do you want to drink?" "water" [gave one bagel to boy]
9.00	Asked what sort of weekend had? Finished off b/fast bagels for other 2 ⇒ Gave them out. "Did I hear a thank you? [thank you]Comment: You boys seem a bit bubbly, sit niuce and quiet for b/fast "Do you remember what you're doing? No "Art" "Are you good?" I know 'X' is? Are you? To ther booys. Chatitng generally about previous work they'd done – arty work- " Bagels gone quick – were you hungry?" Chatted to one about eczema on his arm Finished?" Collected plates up

TA8

9.08	Tr explaining what going to do this morning – follow on from yesterday
	Tr told TA working with HA group ⇒ Tr told her who would be in the gp ⇒
	2 way discussion about who in the gp (respecting opinion)
	Writing activity ⇗ How to plant a seeds
	Tr told TA what wanted TA interjected ideas for trs plan
Q clarifying	Checked where? Paper or book?
	Tr went through chd by chd & expectations ⇒ <u>stretch; get</u>
	On paper; finger spaces; speed etc
	Tr TA discussion Tr – "put date on board" TA asked if should put key words up Tr 'yes & see if generate anymore"
	TA ⇗ Tr discussion on a chd's writing (lots of K of chd)
	Both ⇒ watched video of planting and decided to use it
	Tr " shared write on tis & then they write what they did yesterday"
	TA " shall I put these words in order?
	Tr " No random"
	TA adding to whiteboard
	TA "capitals or lower case"
	Tr "lowercase for a challenge"

Appendix four: Interview Schedule

St Michael's headteacher

Thank you for access, ok to tape – confidentiality etc

1. How long have you been here?
2. Thank you for JD – obviously quite generic from LA. If have a new job coming up would you ask LA for an update? Do they send updates if they do one? Was the last update as a result of single status? Would you adapt it to suit your needs?
3. Are all TAs employed as Level 2? Apart from TA1?
4. Do you think there is any need for a more specific JD for any of the TAs?
5. Has how you support children with SEN in school with SEN changed since the earlier days of SEND?
6. What training have you sent TAs on recently?
7. Have you read the making best use of your TAs by EEF or MITA stuff that came out last year? What did you make of it? Have you considered or applied any of it?
8. How do you decide what interventions to make use of in school?
9. Has how you employ TAs over the years changed? (eg trad lots of TAs start as vols/parents etc)
10. I believe TA1 line manages the other TAs – what does this mean?
11. How do you decide who goes where each year?
12. Do you (or TA1) have regular appraisals with TAs? How often? Do you set targets?
13. Is there an expectation that they attend staff meetings? Are they paid? Is it part of their contract?
14. In what circumstances might you ask a TA (not your HLTA) to cover whole-classes for teacher absences?
15. You have one of the TAs in the middle of HLTA training now – how do you intend to use this?
16. Are TAs ever expected to get involved with teacher's planning sessions? Do teachers share their planning with TAs – how? School procedure?
17. The government proposed last year that there should be TA standards like the HLTA ones but for TAs – they got delayed and eventually shelved. Would you welcome something like that?
18. If you could – had money etc what development would you want to do with your TAs?

St Michael's TA - generic

ok to tape – confidentiality etc

1. Confirm how got job here ? started as vol? check quals level 2/3 etc (TA3) doing them alongside volunteering (TA4)
2. Do you remember getting a job description?
3. What were you taken on to do primarily? Are you still doing that? *(did you get a new JD?) Have you had an updated JD?*
4. Have you moved around key stages/age groups/classes since starting? Why?

5. What are the main things you do each week? Do you have a regular timetable to reflect that?
6. Tell me about the training you did for this?
7. *Do you plan with teachers?* *(how do you know what is coming up in the week?share planning, informal discussions)*
8. Are you responsible for any planning of your own? Does anyone discuss this with you?
9. *Do you do extra hours above your contracted hours?* – *why do you do it? What would happen if you didn't? How do you feel about doing this unpaid work? Do you attend all staff meetings? Do you think how much good will is given depends on your relationship with the teacher? How would you describe the relationship with your class teacher? Close?*
10. What will you do next year and how is that decision made?
11. Do you ever cover the whole-class or another class? How do you feel about this?
12. How do the children respond to you when cover teacher in?
13. How are you directed by teacher? Support gps/indivs??? What are the main things you do in allocated class time?
14. When you are not assigned to a group how do you decide who to go to?
15. Do you have an annual appraisal? How do you feel about this process?
16. Are you aware of school policies on such things as h & s, equality, safeguarding and behaviour?
17. How do you offer support to teachers? Pupils? And maths/numeracy?
18. How do you offer feedback to teachers?
19. How confident are you with using ICT?
20. Do you support any children with SEN? How do you do this?
21. How do you get involved in displays? Preparing the learning environment? Behaviour? Development of positive relationships (chn and adults?)

   Capture close relationship

St Mary's headteacher

Thank you for access, ok to tape – confidentiality etc

22. How long have you been here?
23. Thank you for JD – obviously quite generic from LA. If have a new job coming up would you ask Derbyshire for an update? Do they send updates if they do one? Was the last update as a result of single status? Would you adapt it to suit your needs?
24. Are all TAs employed as Level 2?
25. Do you think there is any need for a more specific JD for a TA?
26. Has how you support children with SEN in school with SEN changed since the earlier days of SEND?
27. When you sent TAs on MITA or was it making best use of your TA? training were you fully aware of what it was about? How did they feed back?
28. Have you read the making best use of your TAs by EEF or MITA stuff that came out last year? What did you make of it? Have you considered or applied any of it?
29. How do you decide what interventions to make use of in school?
30. Has how you employ TAs over the years changed? (eg trad lots of TAs start as vols/parents etc)

31. How do you decide who goes where each year?
32. Do you have regular appraisals with TAs? How often? Do you set targets?
33. Is there an expectation that they attend staff meetings?
34. In what circumstances might you ask a TA to cover whole-classes for teacher absences?
35. Do TAs attend all staff meetings? Is it part of their contract?
36. Are TAs ever expected to get involved with teacher's planning sessions? Do teachers share their planning with TAs – how? School procedure?
37. The government proposed last year that there should be TA standards like the HLTA ones but for TAs – they got delayed. Would you welcome something like that?
38. If you could – had money etc what development would you want to do with your TAs?

St Mary's Teaching assistant - generic

Thank you for obs, ok to tape – confidentiality etc

1. Confirm how got job here ? started as vol? did you have the right quals then? (the L2)
2. Do you remember getting a job description?
3. What were you taken on to do primarily? Are you still doing that? *(did you get a new JD?)*
4. Have you moved around key stages/age groups since starting?
5. What are the main things you do each week? Do you have a regular timetable to reflect that?
6. Tell me about the training you did for this?
7. You recently did the MITA training? Did you discuss it upon your return? What has been the impact in school if any?
8. *Do you plan with teachers? (how do you know what is coming up in the week?share planning, informal discussions)*
9. Are you responsible for any planning of your own? Does anyone discuss this with you?
10. *Do you do extra hours above your contracted hours? – why do you do it? What would happen if you didn't? How do you feel about this expectation to do unpaid work? Do you attend all staff meetings? Do you think how much good will is given depends on your relationship with the teacher? How would you describe the professional relationship with your class teacher?*
11. What will you do next year and how is that decision made?
12. Do you ever cover the whole-class or another class? How do you feel about this?
13. How do the children respond to you when cover teacher in?
14. How are you directed by teacher? Support gps/indivs???
15. When you are not assigned to a group how do you decide who to go to?
16. Do you have an annual appraisal? How do you feel about this process?
17. How do you get involved with parents?
18. Do you feel confident in applying the school's behaviour policy? Do you feel that children respond as well to you as they do for the class teacher?
19. How do you get involved in the pastoral side of things?

Fernleigh headteacher representative - SENDCO (line manger TAs)

Thank you for access, ok to tape – confidentiality etc

1. How long have you been here?
2. Thank you for JD – obviously quite generic from LA for the level 5 and 6 (check if at level HLTA would be employed at) . If have a new job coming up would you ask LA for an update? Do they send updates if they do one (NOTICE IT ISNT DATED)? Was the last update as a result of single status? Do you adapt it to suit your needs?
3. Do you think there is any need for a more specific JD for any of the TAs?
4. Has how you support children with SEN in school with SEN changed since the earlier days of SEND?
5. What training have you sent TAs on recently?
6. I think you are aware of making best use of your TAs by EEF or MITA stuff that came out last year? What did you make of it? Have you considered or applied any of it?
7. How do you decide what interventions to make use of in school?
8. Has how you employ TAs over the years changed? (eg trad lots of TAs start as vols/parents and velcroed etc)
9. In saying that there does appear to be a child with SEN who has a decdicated TA – tell me about the reasoning behind that?
10. How do you decide who goes where each year? *(any TAs who do bnot move?)*
11. Do you have regular appraisals with TAs? How often? Do you set targets?
12. Is there an expectation that they attend staff meetings? Are they paid? Is it part of their contract?
13. In what circumstances might you ask grade 6 TAs to cover whole-classes for teacher absences? Would you EVER ask a grade 5?
14. Are TAs ever expected to get involved with teacher's planning sessions? Do teachers share their planning with TAs – how? School procedure?
15. The government proposed last year that there should be TA standards like the HLTA ones but for TAs – they got delayed and eventually shelved. However taken on more or less and promoted by MITA website and National College of HTs?
16. If you could – had money etc what development would you want to do with your TAs?

Fernleigh TA generic

ok to tape – confidentiality etc

1. Confirm how got job here ? heard through PTA?? Do you remember getting a job description when you were taken on?
2. What were you taken on to do primarily? You are you still doing that? *(did you get a new JD?) Have you had an updated JD?* Why changed?
3. Have you moved around key stages/age groups/classes since starting? Why?
4. What are the main things you do each week? (**pupil premium intervention)** Do you have a regular timetable to reflect that?
5. Tell me about the training you did for this?
6. *Do you plan with teachers? (how do you know what is coming up in the week?share planning, informal discussions)* **How would you get to input/contribute? (JD)**
7. Are you responsible for any planning of your own? Does anyone discuss this with you?

8. *Do you do extra hours above your contracted hours? – why do you do it? What would happen if you didn't? How do you feel about doing this unpaid work? Do you attend all staff meetings? Do you think how much good will is given depends on your relationship with the teacher? How would you describe the relationship with your class teacher? Close?*
9. What will you do next year and how is that decision made?
10. Do you feel that there are things you do that are not on your JD?
11. Do you ever cover the whole-class or another class? How do you feel about this? **Grade 6 in JD** *Did you get asked as a grade 5?*
12. How do the children respond to you when cover teacher in?
13. Do you have an annual appraisal? How do you feel about this process?
14. **Do you attend staff meetings?** Are you paid?
15. How would you describe your relationship with your CT?
16. **How aware are you of school policies such as behaviour?**
17. **How do you input into things like IEPs/behaviour plans etc**
18. **Do you work independently on recording pupil information? How would the teacher make use of this?**
19. **How are you involved in display?**

From JD

City - headteacher
Thank you for access, ok to tape – confidentiality etc

1 How long have you been here?
2 Thank you for JD – who has designed it? If have a new job coming up would update it?
3 Are TAs employed at different levels? And used accordingly?
4 Do you think there is any need for a more specific JD for any of the TAs? Do they have it?
5 Has how you support children with SEN in school with SEN changed since the earlier days of SEND?
6 What training have you sent TAs on recently?
7 Have you read the making best use of your TAs by EEF or MITA stuff that came out last year? What did you make of it? Have you considered or applied any of it?
8 How do you decide what interventions to make use of in school?
9 Has how you employ TAs over the years changed? (eg trad lots of TAs start as vols/parents etc)
10 I believe TA29 line manages the other TAs – what does this mean? What leadership training have middle managers had
11 How do you decide who goes where each year?
12 Do you or phase leaders have regular appraisals with TAs? How often? Do you set targets?
   How do you ensure TAs are doing what is asked of them?
13 Is there an expectation that they attend staff meetings? Are they paid? Is it part of their contract?
14 In what circumstances might you ask a TA (**not your HLTA)** to cover whole-classes for teacher absences?
15

16 Lots of TAs in schools do additional unpaid hours – does that happen here
17 How has converting to an academy affected how you use TAs Are TAs ever expected to get involved with teacher's planning sessions? Do teachers share their planning with TAs – how? School procedure?
18 The government proposed last year that there should be TA standards like the HLTA ones but for TAs – they got delayed and eventually shelved. Would you welcome something like that
19 If you could – had money etc what development would you want to do with your TAs?

City TA - generic

Thank you for obs (if applicable), ok to tape – confidentiality etc

1. Confirm how got job here ?
2. Do you remember getting a job *description?*
3. What were you taken on to do primarily? Are you still doing that? (did you get a new JD?)
4. Did anything change when you became an academy?
5. What are the main aspects of your role?
6. Do you feel you do things not on your JD
7. Do you get to plan with you teachers? (how do you know what is coming up in the week? Are you responsible for any of your own planning? What? How do you feel about that? Does anyone check it?
8. Do you do extra hours above your contracted hours? –eg come in early are the additional hours you put in related to the relationship with the class teacher? How would you describe your relationship ?
9. Do you attend all staff meetings? (briefing/training?) are you contracted for this?
10. What will you do next year and how is that decision made?
11. How was the decision made about what you did this academic year made?
12. Generic JDs talk about support for pupils – how do you interpret that?
13. Generic JDs talk about support for teachers – what does that entail? Monitoring/ assessment/ display?
14. JDs state support for the school – how aware do you think you are of school procedures and policies such as behaviour, marking?
15. Do you have any additional responsibilities such as curricular?
16. Do you ever cover the whole-class or another class? How do you feel about this?
17. How do the children respond to you when cover teacher in?
18. How are you directed by teacher? Support gps/indivs???
19. Do you feel you have been trained sufficiently to carry out your duties?
20. Which children do you tend to support the most

Appendix five: Pilot TA questionnaire (pilot school)

Name					
Contact email **(please print)**					
Age range **(please circle)**	18 – 25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56 & over
Gender	Male / female				
Who is your line manager(s)?					
Maths and English GCSE grade (if applicable)	Maths ____ English ____				
Highest qualification What subject (if applicable e.g. A levels in maths and biology; foundation degree in art; level 2 CYPW)	Full degree Foundation degree Level 3 Level 2 other _____ _____ _____ _____				
Do you have HLTA status?	Yes/No				
If yes, since when (year)					
How long have you worked as a TA? (years)	_____ years				
Have you worked in any other career?	Yes/No				
If so what?					
How long have you worked at your current school?	_____ years				
Do you have children in the school?	Yes/No				
Did you have children in the school in the past?	Yes/No				

Are you employed full time or part time?	Full time / Part time
How many hours do you work each week?	
How did you get the job? (e.g. saw advert; heard from someone; started as volunteer)	
How would you describe the main duties you undertake on a daily and weekly basis?	
What level are you employed at? (e.g. level 2; 50% level 4 etc)	
What grade are you employed at?	
Which key stage do you work in?	Early Years Key Stage 1 Key Stage 2 (please circle)
Recent CPD (last 2 years)	
What percentage of the CPD directly relates to your current role?	
Do you attend staff meetings?	Yes/No
Do you have annual appraisals with your line manager?	Yes/No
Are you set annual targets?	Yes/No
Is this monitored at intervals in the year?	Yes/No
Do you have a job description?	Yes/No
Do you have a regular timetable?	Yes/No

Please **circle** the most appropriate answer when applicable.

Thank you for your time

Appendix six: Pilot interview schedule – Line manager

Line Manager Interview

ok to record?

Remind confidential; can refuse to answer etc

This is about TAs and the JDs

Do you work directly with the TAs you manage?

Teaching support

1.1 TAs are asked to uphold philosophies of the school. Do you feel they will understand this

TAs are working under direction/guidance of teacher. What does this look like?

How are TAs expected to know what teachers want them to do?

Are TAs expected to take responsibility for any planning etc of their own?

Do you feel they are aware of how to record progress?

What policies do you expect TAs to be familiar with?

How do they get involved with whole school training? Are they expected or allowed to attend staff meetings? paid?

Name _____

School_____

Day_____

Date_____

TA role/grade_____

TICKS I NEACH BOX – MORE THAN ONE –IORDER 1,2,3 ETC IN EACH 5 MIN TIME FRAME

ADITIONAL NOTES – TIME

UNDER GUIDANCE AND UNDER DIRECTION USED INTERCHANGEABLY

3.1 INTERPRETED AS NOT ASSIGNED TO A GROUP OR ELSE OVERLAPS WITH OUT SPECIFYING GROUP OR 1:1 WITH 1.4

1.3 TAKEN TO BE BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT TYPE ACTIVITIES

Time A4 size	1.10 promote gd behav inc enc chn to taker resp	1.8 small gps access to library/ICT	1.8 1:1 access lib/ict etc	1.7 ensure suitable eqpt/prep resources	1.6 Clerical eg copying	1.4 small gp **support on** pre planned activities to reinforce teacher	1.4 1:1` **support** pre planned activities to reinforce teacher	1.3 **supervise** activities and supervise general m/ment and control of pupils	2.1 Provide sp and guidance gps in core skills and curric needs	2.1 Provide sp and guidance 1:1 in core skills and curric needs	2.2 Encour inclusion of all pupils to partake in activities and access NC	2.3 Indiv assist or in gps assist thru implementing BPs or IEPs	3.1 **Assist in structured and agreed learning activities** **FLOATING ASSISTANCE**	3.3 Assist in prep and tidying of C/R and upkeep of resources
900														
905														
910														
915														
920														
925 - 930														

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Time A4 size	1.10 promote gd behav inc enc chn to taker resp	1.8 small gps access to library/ ICT	1.8 1:1 access lib/ict etc	1.7 ensure suitable eqpt/ prep resources	1.6 Clerical eg copying	1.4 small gp **support on** pre planned activities to reinforce teacher	1.4 1:1` **support** pre planned activities to reinforce teacher	1.3 **supervise** activities and supervise general m/ment and control of pupils (bm)	2.1 Provide sp and guidance gps in core skills and curric needs	2.1 Provide sp and guidance 1:1 in core skills and curric needs	2.2 Encour inclusion of all pupils to partake in activities and access NC	2.3 Indiv assist or in gps assist thru implementing BPs or IEPs	3.1 **Assist in structured and agreed learning activities** FLOATING ASSISTANCE	3.3 Assist in prep and tidying of C/R and upkeep of resources
930														
935														
940														
945														
950														
955														

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Time A3 size	1.10 promote gd behav inc enc chn to taker resp	1.8 small gps access to library/ICT	1.8 1:1 access lib/ict etc	1.7 ensure suitable eqpt/prep resources	1.6 Clerical eg copying	1.4 small gp support on pre planned activities to reinforce teacher	1.4 1:1` support pre planned activities to reinforce teacher	1.3 supervise activities and supervise general m/ment and control of pupils (BM)	2.1 Provide sp and guidance gps in core skills and curric needs	2.1 Provide sp and guidance 1:1 in core skills and curric needs	2.2 Encour inclusion of all pupils to partake in activities and access NC	2.3 Indiv assist or in gps assist thru implemen ting BPs or IEPs	3.1 Assist in structured and agreed learning activities FLOATING ASSIST	3.3 Assist in prep and tidying of C/R and upkeep of resources
1100														
1105														
1110														
1115														
1120														
1125														

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Time A3	1.10 promote gd behav inc enc chn to taker resp	1.8 small gps access to library/ICT	1.8 1:1 access lib/ict etc	1.7 ensure suitable eqpt/prep resources	1.6 Clerical eg copying	1.4 small gp **support on** pre planned activities to reinforce teacher	1.4 1:1` **support** pre planned activities to reinforce teacher	1.3 **supervise** activities and supervise general m/ment and control of pupils (bm)	2.1 Provide sp and guidance gps in core skills and curric needs	2.1 Provide sp and guidance 1:1 in core skills and curric needs	2.2 Encour inclusion of all pupils to partake in activities and access NC	2.3 Indiv assist or in gps assist thru implementing BPs or IEPs	3.1 **Assist in structured and agreed learning activities** **FLOATING ASSIST**	3.3 Assist in prep and tidying of C/R and upkeep of resources	
1130															
1135															
1140															
1145															
1150															
1155 - 12															

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Interview LM (pilot)

Pupil support

How do TAs get involved in implementing IEPs etc. Planning? Self? Specialised training? Much 1:1 support? Where do it?

How else are they involved in inclusion?

How does the school expect TAs to provide support to individuals and groups?

Would TAs be expected to use physical restraint on pupils? If so under what circs? Trg?

Under what circs would TAs be expected to get involved in intimate care of children? Additional trg?

How do TAs get involved in reviews for children with IEPs?

Curric

General

Do you feel that the TAs are aware of current issues in safeguarding and what to do?

How are TAs informed of changes to policy/legislation and so on?

TA interview (pilot)

Thank – remind about recording; data will be anonymised; pilot; don't have to answer questions if don't want.

Obs yesterday.

Typical morning? What else would you REGULARLY do that I didn't see?

Questions relating to JD.

JD talks of working under supervision, direction and guidance of teacher/staff. How is this evident?

Teacher support

1.1 – says you should actively uphold the philosophy of the school. What does this mean to you?

1.2 And 1.5 How do you get involved in recording pupil progress? Do you do this independently? In what circs?

1.9 Do you ever get involved in educational visits? What role would you take in this?

1.10 How able do you feel you are in relation to dealing with behavioural incidences? Do you feel knowledgeable regarding the school policy? Do you feel you need guidance from the teacher?

1.11 How do you get involved in training? In school? External? Why?

Pupil support

2.1 when supporting groups or individuals do you get involved in planning? Self? With teacher?

2.3 Are you aware of which pupils have IEPs? Do you work with any of these children? What knowledge, training or additional guidance do you have? Do you get involved with the planning of activities for these children? Do you feel skilled in these areas?

2.4 Do you ever work with pupils who would require physical restraint? Do you know what to do? Strategy team teach? Know what it is?

2.5 Do you ever deal with minor medical issues? Are you trained? Are you ever called upon to get involved in intimate care of children?

2.6 How do you get involved in education plans for children? Do you help teacher develop? Attend reviews?

2.7 do you do lunch-time cover? Break? For teachers? Planned or short notice?

curriculum

3.2 do you do displays?

3.4 How often do you attend meetings? Whole staff? With class teacher? Staff trg? Paid?

General

4.1 how equipped do you feel you are to safeguard children? Trg? Know who go to?

4.2.1 do you feel up to date with the latest initiatives/policies at school? Do you feel kept in the loop?

Planning – own and with teacher

Appendix eight: Research Degrees Sub-Committee

APPLICATION TO REGISTER FOR A PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE

Submitted by the Faculty of Business, Education and Law

Applicants and their supervisors should consult the University's Regulations for the award of Research Degrees before completing this form. Copies may be obtained from the University's website or the Research Degrees Administrator.

Name of Candidate	**Fiona Hall**
Research Award (delete as appropriate)	**EdD**
Mode of Study **(full time or part time)**	**Part time**
Title of the Research Project	An investigation into the practice of Teaching Assistants within Primary Schools: Analysing institutional policy and practice
Home Address	Xxxx Xxxx xxxx
Correspondence Address (if different)	

	As above
Daytime Tel No	07976710778
Email address	Fiona.hall@staffs.ac.uk
Date of enrolment on award	Jan 2013
Start date requested for research degree registration purposes.	Nov 2015

The Research Degrees Sub-Committee will approve up to six months back-dating from the date of receipt of the application. Requests for longer back-dating must be accompanied by a report of progress already achieved and justification for retrospective registration, supported by your supervisory team.

Expected average weekly commitment to the research programme (in hours)	20
Expected submission date for the thesis *(Please refer to the University Regulations for minimum and maximum registration periods)*	Sept 18
Intellectual Property Rights Are there any IPR implications for this research project? If yes, please detail how they have been, or will be, addressed.	<mark>N/A</mark>
Source of Financial Support Give particulars of any studentship or other award held in connection with the proposed research programme	<mark>Fee remission gained through the TFAQ approval process.</mark>
Details of Higher Education qualifications gained Institution attended, dates, award, classification, etc.	Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of Manchester (2006) Dissertation title:

If Masters award included a dissertation research project provide <u>title</u> and <u>word length.</u>	"A Study of the Issues Affecting Adolescent Females of Asian Heritage Living in Britain" Word length: 20,000
Training and experience (include details of activities undertaken [with dates] relevant to this application and any research or other <u>relevant conference papers, articles,</u> books etc which have been published)	2 years study on the Ed.D. at Staffordshire University already completed. Modules 1 – 5 all passed.
Will your programme of research be largely conducted at the University?	<mark>Yes (excluding fieldwork in primary schools)</mark>
Collaborating Establishment If appropriate, give full address. Attach: ▪ A letter of support. ▪ A statement of contingency measures.	**Not applicable**

DELETED THE SECTION REGARDING THE PG CERT RESEARCH METHODS AS EdD & DBA ARE EXEMPT FROM THIS AWARD

- **FACILITIES AVAILABLE FOR THE INVESTIGATION** (including funding and location).

Please indicate the facilities/resources available for the research project, and any additional facilities/resources that the Faculty or University is required to provide. Please indicate the proportion of time to be spent working at the University and any Collaborating Establishment. If it is proposed that part of your programme of work will take place outside Staffordshire University, please specify the facilities/resources available to you at the partner or collaborating establishment.

NB: In the case of any collaborative work the RDC1 must be accompanied by a letter confirming the collaboration and the availability of facilities/resources in support of the project. In addition, the student and his supervisors must give details of contingency measures to deal with possible changes of the collaboration which could have a detrimental impact on the research programme (for example if the Collaborating Establishment ceases operating, decides to withdraw its support, changes its project requirements, etc). The statement of contingency measures must show that successful completion of the programme is not coupled tightly to the collaboration.

THIS STUDY WILL NOT REQUIRE ANY SPECIAL FACILITIES

- **ETHICS**

For the purposes of ethical approval you must as a minimum complete the Fast Track Form (available from the University Academic Ethics web page). The Fast Track form acts as a filter and once completed you will be able to identify whether you should complete a full University ethics form for your Faculty Ethics Committee or an Independent Peer Review form for the University IPR Panel. If you are applying to an external body such as the NHS, Social Care or the Ministry of Justice, you will need to complete the IPR form.

If you are completing the full University Ethics Form of applying for ethical approval externally subsequent to the submission of your RDC1 you must notify the Faculty Research Degrees Administrator when you have received your final approval.

I/We confirm that ethical implications concerned with the proposed research programme have been considered by the Candidate and the Supervision Team and where appropriate, a full application to an Ethics Committee (eg Faculty, University, NHS) has or will be made when the complete details of the research programme are known:

Ethical approval (delete as necessary):

Not Applicable (append the completed Fast Track form)

Applicable - <mark>**approved**</mark> **-** provide details of application(s) and outcomes(s) and append documents

Applicable - to be approved - provide details

Signatures: Candidate: *Fiona Hall*   Date 11th Jan 16

Principal Supervisor: Cheryl Bolton Date: 11th Jan 16

- **RISK ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

In completing this section the supervision team should consult the guidance available on the University's Health & Safety website:
***http://www.staffs.ac.uk/support_depts/healthandsafety/index.jsp*. In particular the University's** *Health and Safety Policy* **identifies the responsibilities of academic staff. Supervisors should note that this responsibility cannot be discharged by relying upon the research student's perceived competence. Supervision teams will find in addition to information on laboratory and studio-based risks this website contains important health and safety guidance likely to be of relevant to most subject areas e.g. on lone working, field work and working overseas.**

The Principal Supervisor should identify areas of work in the following risk categories:

A   =   Those where work may <u>not</u> be undertaken without <u>direct</u> supervision;

B   =   Those where work may not be started without the supervisor's advice and approval;

C   =   Activities which can only be undertaken unsupervised after appropriate training.

D = Those with risks (other than categories A & B) where extra care must be observed, but where it   is considered that this student is already adequately trained and competent in the procedures involved;

E = Those where the risks are insignificant and carry no special supervision considerations.

The nature of the risks should be defined, e.g. lone working, toxicity, explosion, fieldwork risks (e.g. risks from respondents, travelling risks), high-voltage, lasers, flammability etc.

Instructions and advice should include the method of work and the safeguards (e.g. personal safety training; access to panic buttons and mobile phones) to be used.

The person who is to supervise A and B risks should be identified

Nature and Method of Work	Hazards/Risks	Safeguards	Category Assigned
Questionnaire with school staff	Limited risk. Participants can choose not to answer any questions they don't want to.	Clear information given regarding voluntary participation.	D
Observation of Teaching Assistants	Limited risk	Researcher has current DBS certificate. Research ex primary teacher so familiar with the workings of the such settings. Observations will be undertaken as part of the participants' usual working day.	C

		The children are not being observed and are not part of the data collection process.	
		The TAs are used to observations by other TAs, teachers and head teachers.	
		Discussion prior to observation regarding option for withdrawal from the process	
Interviews with school staff.	Limited risks	Questions won't be of a personal nature.

Discussion prior to commencement regarding voluntary participation etc. | D |

Signatures: Candidate: *Fiona Hall*   Date 11th Jan 16

Principal Supervisor: ……………………………… Date: ……………[...]

- **PROPOSED PLAN OF WORK**

You must submit a proposed plan of work with this application. It must include details on the following sections:

1.   Aims of the investigation

The aim of the study is to investigate the practice of TAs within primary settings by investigating How TAs are employed in primary schools and how this compares with what is stated in their job descriptions.

2.   Objectives of the project

There are four main objectives:

1.   What roles are identified on the job descriptions of TAs in the case study schools?
2.   How are TAs' roles represented on school timetables?
3.   How does TA practice compare with their job descriptions?
4.   How do TAs execute their roles in relation to their job descriptions, and why?

3.   Context of the investigation

A key policy *Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: A National Agreement* (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2003) led to contractual changes and greater employment of support staff in schools (Department for Education (DfE), 2013). The policy aimed to implement changes for teaching staff that would reduce their workload by removing administrative tasks from their schedule and providing time for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA). It was suggested that this would improve their work/life balance. In order to make this possible, the role of TAs would be affected with an expansion of their duties and it was also suggested that TA numbers in schools would also increase

As part of the National Agreement, there was an attempt to increase the professional status of TAs and new roles were introduced such as Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) who would lead lessons with classes of students. It was envisaged HLTAs would help make 'substantial contribution to the teaching and learning process in schools and to raising standards of achievement' (DfES, 2003 p. 13). Guidelines relating to HLTA status offered a clear set of national standards (Teaching and Development Agency (TDA), 2007a).

The National Agreement intended that TAs would be supporting teachers by purely providing administrative tasks (DfES, 2003), however Butt & Lance (2009) found there was 'a blurring of boundaries between those who teach and those who support

teaching' (Butt & Lance, 2009, p.227). Wilson & Bedford (2008) also identified how TA roles had changed dramatically in the years after education workforce remodelling and aired concerns over TAs teaching, which they felt was leading to a reduction in the standard of teaching and learning including pupil performance in complete contrast to one of the primary aims. Blatchford, Russell & Webster (2012) also found that greater numbers of TAs had direct contact with children than was initially envisaged. However, although in 2001 occupational standards had been drawn up to cover support staff across England (TDA, 2007b) the National Agreement did not necessarily lead to greater levels of qualifications and OFSTED (2010) noted there has been no requirement for them to have any formal qualifications (OFSTED, 2010).

In addition, with regard to the support of children's learning, it has been found that TAs are often not making a significant difference, often focusing on task completion and not on assisting children to become independent thinkers (Blatchford, Russell & Webster, 2012). Furthermore TAs are often covering PPA time (Blatchford, Russell & Webster, 2012) when it would be of greater benefit to learners if they were involved in the planning of learning alongside the teachers they support (Russell, Webster & Blatchford, 2013). Similar findings continue to be identified in more recent analysis of TA practice (Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, 2015).

TAs are also increasingly supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Both Fraser & Meadows (2008) and Webster & Blatchford (2013) clearly point out the children with SEN are regularly withdrawn from the classroom by TAs which Blatchford et al. (2009) documented was to the detriment of their inclusion in the whole-class experience.

What is also interesting to note is that TAs' job descriptions often did not exist (Lorenz, 1998) and although in 2000, the government identified that 'clear and accurate job descriptions should be every employee's right' (Department for Education and Skills, 2000, p.15) there are still calls for clearer job descriptions (Butt & Lowe, 2012) where there is less ambiguity (Butt & Lance, 2009) and requests for them to exist (Lowe, 2010). More recently it has been recommended that school managers not only examine job descriptions but also the qualifications of TAs to ensure they have the necessary credentials to support children's learning if they are expected to take on a pedagogical role (Radford et al. 2015). The anticipated TA standards, in consultation in 2014 (DfE, 2014) and due for publication in March 2015 but delayed, may well impact in the future.

4.   Theoretical basis

Much of the theoretical base is yet to be developed as information around job descriptions and TA management, for example, becomes evident. However some theory that is likely to be used is that connected with guiding learning. Indeed Blatchford et al. (2009) in their research noted that 40% of TAs' time was involved in direct pupil support and this being the case established theories relating to teaching and learning will be relevant for example Vygotsky and Bruner.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasised the role social learning played on cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) stressed the active involvement needed in learning and also coined the phrase 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) which is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). He also used the phrase 'more knowledgeable other' (MKO) to describe the person offering the assistance (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's views have continued to be supported. Mercer (2000) for example, emphasises the requirement to recognise how people work together to construct knowledge and Mcleod (2007) notes the contemporary application of Vygotskian theory in the domain of reciprocal teaching where teachers and pupils work together practicing four key elements; summarising, questioning, clarifying and predicting. The role taken by the teacher reduces as the students gain competence. To work within the ZPD, Vygotsky (1978) also believed that children's learning needs 'scaffolding' which was specifically used by Wood, Bruner & Ross (1976) to describe adult assistance in learning.

Mercer (2000) offers a development on Vygotsky's ZPD and discusses the Intermental Development Zone (IDZ) which draws on both scaffolding and the ZPD. He uses the term to discuss the dynamic context in which knowledge is acquired via language and joint actions and there is much greater focus on communication.

Rubie-Davies et al. (2010) also mention Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) Initiation, Response, Feedback (IRF) model which is the common format for questioning whilst encompassing the transfer of knowledge. It can be considered as part of the scaffolding process but Jones (2007) notes IRF can be considered as "closing down, by the teacher" (Jones 2007, p. 571) and much classroom talk can be of this nature (Sharp, 2008). Alexander (2008) identifies the prevalence for closed questions, a lack of focused, useful feedback and poor group work in much classroom discourse. However Sharp (2008) goes onto explain how a supportive dialogue can be obtained

if the feedback response helps develop the pupil to think more critically "and provides the opportunity for the teacher to support students in absorbing new information … as they work within their zone of proximal development to gain new understanding"(Sharp, 2008, p138).

5.   Methods of investigation

Head teachers in four primary schools will be approached to gain permission to undertake research in the schools. A pilot school has already been arranged through a head teacher who is an existing contact. The case study primary schools will be selected so that a range of school characteristics are represented (see categories for selection below):

Maintained	Academy
OFSTED rating good or above	OFSTED rating below good
One form entry	More than one form entry
Faith	Non faith
Rural	Inner city

The top two HIGHLIGHTED characteristics are likely to be most significant in terms of determining the school sample. However, other characteristics will be identified and evaluated so as to represent different types of school within the primary sector.

Head teachers will also be asked to supply generic TA job descriptions and TA timetables. Once access to the case study schools has been gained, the second phase is to distribute questionnaires to all TAs in each school. This is expected to include approximately 40 TAs across 4 schools. The data generated through the initial questionnaire will provide quantitative data on the following issues:

This raw data will be analysed in order to select the sample for the third phase of data collection and will be selected to be representative of TAs working in the schools. In addition numeric data will be generated relating to the TA characteristics and TA qualifications, role and HLTA status are of particular interest. The timetables will give information regarding the amount of time TAs are allocated to different aspects of their role.

The third phase will be to observe 8 TAs, two from each school, who will be selected to ensure a representative sample of TAs across the schools. The purpose of this is to observe what activities the TAs are undertaking and to analyse these against their job descriptions. Observations will take place prior to any interviews. The observations will produce both quantitative and qualitative data. Firstly, by means of tallying tasks and any additional tasks not on job descriptions will be noted. Secondly, as part of the observation process field notes will be made of any 'critical incidents' which will require further reflection and investigation. The observation process will establish the extent to which TA practice reflects the main purpose and tasks outlined in the job descriptions.

The fourth phase will be to interview the eight TAs who were observed. This will enable reflection and discussion regarding aspects of the TAs role, as outlined in job descriptions and timetables, which were not observed. In addition two further TAs from each school will be interviewed in order to substantiate the TA role, investigate if their tasks are comparable with the observed TAs and enable patterns of similarities and differences to be established across the schools.

Finally the TAs' line managers in each school, four in total, will be interviewed as this will enable a different perspective of the TA's role to be obtained. All the interviews will be face to face, recorded and fully transcribed.

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│  │          Access four schools          │  │
│  │   Get job descriptions and timetables │  │
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│  │          40 TA questionnaires         │  │
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│  │      8 observations (two per school)  │  │
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│  │ 4 line manager interviews (one per    │  │
│  │ school)                               │  │
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Objective one: The initial data collected via the questionnaires will be examined by way of descriptive statistics that will enable context to be given to the participants and analysis will show patterns amongst them.

Objectives two and three: Details regarding job descriptions and timetables will also make use of descriptive statistics in order to look for similarities and differences and can be cross referenced with some of the data generated from the questionnaires. It should also be possible to generate some correlation data relating to the quantitative data collected from the questionnaires, job descriptions and timetables.

Objectives four and five: The observation data will be examined on an individual basis, as the observation sheet will be developed so that it specifically relates to each individual's job description. These will then be examined holistically, in order to search for themes and patterns across the participants as a whole.

Objectives four and five: Transcripts will be made from the interviews. The transcripts, alongside any field notes, will be read and reread so that they become familiar and will lead to the development of the themes which will be raised for detailed analysis. Text will therefore be coded in order to identify similar information and will begin after the first field notes and interviews occur and it will be an ongoing process. Nvivo, a software package, will be utilised to support the management and storage of this data and also assist in the classification and retrieval of information. Information retrieved will relate to the assigned codes and will undergo content analysis, initially under larger subheadings before refining the categories and finally drawing together the information. Throughout it will be important to constantly reflect as an element of subjectivity will arise from the collection of qualitative data.

6.   Timescale

November 2015 –January 2016	Locate participant schools
October 2015 – June 2016	• Methodology investigation and write up chapter • Questionnaire data collection from TAs • Draft literature review
June 2016 –Dec 2016	• TA observations and interviews • Initial analysis

Dec 2016 – Aug2017	• Analysis • Findings and discussion
Aug 2017 – April 2018	Writing up
Apr 2018 – Aug 2018	Updating literature
Aug 2018	Submission of thesis

7.   Expected outcome or outcomes

If TAs are increasingly employed in direct pedagogical roles, job descriptions should clearly indicate this expectation. The research will contribute towards the evidence base around institutional policy and practice and it is expected that this could offer some insight into the value, in performance terms, of having clearly identified expectations. It is also envisaged that this could impact on training providers of TA qualifications.

 I will disseminate my findings at conference level such as those directly targeting head teachers for whom the findings will be pertinent as well as submission of articles for publication in appropriate journals such as:

1. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice;*
2. *Support for Learning; Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education;*
3. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice and learning and Instruction*

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Plan of work guidelines:

PLEASE INCLUDE A 400 WORD (MAXIMUM) SYNPOSIS OF THE RESEACH PROJECT FOR THE LAY READER

1. FOR THE PLAN OF WORK: A <u>maximum</u> of 2,500 words should be used. A student may use fewer words if they choose to do so, but <u>may not use more</u>.

2. Use <u>Arial font</u> - <u>size 11</u>

3. Footnotes should be used to provide a <u>reference / citation for the reader</u>. A <u>short and brief explanation</u> (if one is required of a particular point) may be included, but should be used only where necessary and <u>not</u> to circumvent the word limit.

4. The references / bibliography required <u>are not included</u> in the word limit of 2,500 words permitted, but <u>should not exceed three pages and should adhere to the Arial font – size 11 stipulation.</u>

5. The time-line for the project is <u>not</u> included in the word-limit.

6. Tables and diagrams are not included in word limits but should be <u>used only to explain and enhance as necessary</u> and <u>not</u> as an attempt to circumvent the limit.

- **SUPERVISION OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK**

INTERNAL SUPERVISORS - a Supervisors CV proforma must be submitted for each supervisor (available from the Research Awards Administrator). Other forms of C.V. will **NOT** be accepted.

Name of Principal Supervisor	Cheryl Bolton
Department and Faculty	School of Education
Email address	c.bolton@staffs.ac.uk

Area(s) of subject expertise	Educational policy, Bourdieusian theory applied to Education, leadership and teacher practice.			
Number of registered research degree candidates currently supervised	MPhil		PhD EdD	3 8
Number of candidates previously supervised to successful completion	MPhil		PhD	
Undertaken the University's Research Supervisors Training Module, and actively researching	YES / NO / **IN PROGRESS** (If yes, date of successful completion)			

Name of Supervisor	Katy Vigurs			
Department and Faculty	School of Education Faculty of Business, Education and Law			
Email address	K.Vigurs@staffs.ac.uk			
Area(s) of subject expertise	Social justice and education, professional development in education.			
Number of registered research degree candidates currently supervised	MPhil		PhD EdD	4 13
Number of candidates previously supervised to successful completion	MPhil		PhD EdD	1 1
Undertaken the University's Research Supervisors Training Module, and actively researching	**YES** / NO / IN PROGRESS (If yes, date of successful completion)			2010

Name of Supervisor	
Department and Faculty	
Email address	
Area(s) of subject expertise	

Number of registered research degree candidates currently supervised	MPhil		PhD	
Number of candidates previously supervised to successful completion	MPhil		PhD	
Undertaken the University's Research Supervisors Training Module, and actively researching	YES / NO / IN PROGRESS (If yes, date of successful completion)			

EXTERNAL SUPERVISOR/ADVISER (if appropriate)

If the bulk of the programme of research is to be conducted outside Staffordshire University, candidates must have a supervisor based at the institution or body at which the research will be carried out.

Please include details of External Supervisors/Advisers below **-** a Supervisors CV proforma must be submitted for each supervisor/adviser (available from the Research Awards Administrator). Other forms of C.V. will **NOT** be accepted.

SUPERVISORS WHO ARE ALSO RESEARCH STUDENTS

Are any of the proposed supervisors simultaneously registered as research students in their own right?

YES/NO

If yes, please name them below:

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

   (Period approved will normally not exceed two years from the date of the oral examination)

   Is permission sought for the thesis to be kept confidential?   **NO**

   If yes, written justification must accompany the application.

STATEMENT BY THE APPLICANT

On the basis of the proposals given in this application, I wish to apply for registration for the degree of: (delete appropriate)

   EdD

I confirm that all the information given is correct.

I understand that, except with the specific permission of the Research Degrees Committee, I may not, during the period of my registration, be a candidate for another research award.

I understand that, except with the specific permission of the Research Degrees Committee, I must write and defend my thesis in English.

Signed: D *Tara Hall* Date: 11th Jan16

RECOMMENDATION BY THE SUPERVISORS

We support this application and believe that the applicant has the potential to successfully complete the programme of work proposed within the University's maximum registration period.

We recommend that the applicant be registered as a candidate for a research degree.

We confirm also that in the case of any supervisor who is also a student in their own right, there is no conflict of interest between their own research and the proposed research of this student.

Signed: Dr C Bolton . Date: 11th Jan 16

Signed: Dr K Vigurs Date: 11th Jan 16

Signed: […].. Date: […][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…]

FACULTY SUPPORT

I support this application and confirm the Faculty will ensure the specified resources (on page 3) are made available for the planned duration of the project.

Signed: […][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…][…]   Print Name: ………………………… Date: […][…][…][…][…][…].

(Faculty Associate Dean – Scholarship, Enterprise and Research)

The Faculty Research Degrees Committee has approved the application for the award of:

(delete appropriate)

EdD   -   **Registration effective from:**

or

DBA   -   -   **Registration effective from:**

Signed: [...][...][...][...][...][...][...][...][...][...][...][...][...][...][...][...][...]   Print Name:
…………………………   Date: [...][...][...][...][...][...].

(Chair: Faculty Research Degrees Committee)

Appendix nine: Head Teacher Information Sheet

Title of Research Project

Investigation into the Practice of Teaching Assistants within a Primary Setting: Institutional Policy and Practice.

You have kindly agreed for that your school can take part in a research study. Please take the time to read the following information carefully so that you are fully aware of what is involved.

What does it involve?

The research will involve all the schools' TAs completing a short initial questionnaire relating to such things as their qualifications, the length of time they have worked in the school etc. In addition the school will be asked to provide any job descriptions (if they are available). Following completion of the questionnaire two of the TAs will be asked to be shadowed for a day as well as undertaking a short interview. I would also like to undertake a short interview with two other TAs and the TAs' line manager(s). All timings will obviously be arranged so they are mutually convenient for participants and the school.

Ethical approval

The research has been approved by the Faculty Ethics Committee at Staffordshire University and you will be asked to sign a consent form.

Any knowledge that is gained as a result of the research will be made available to your school and you will be welcome to read the whole thesis on completion. A short report, specifically relating to your school will be made available for you if you wish. *This research will help to inform future developments in school practice.*

Your school's participation is completely voluntary, as is the participation of the TAs and teachers in the school. As head teacher of the school, if you or any of the participants change their mind at any point, then the school or individual can withdraw, and you don't have to give a reason for doing so. If there are any questions in the questionnaires or interviews that participants would prefer not to answer, then they do not have to answer them. However once the data has been aggregated for analysis purposes you will be unable to withdraw.

Will the school or individuals be identified in the report?

No. None of the information that your school provides will identify the school or individuals in it, or be attributed directly to them in the final report. The anonymity of everyone who takes part will be protected in the final document.

Any personal information that participants provide will be confidential and accessed only by the researcher. Questionnaires and related documentation as well as transcripts of interviews will be stored securely whilst the research is being undertaken, and will be destroyed in accordance with University and Faculty procedures that are in force when the project is completed.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

This research is being undertaken for the purpose of completing a thesis for a professional Doctorate in Education at Staffordshire University. If you have any queries or questions related to this research, please contact me on 01782 294903, or by email at Fiona.Hall@staffs.ac.uk. If you have any concerns about this research, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr.Katy Vigurs. Her email address is K.Vigurs@staffs.ac.uk.   Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

HEADTEACHERS CONSENT FORM

Project Title: *Investigation into the Practice of Teaching Assistants within a Primary Setting: Institutional Policy and Practice.*

1. I agree for the school to take part in the research project.

YES	NO

2. I confirm that I have read and understand the Head Teacher Information Sheet for this Project.

YES	NO

3. I confirm that I have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

YES	NO

4. I understand that my school's participation in this project is voluntary, and that if I change my mind, I can withdraw the school at any time up to the point at which data has become aggregated for analysis purposes, without prejudice and without giving a reason.

YES	NO

5. I understand that confidentiality will be maintained throughout this project, that the school will not be identified in the final report and that quotations can be used in the report as long as they are anonymised.

YES	NO

Name of Headteacher: (please print)	Signature:	Date:
Name of School:		
Name of Researcher Fiona Hall	Signature:	Date:

Appendix ten: TA Information Sheet

Title of Research Project

An investigation into the practice of Teaching Assistants within Primary Schools: Analysing institutional policy and practice.

What is the project about?

The aim of this research study is to investigate teaching assistants' (TA) roles in primary schools.

What does it involve?

The project will involve TAs in the school completing a short initial questionnaire. It must be stressed that there is no right or wrong answer to these questions; what is required is an accurate representation of your life in the school on a daily basis, so please be as open and honest as you can. In addition the school will be asked to provide job descriptions. I also want to shadow two TAs going about their normal business for a day. This is to see what you do as part of your busy role and the variety of tasks you undertake. I will also want to conduct short interviews with those TAs and two others.

Are there any risks or benefits?

There are no personal risks or disadvantages involved in taking part in the research. You will be discussing and demonstrating your role and experience in the school. If you are observed it will be doing what you normally do as part of your role. The research has been approved by the Faculty Ethics Committee at Staffordshire University.

There are no personal benefits for the people who take part but the research will help to inform future developments in school practice.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you change your mind at any point, you can withdraw, and you don't have to give a reason for doing so.

Will I be identified in the project?

No. None of the information that you provide will identify you, or be attributed directly to you in the final write up, nor will your school be identified.

Any personal information that you provide will be confidential and accessed only by the researcher. Questionnaires and notes from the observations/interviews will be stored securely whilst the research is being undertaken, and will be destroyed in accordance with University and Faculty procedures that are in force when the project is completed.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

This research is being undertaken for the purpose of completing a dissertation for a professional Doctorate in Education at Staffordshire University. If you have any queries or questions related to this research, please contact me on 01782 294903, or by email at fiona.Hall@staffs.ac.uk. If you have any concerns about this research, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr.Katy Vigurs. Her email address is K.Vigurs@staffs.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

PATRICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project Title: An investigation into the practice of Teaching Assistants within Primary Schools: Analysing institutional policy and practice.

1.   I agree to take part in the project.

YES	NO

2.   I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet for this Project.

YES	NO

3.   I confirm that I have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

YES	NO

4.   I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary, and that if I change my mind, I can withdraw at any time up to the point at which data has become aggregated for any analytical purposes, without prejudice and without giving a reason.

YES	NO

5.   I understand that confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study and that I will not be identified in any reports.

YES	NO

Name of Participant: (please print)	Signature:	Date:

Appendix eleven: the schools

Introduction

The previous chapter outlines the methodological approach taken for the study whilst this chapter begins to introduce the research findings themselves. Research took place in four primary schools in England, the context of which is needed to understand where the research positions itself, therefore key features of the education system will be identified. Gaining access to undertake research can be a difficult process and how access was gained is outlined before identifying the key characteristics for each school before reflection on my role in the school.

English Primary Schools

Primary schools in England cover ages five to eleven, split into key stage one (KS1) and key stage two (KS2) (McKenzie, 2001). A standard system does not exist hence the schools selected for the research took account of different features on offer. Firstly, consideration was given to the type of school and an explanation of terms can be seen in table A11-1 taken from Hindmarch *et al* (2017).

School type	features
Voluntary Aided (VA)	- Faith school - Governing body has control over staffing and admissions - Religion may impact on staffing and admissions. - Mainly funded by Local Authority (LA) Some funds are provided by a trust or foundation, connected to the religious denomination of the school.
Voluntary Controlled (VC)	- Faith school - LA has control over staffing and admissions - Religion may impact on staffing and admissions - Funded entirely by the LA
Academy	- Publicly funded - Run outside LA constraints in areas such as staffing, pay and curriculum - Often sponsored by - Must follow LA rules relating to admissions and exclusions - May have converted from an existing school or be a new school

Table A11-1: Types of schools

Consideration was also given to the OFSTED grading of the schools. The *Education (Schools) Act 1992* introduced school inspections and is where the current system originated. Following an inspection schools will be judged according to their overall effectiveness and given a grade, taken from the four categories available which are: Outstanding (1), Good (2), Requires improvement (3) and Inadequate

(4) and the frequency of subsequent inspections relates to the grade awarded (OFSTED, 2015). At the time research was collected the overall judgement was based on the following criteria:

'Quality of leadership in and management of the school;

The behaviour and safety of the pupils at the school;

Quality of teaching in the school;

Effectiveness of the early years' provision.' (OFSTED, 2015, p. 3)

However the current judgements for each school at the time of data collection could have been against different criteria which was utilised at their last inspection. In addition church schools are subject to additional inspections where the focus is on the school's overall Christian vision as well as their collective worship (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS), 2018).

School Characteristics

The schools varied in their characteristics and were selected in order to provide a variety based primarily on size, faith, location, academisation and OFSTED grading, therefore representing a breadth of the school population and a range of sizes where average means one form entry. All schools were situated in different local authorities around the North West of England. No real compromises were made except ideally the 'good' academy school would not also have been a faith school. However, the main objective was to obtain a primary academy within the geographical area, that was rated 'good'; in May 2016 this presented a challenge as only around 22% of primary schools had attained academy status (DfE, 2017b) making this the hardest aspect of the search. In addition, several schools were approached without the benefit of a sponsor and were not successful. The breakdown is identified in table A11-2.

	School type	location	Overall OFSTED grade (at time of visit)	Number of classes	Number of TAs	Number teachers
St Michael's	Smaller than average sized faith school	Semi-rural	Good	4	7	4
St Mary's	Averaged sized faith school	Small town	Requires Improvement	7	6	8
Fernleigh Academy	Larger than average faith academy	Small town	Good	14	14	19
City Academy	Larger than average academy	urban	Requires Improvement	16	25	18

Table A11-2 characteristics of the schools

A more detailed profile follows for each school although certain features have been withheld to avoid identification. Each school was in a different local authority (LA).

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

St Michael's is a voluntary aided, Church of England primary school (St Michael's 2016) situated in a semi-rural location (National Society SIAMS, (NSSIAMS), 2014) in LA1. It caters for children from four to eleven years of age, has four classes of mixed age ranges with less than 90 children on roll (OFSTED, 2014a). There was a headteacher (HT1), four class teachers and seven TAs, one of whom had HLTA status (St Michael's, 2016). In the summer of 2014 the school had received an OFSTED grading of 'Good' in all categories, following a previous grading of 'Requires improvement', and this was the grading at the time of the visit. The majority of children are white British with a small number of children for whom English is an additional language (EAL) (OFSTED, 2014a). The number of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is above average whilst the number of children receiving support through pupil premium[40] (PP) is below average (OFSTED, 2014a). The school is relatively modern in construction (St Michaels, 2016). Questionnaires were distributed towards the end of March 2016 and observations and interviews undertaken early June 2016. All TAs in the school completed a questionnaire.

TA summary

The key data for St Michael's collected for each TA can be seen in a summary in table A11-3. This includes the highest qualification disclosed by each TA but a further breakdown of this can be seen in table A11-4.

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[40] Pupil premium is additional government funding designed to help disadvantaged pupils perform better, hence closing the gap between them and their peers

	gender	Age category	Highest qualification	Children in school	Previous career	Length of time as TA in years	Time as TA in this school	Key stage (KS)	role	Part/ full time (p/t or f/t)	Level employed at	How got the job
TA 1	f	46-55	Level 3[41] HLTA status (Level 4)	previously	none	30	26	all	HLTA Class cover Forest schools	p/t	Level 4	Did not answer (DNA)
TA 2	f	26 - 35	Level 3	no	insurance	6.5	3.5	KS 2	Interventions In class support Providing feedback administration	p/t	Level 2	Advert on LA website
TA 3	f	56 & over	degree	previously	fashion	16.5	16.5	KS 1	Interventions In class support 1:1	p/t	50% level 2 50% level 4	volunteer
TA 4	f	36 - 45	Level 3	previously	Various – checkout, driver, PCB assembler	16	16	KS 2	In class support SEN support Lunch time supervision	p/t	Level 2	volunteer
TA 5	f	46 - 55	HND	no	Food technologist	10	10	Early years (EY)	In class support Administration Lunch time supervision First aid phonics	p/t	Level 2	advert

TA 6	f	46 - 55	Level 3	no	mental health charity	4	2	all	In class support Play time and lunch time supervision Administration First aid	p/t	Level 2	Advert on LA website
TA 7	f	46 - 55	Level 2	previously	none	15 (vol)	12 (vol) 6 months paid	EY KS 1	In class support Administration /display Phonics First aidp	p/t	Level 2	Lunch-time supervisor – then volunteer

Table A11-3: Key data for St Michael's

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[41] TAs are employed in schools at different levels ranging starting at Level one where TAs should be concentrating on administrative tasks with increasing expectation of direct pedagogical involvement as the levels increase

Qualifications

St Michael's	Maths O level/GCSE C or above	Other (CSE/ adult numeracy)	English O level/ GCSE C or above	Relevant voc level 2	Relevant vocationat level 2 and 3	Other level 3	Relevant voc L3	other qual (FD or HND)	Other degree	HLTA status (Level 4)
TA1	√		√				√			√
TA2	√		√	√		√				pending
TA3		√	√						√	
TA4		√	√		√					
TA5	√		√	√				√		
TA6	√		√		√	√				
TA7	√		√	√						

Table A11-4: Qualifications St Michaels

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

St Mary's is a voluntary controlled Church of England primary school (St Mary's, 2016) situated in LA2. It caters for children from four years to eleven, is single form entry and had around 180 children on roll in May 2016, educated in seven classes (OFSTED, 2014b). The staff comprised of a headteacher (HT2), eight teachers and six TAs (St Mary's 2016). In relation to the overall OFSTED grading, at the time of the visit, the school was graded overall 'Requires improvement' although both 'behaviour and safety of pupils' and 'leadership and management' were 'Good' (OFSTED, 2014b). The majority of the children are white British with no pupils having EAL (OFSTED, 2016a). The number of children eligible for pupil premium is below national average as is the number of children with SEND (OFSTED, 2016a). The school is situated in a small town with a building of modern construction with some open plan spaces (St Mary's, 2016). Questionnaires were distributed in April 2016 with the observations and interviews taking place in the May. All TAs in the school completed a questionnaire.

TA summary

The key data for St Michael's collected for each TA can be seen in a summary in table A11-1. This includes the highest qualification disclosed by each TA but a further breakdown of this can be seen in table A11-5.

	gender	Age category	Highest qualification	Children in school	Previous career	Length of time as TA in years	Time as TA in this school	Key stage (KS)	role	Part/ full time (p/t or f/t)	Level employed at	How got job
TA 8	f	36 – 45	Level 3	no	Nursery manager	6 months	6 months	KS 1	Intervention In class support	f/t	DNA *(level 2)*	student
TA 9	f	56 & over	degree	previously	Nursing & midwifery	14	14	EY	In class support Phonics Classroom set up	p/t	Level 2	volunteer
TA 10	f	56 & over	Level 3	no	Dress making	18	16	KS 2	Interventions In class support	p/t	Level 2	Handed in CV
TA 11	f	DNA	Level 2	yes	hairdresser	3.5	3.5	KS 2	In class support Interventions Administration First aid	f/t	Level 2	volunteer
TA 12	f	46 – 55	Level 3	previously	Shop and bar work	30	30	KS 1 & 2	In class support	p/t	Level 2	Accompa nnied child from previous school
TA 13	f	46 – 55	Level 3	previously	DNA	10	10	KS 2	In class support SEN	f/t	Level 2	volunteer

Table A11-5: Key data St Mary's

Qualifications

The TAs in the school had a range of qualifications ranging from no GCSE/ 'o' levels to a degree, however all had a relevant level 2 or three qualifications and a breakdown can be seen in table A11-6.

St Mary's	Maths O level/GCSE C or above	English O level/GCSE C or above	Relevant voc level 2 only	Relevant vocational level 2 and 3	Other level 3	Relevant voc L3	Relevant degree	other qual (FD or HND)	Other degree
TA8	√	√				2			
TA9	√	√	√						√
TA10	no	no				√			
TA11	√	√	√						
TA12	√	√				√			
TA13	no	no				√			

Table A11-6: Qualifications St Mary's

Fernleigh Academy Primary School

Fernleigh Academy Primary School

Fernleigh Academy is a voluntary controlled, Church of England primary school, situated in LA3 which took on academy status in August 2014 (Fernleigh Academy, 2016). It caters for children from four to eleven years, is two form entry, with 14 classes (Fernleigh Academy, 2016) and had just under 400 children on roll in July 2015 (NSSIAMS, 2015). The staff comprised of a headteacher, 19 teachers and 14 TAs (Fernleigh Academy, 2016). The SEND Co-ordinator (SENDCo) (HT3) was the headteacher's representative in this school as she line managed the TAs and will be referred to as the headteacher throughout. In its last full OFSTED inspection in 2010, the school was graded 'Good' in all areas (OFSTED, 2010); reiterated in an interim inspection in 2013 (OFSTED, 2013). The number of children eligible for PP is below average. In addition the number of children identified as having SEND is lower than average as is the number of children with EAL and pupils are mainly white British (OFSTED, 2010). It is situated in a suburb of a small town and is set in a relatively modern, semi open-plan building (Fernleigh Academy, 2016). Questionnaires were distributed towards the end of June 2016 and the observations and interviews conducted June and July 2016. Out of 14 TAs in the school, 12 attended the meeting and all completed questionnaires. Attempts were made to capture data from the two unable to attend but the questionnaires were not returned.

TA Summary

The summary of the TAs can be seen at table A11-7

	gender	Age category	Highest qualification	Children in school	Previous career	Length of time as TA in years	Time as TA in this school	Key stage (KS)	role	Part/ full time (p/t or f/t)	Level employed at	How got job
TA 14	f	36 - 45	degree	yes	Civil service	5	5	KS 1	Interventions In class support	p/t	grade 6	volunteer
TA 15	f	46 - 55	Level 3	previously	Accounts Pre school	14	9	KS 2	Interventions In class support Resource preparation Breakfast club	p/t	grade 6	advert
TA 16	f	46 - 55	Level 3	previously	None	35	15	all	Interventions Pupil premium support	p/t	grade 6	Chair of PTA and heard
TA 17	f	36 - 45	degree	yes	Chemist dispenser	5	5	KS 2	In class support Interventions (dyslexia) nurture	f/t	Grade 6	volunteer
TA 18	f	36 - 45	degree	yes	Retail	3	8 months	KS 2	In class support interventions	f/t	Grade 5	advert
TA 19	f	DNA	Foundation degree	No	Wages clerk	20	16	KS 2	In class support SEN	p/t	Grade 5	advert

TA 20	f	DNA	HND	No	Nail technician Cook Retail	5	5	KS 2	Did not specify (varied)	p/t	Grade 5	Heard off someone
TA 21	f	46 - 55	Level 3	previously	Pre school; Mid-day supervisor Textile industry	19	19	KS 2	In class support Class cover	p/t	Grade 6	volunteer
TA 22	f	46 - 55	HND	previously	Retail	6	6	KS 2	Interventions In class support Dyslexia support nurture	p/t	Grade 5	volunteer
TA 23	f	46 - 55	Level 3	no	Yes	16	14	KS 1	Class cover In class support 1:1 support Stock control	f/t	Grade 6	advert
TA 24	f	36 - 45	Level 4	yes	Hairdresser	10	10	EY & KS 2	In class support Class cover Display Input planning	f/t	Grade 5	advert
TA 25	f	36 - 45	Level 3	no	Nursery nurse	15	15	EY	In class support Interventions Phonics First aid	f/t	Grade 6	advert

Table A11-7: Key data Fernleigh Academy

The TAs in the school had a range of qualifications ranging from no GCSE/ 'O' levels to a degree; however all had a relevant level 2 or three qualifications and a breakdown can be seen in table A11-8.

	Maths O level/GCSE C or above	English O level/GCSE C or above	L 2 adult numeracy and literacy	Relevant voc level 2 only	Relevant vocational level 2 and 3	Other level 3	Relevant voc L3	Relevant degree	other qual (L4 or FD or HND)	Other degree
TA14	√	√				√	√			√
TA15	√	√					√			
TA16	√	√					√			
TA17	√	√		√		√		√		
TA18	√	√		Left blank						√
TA19	no	no					√		√	
TA20	no	no		√					√ (not rel)	
TA21	no	no	√				√			
TA22	√	√					√			
TA23	√	√					√			
TA24	√	√					√		√	
TA25	√	√					√			

Table A11-8 Qualifications Fernleigh Academy

Only two TAs did not appear to have English or maths level two.

The length of time the TAs had been employed at the school varied from eight months to 19 years. TA 14, 17, 20, 22, 24 and 25 had only ever worked as a TA at Fernleigh whilst the remainder had worked elsewhere.

Four of the TAs had children who were either still at the school or who had attended the school in the past.

City Academy

City Academy is an academy convertor which took on academy status in 2016 (OFSTED, 2016b) and is situated in LA4. It is part of a MAT which currently consists of three schools (Multi Academy Trust, 2016). It caters for children from three to eleven years and had approximately 470 children on roll in

October 2014 (OFSTED, 2014c). It is two form entry with sixteen classes in total, including nursery provision (City Academy, 2016). The staff comprised of a Principal (HT4), a Vice Principal, 18 full time equivalent teachers and 25 TAs (City Academy, 2016). In its last full OFSTED inspection before conversion, the overall effectiveness was 'Requires improvement' although the 'behaviour and safety of the pupils' was 'Good' (OFSTED, 2014c). The number of children identified as having SEND is above average and the number of children identified in receipt of PP and who have EAL is well above average. 40% of pupils are white British with the remainder from a variety of ethnic heritages (OFSTED, 2014c). The school is positioned in an urban area of a large city and is situated in a Victorian building (City Academy, 2016). Questionnaires were distributed in a meeting at the end of August 2016 which included 21 TAs out of a possible 25. It was not possible to attempt collection from the remaining TAs. Observations and interviews were conducted in early September 2016.

City Academy
TA summary

The key data can be seen in table A11-9.

	gender	Age category	Highest qualification	Children in school	Previous career	Length of time as TA in years	Time as TA in this school	Key stage (KS)	role	Part/ full time (p/t or f/t)	Level employed at	How got job
TA 26	m	18 - 25	degree	No	None	6	5	KS 2	In class support Class cover Behaviour Healthy schools	f/t	Level 3	Agency temp
TA 27	f	26 - 35	About to complete degree	No	Business administration	8	8 months	Cross school	Behaviour support Lunch time clubs	f/t	Level 2	advert
TA 28	m	36 - 45	degree	No	Retail	2	2	KS 2	In class support 1:1 interventions Manage resources First aid	f/t	Level 3	Agency temp
TA 29	f	46 - 55	Level 3	No	Chef	16	16	DNA	In class support Interventions Eco school First aid	f/t	DNA (Level 4 HLTA)	Lunch time supervisor
TA 30	f	36 - 45	Level 3	Previously	Catering cashier	12	12	KS 2	In class support 1:1 support Interventions cover for planning,	f/t	Level 3	volunteer

									preparation & assessment (PPA) time			
TA 31	f	46 - 55	Level 3	No	Health care nurse	11	9	KS 1	In class support	f/t	Level 3	Heard from friend
TA 32	f	18 - 25	Level 3	No	Sales assistant	5	5	EY	In class support and breaks	f/t	DNA	Agency temp
TA 33	f	36 - 45	Level 3 (Degree for overseas)	Previously	None	5	5	EY	In class support	f/t	Level 3	volunteer
TA 34	f	46 - 55	Level 3	Previously	Hairdresser	16	16	EY	In class support	f/t	Level 3	Lunch time supervisor
TA 35	f	26 - 35	Level 3	No	Private nursery	8	8	EY	In class support	p/t	Level 3	Agency temp
TA 36	f	36 - 45	Level 3	Previously	Computing engineer	2	2	EY	In class support inc SEND Assist at lunch and breaks	f/t	Level 1	volunteer
TA 37	f	46 - 55	Level 3	No	Secretary Care assistant	8	8	KS 2	In class support PPA cover First aid	f/t	Level 3	Agency temp
TA 38	f	36 - 45	degree	Yes	Catering assistant teacher? (overseas?)	1.5	1.5	KS 1 & KS 2	SEND TA associated SEND 1:1 & interventions	f/t	Level 1	volunteer

TA 39	f	36 - 45	Foundation degree	No	Careers guidance Customer service Sports coach	2.5	2.5	EY	In class support Behaviour Class preparation/ display	f/t	Level 2	Agency temp
TA 40	f	46 - 55	Level 3	No	Nursery Child care Casino croupier	4	1	EY & KS 1	In class support 1:1 Behaviour Lunch time clubs Class preparation/ display	f/t	Level 2	Heard from friend
TA 41	f	36 - 45	Level 3	Yes	DNA	13	13	DNA	DNA	f/t	Level 3	volunteer
TA 42	f	26 - 35	Level 3	No	PA Secretary	5	5	DNA	In class support Interventions Behaviour planning	f/t	Level 3	Agency temp
TA 43	f	56 & over	degree	No	Business rep Radio presenter	9	7	KS 2	variable	f/t	Level 3	Agency temp
TA 44	f	46 - 55	Level 3	Previously	Cashier	12	DNA	KS 1	In class support PPA cover Nurture class preparation first aid planning	f/t	Level 4	volunteer

| TA 45 | f | 46 - 55 | Level 3 | No | Carer Fosterer | 26 | DNA | KS 1 | variable | f/t | Level 3 | Agency temp |
| TA 46 | f | 36 - 45 | Level 3 | No | Travel and tourism | 4 | 1 | KS 2 | In class support Interventions Lunch clubs Behaviour class preparation | f/t | Level 3 | Advert. |

Table 11-9 Key data City Academy

Qualifications

The TAs in the school had a range of qualifications ranging from level 2 to degrees; however all bar one had relevant qualifications in relation to their role albeit at different levels (see table A11-10). The exception had a health and social care BTEC. Two TAs had HLTA status.

	Maths O level/GCSE C or above	English O level/GCSE C or above	L 2 adult numeracy and literacy	Relevant voc level 2 only	Other level 3	Relevant voc L3	Relevant degree	other qual (L4 or FD or HND)	Other degree	HLTA status
TA26	√	√					√			
TA27	√	√				√	√			
TA28	√	√		√		√			√	
TA 29	√	√		√		√				√
TA 30	√	√				√				√
TA 31	√	√			√					
TA 32	Below c	Below c	√	√		√				
TA 33	√	√				√				
TA 34	√	√		√		√				
TA 35	Below c	Below c		√		√				
TA 36	√	√		√		√				
TA 37	√	√		√		√				
TA 38	√	√				√			√	
TA 39	Below c	√		√	√			√		
TA 40	Below c	Below c		√		√				
TA 41	√	√				√				
TA 42	√	√		√		√				
TA 43	√	√				√			√	
TA 44	Below c	Below c	√	√		√				
TA 45	√	√		√		√				
TA 46			√			√				

Qualifications City Academy

The majority of TAs had GCSE at C or above in English and maths.

The participants

A breakdown of individual characteristics of the schools and all 46 TAs can be seen at appendix twelve including a brief profile of the 16 TAs shadowed and/or interviewed. Data were captured relating to ages, gender, qualifications, role and previous careers as outlined in the blank questionnaire at

appendix two. A summary in relation to the TAs' ages, gender, previous careers, whether they are connected to the school through their children and the time spent doing TA work are identified in this section.

Ages and gender

The age of TAs varied with two circling the lowest category and one circling the highest but around ¾ of the TAs were between 36 and 55. Two of the TAs were male, both at City Academy. Age groups of the TAs in each school are outlined in table A11-11.

age	18- 25	26 – 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	56 and over	No answer
St Michael's		1	1	4	1	0
St Mary's			1	2	2	1
Fernleigh			5		5	2
City	2	3	8	7	1	0
Total	2	4	15	13	9	3

Table A11-11: age groups of the TAs

Previous careers

85% of the TAs had had previous careers which ranged from hairdressing to midwifery and table A11-12 indicates the number of TAs in each school who had worked in another career prior to taking up TA employment.

School	Yes	no
St Michael's	5	2
St Mary's	5	1
Fernleigh	11	1
City	18	3
Total	39	7

Table A11-12: number of TAs who had had previous careers

Children in school

15% of the TAs also had children in the school where they worked and 37% of TAs had children who had attended the schools in the past. 48% of TAs were not connected to the school by their children (see table A11-13).

Children in school	Yes	In the past	Not connected to school by children
St Michael's		4	3
St Mary's	1	4	1
Fernleigh	4	4	4
City	2	5	14
Total	7	17	22

Table A11-13: Number of TAs who are and who are not connected to the schools through their own children

How long had participants worked as TA?

The length of time the TAs had been employed at the school varied; see table A11-14.

	The lowest amount of time one of the TAs has	The maximum amount of time one of the TAs had	Number of TAs who had only ever	Average years as a TA	Average years in school

	spent working in the role	spent working in the role.	worked in the school		
St Michael's	6.5	30	3	10.86	10.57
St Mary's	6 months	30	5	12.70	12.33
Fernleigh	3	19	7	12.75	9.97
City	8 months	26	13 (2 did not fully complete)	8.38	6.30

Table A11-14: length of time TAs have been in the school

The data indicated the mean average number of years the TAs had worked in the current schools. The average for the smaller schools tended to be higher and City, the largest school, produced the lowest average. Potentially this average could have produced a higher result of 7.5 if the two TAs who failed to complete the section had indeed only ever been at that school and their data added. Overall City had the least experienced staff in terms of mean averages.

The sixteen main TAs

TA 1

TA1 had been employed in the school for 26 years and had overall 30 years' experience as a TA. She had acquired HLTA status in 2006 and was employed in this capacity at the school, covering PPA and leading forest school activities throughout the school. She had previously had children who attended the school and had begun working there temporarily to cover a staff illness. She was qualified at level 3 and also had forest school qualifications. She was now less willing to work outside her contracted hours.

TA 2

TA2 had worked as a TA for 6 ½ years and had worked at St Michael's for 3 ½ after responding to an advert for SEND support. She had a previous career as an insurance claims handler. She had a level two in teaching and learning support and three 'A' levels. She worked in key stage two and was in the process of undertaking HLTA status as part of the head teachers' progression planning as it was likely that TA1 would retire in the near future.

TA3

TA3 had worked as a TA for sixteen years and had only ever worked in St Michael's in KS1. She had a previous career in the fashion industry. She had a degree in Environmental Science and English but had no relevant level two or three qualifications. Her children had attended the school and she also had responsibility for the forest school approach.

TA4

TA4 had worked in KS2 and had been in the school for sixteen years and had never worked elsewhere in this capacity. She had had previous employment in a factory, as a driver and a checkout operative.

Her children had attended the school previously. She began at the school as a volunteer whilst undertaking a relevant level two course.

TA 8

TA8 had been employed in the school for six months and was assigned to the year one class. She had a previous career as a nursery manager and although qualified at level 3 having completed National Nursery Education Board (NNEB) training she had decided to undergo further level 3 training, hence started at the school as a volunteer prior to being offered a permanent position. Having previously run her own nursery she was more overtly aware of the distinction between teacher and TA.

TA 9

TA 9 had worked as a TA for 14 years and had only ever been employed as such at St Mary's. Although she had worked across the school she was currently in reception. She had a previous career as a midwife and was therefore educated to degree standard. She also had a relevant level 2 in Childhood Studies and Development, although it is to be expected that aspects of her degree would have had relevance too. TA9 had had children in the school.

TA10

TA10 had worked in the school for sixteen years and had a previous career in dress making. She began working in the school temporarily part-time before taking on a full time position. She currently worked in KS2.

TA11

TA11 had worked as a TA for three and a half years and had only ever been employed in St Mary's. She worked in KS2. She started as a volunteer whist undertaking a related course before gaining employment in the school. She had previously owned a hairdresser's shop but wanted a job that worked alongside family life and her children were currently in the school.

TA14

TA14 had been employed in the school for five years and was assigned to the year one classes. She had had a previous career in the civil service, had a relevant level three qualification as well as a full degree in an unrelated subject. She started in the school initially as a volunteer and her children were at the school.

TA15

TA15 started in the school part-time around nine years earlier after responding to an advert when her children were still there. She had previously worked in accounts as well as pre-school. She had spent most of her time in upper KS2 but had moved that academic year to year three. She had responsibility for interventions which she organised herself.

TA16

TA16 had children at Fernleigh where she was a member of the parent-teacher association (PTA). She worked in another school when a job became available and she was asked to apply. She had worked throughout the school until recently.

TA17

TA17 started as a volunteer five years previously whilst studying for a foundation degree. She was eventually offered a paid position. She worked in KS2 and had a degree and a previous career working in a chemist shop. She was undertaking the dyslexic teaching certificate and would be responsible for the dyslexia assessments when she had completed the course. Her children were still at the school.

TA 26

TA26 had been a TA for six years and had been working at the school for five. He had a degree in Early Childhood Studies (ECS) and was currently supporting in year six. He started at the school initially through an agency before being taken on permanently. As well as the class TA in one of the year six classes he was the healthy schools' coordinator.

TA 27

TA27 had a previous career as a business administrator but had worked as a TA for eight years and had been at the school for eight months. She was currently undertaking a degree and had around two months left before she finished. She had a background in SEND and had worked in a special school prior to starting on a temporary contract at City in order to gain main stream experience. Although she had initially started as a class based TA covering a maternity leave she had begun the new school year working across the school in a mentoring role for specified children and the school was hoping to make this permanent. She had thought of teaching as a career but was disillusioned with the bureaucracy.

TA28

TA28 had worked at the school for two years and had originally arrived as an agency temp. He was employed under that guise for about six months and then a full time position became available which he successfully applied for. He had a degree, had worked previously in retail and had considered becoming a teacher. He liked the fact that this job allowed him to finish and go home without having to take anything with him.

TA29

TA29 had a previous career as a chef and began working at the school as a lunch-time supervisor; when a TA vacancy came up the headteacher asked her to apply for it. As a result of being successful she then went on to undertake the relevant training. She confirmed she had level 2 as well as a certificate in mentoring and was an HLTA which meant line management responsibilities. She also ran support sessions for pupil premium children and was the 'eco' co-ordinator.

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Appendix twelve: example page from coding page

Appendix thirteen: codes assigned to themes

Heads/Line manager	teachers	TAs	Specialist teachers and other staff	children	parents
Head approachable	Relationship with teacher	Male TA		Supply	parents
Knew me	Discussion with teacher			pastoral	Community
Staff acknowledge	Staff acknowledge	Staff acknowledge	Staff acknowledge	Support children	
savvy	Hold back			Relationship with children	
expectation	Learning from teacher	Learning from teacher	Learning from teacher	Independence	
excluded	Alter practice			children	
appreciation	appreciation	appreciation	Discussion with middays	Transition?	
caring	caring	caring		Sort conflict	
leadership	leadership	Leadership TA	External trainers	engage	
cohesion	cohesion	cohesion			
				H and S (care)	
Allocation of support	Allocation of support				
inclusive	Tr ask				
consult	proactive				
Respect decisions					
Taking advantage	Collab work				
Staff meetings	Male teacher				
PROGRESS	Taking advantage				
	debrief				
	Subordinate role				
	input				
	NQT				
	PROGRESS				

Training	TA management	Planning	School and systems	External influences
Lack of quals	Pay (TA)	planning	governors	Church
Training	appraisal	Mid-term plans	School dev plan	LA

quals	contracts	Head checking	School policy	Academy
twt	move	Own planning	PTA	Inspection
Feedback on training	observations	PPA	routine	Job description
Better qualified	Class routines		Pay (finance)	Unions
Lack of training	Job descriptions	How know what's happening?	reorg	H & S
cluster	timetables	Debrief?	school	TA research
Professional	career		School layout	
	Resource (TA)		emailed	
	age		succession	
	PROGRESS			
	HEAD CHECKING			

career
Previous career
Career change
unemployment
Career move
Alter career
Previous school paid
Previous school unpaid
advert
interview
Looking for a job
How started
Student vols
Challenge of finding a placement
temp
Knew me

direct support of children	Knowledge	autonomy	Other tasks	Support teacher	Love of the job	curriculum
model	skill	interventions	Other tasks	Support teacher	Love job	Phonics
Keep on task	Own research	SEND		Diff role	Job satisfaction	Reading
telling	TA knowledge		Behaviour management	settle	Extra INC TAKING ADVANTAGE	Number
questioning		HLTA		observing	Lunch hour	Provision
Vis support		Sent out	Other duties	Teacher role	justification	Spelling
reminding		Own planning	Pupil premium	demand	Extra curric	Knowledge of curriculum
strategies		Don't feedback	initiative	settle	Less willing	IT
Peer support		specialism		Teacher job	NVC	Other curric subjects
reassure		org		intro	fun	Resource (physical)
clarify				listening	opinion	assessment
clue					Can't say no	RE?

Reading out loud	role	Self-belief	challenges
clue	Position?	Good at job	Physical challenge of role
talk		confidence	flexibility
checking		teaching	Pay TA
reads	role	proactive	Demand 181
Answer q	changed	Professional	
ability			
circulate			
Next steps			
Feedback			